Australians at War Film Archive

Edward Trappett (Ted) - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

00:39 My name is Ted Trappett and I was born in Nundah in Queensland in 1919, a very good year that year. When I was 12 months old they shooted up to Toowoomba. During that time it got to the stage

01:00 where the Depression was starting to come on. I remember the father was in a business and found himself out of work. I remember one night I heard some crying out in the kitchen and there was the mother and I went out and peered behind the door and my father was rolling his swag. He rolled his swag and he walked from Toowoomba to Nambour to get a job. And the job he got was on a cane farm and he chipped cane

01:30 when it was growing, chipped the weeds from the cane and then when the season came he was a cutter. And we stayed there from 1925 until 1929. There were four boys in my family and the family decided it'd be best if we came back to Brisbane to get the boys an apprenticeship. We came back to Toombul and we lived at Toombul right beside the railway line. During those days we was quite happy, we

02:00 were on the banks of the Kedron Brook. We used to go and fish for tiddlers on the Kedron Brook and all that sort of thing. Generally it was a pretty happy time and we used to do a lot of gardening and by this time the Depression had really come on, in 1929 and we decided that we'd make the best of it. We had a big garden and we used to sell all the produce from the garden and lettuce and tomato and all that sort of thing,

02:30 and then we used to sell horse manure, we used to pick it up around the and sell it, and we found ourselves quite well off really during the Depression. Then when I was 13 years of age they called for a Sunday school Exam, Scripture Knowledge and out of all of Queensland, I finished up winning the gold medal and I was quite pleased with myself of course. And there was three brothers and we all

03:00 got on very well together and quite happy. And what else did we do there? It used to be funny there at times, the parents used to have a card party of a Saturday night, the people'd come in and they'd play cards, and all the kids would have a concert out on the verandah. We used to get up to all sorts of antics on the verandah and we used to fill our time in like that. When it came time… I passed scholarship when I was 14 and

03:30 then the first job I had was a telegram boy and they told me there'd be an exam shortly to make it permanent. But when that exam came I was three days too old they said, so I found myself then 16 out of work looking for a job. So anyway I heard about an apprenticeship going at the local bakehouse and went down and got it. And I don't know why I got it because I was tall and thin, and a bag of

04:00 flour those days used to weigh 150 pound. Anyway it finished up I got the job and it stood by me the rest of my life you know. During those days I played hockey, I was a member of the local YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association], they had a YMCA at the Baptist Church, I took part in the activities there and… where am I up to now?

04:30 The job was one of those jobs where you work 50 hours a week and if you complained in anyway what-so-ever the boss would say, "Well I'll sack you and get someone else." They were pretty hard days really, like you know. The thing was, there was only a foreman, a man and a boy in the bakehouse and I was the boy of course, and they taught me a very good trade. I played me part in making the yeast, had to make our own yeast and

05:00 there used to be small doughs made by hand. You had to make hand doughs and they had to run the ovens, wood-fire ovens, had to fire the ovens, other words you did a complete trade like, you know. Then later on I decided to join the army. They formed a Scottish battalion in Brisbane and I raked up a grandma in Scotland somewhere and qualified, so I joined the 61st Battalion

05:30 Queensland Camerons. I joined that in 1937. I was one of the foundation members because those days we had to raise 12 pounds per man to buy the kilt – buy the sporran, and the Glen Gowrie and the spats. They weren't on issue from the Australian Army, so we had to buy them, and the 12 pound covered it.

We used to meet at Kelvin Grove each Tuesday night. If you missed two nights in a row you was out.

06:00 There was always someone waiting to come in. We had several camped at Fraser's Paddock and then they used to write and say you were invited to attend a camp. But then when the Munich Crisis came up they sent a message to say 'you will report'. So we reported at Redbank and the Munich Crisis passed over but they kept us in camp until the war broke out. When the war broke out I went down to try and join the navy

06:30 but they told me that there was tons of men but no ships. So I stayed with the 61st at Redbank and I was a Vickers machine gunner and we were pretty well trained and consequently we were sent over to the AIF [Australian Imperial Force] to act as instructors and you can imagine those big six foot diggers and the fellows in the kilts trying to teach them something about machine gun. They used to go of a night and get drunk and come back and

07:00 sleep all day and you'd have to try and stir them up. Anyway they made good in the future. I was at Redbank until August 1940 when the navy called me and I went down and they said, "Have you got a trade?" And I said, "I'm a cook," no, "I'm a baker." So they said, "Right you'll be a cook." So I joined the navy as a cook. And that was the start of a long and varied career like you know.

07:30 When I first joined the navy I was in Brisbane. I joined there. I joined on a Wednesday, had to hand my kilt in and come back and join on the Wednesday, and then on the Friday I got sent down to Cowra because I was a qualified cook they reckoned, and I was cooking for 22 people on the Signal Station. Anyway I worked it out, all my friends had joined all the various AIF and air forces and been sent away and I thought I'd like to get

08:00 away, so I went up to the Skipper and I said to him, "I think I was made for bigger things." And he said, "What do you mean?" I said, "I've been cooking for 20 fellows and I think I'm capable of baking bread on a ship." So anyway he sent me to Brisbane to see the paymaster and eventually they sent me down to Flinders Naval Depot. And I went down there and I went to the galley and I did about three weeks

08:30 instruction as a cook and then they woke up that I was a baker and they sent me down to the bakery. And the bakery was very old fashioned. They had tinned yeast, it was like a syrup and very slow moving, you used to make a dough and you had to wait for four or five hours for it to rise, that sort of thing. So anyway I went and saw the bloke in charge and it was rather strange – this chap was in charge of cooking and his name was Honeybun. And he was a Warrant Officer

09:00 and he said, I said to him I said, "Why don't we get compressed yeast?" He said it won't keep on the ships. I said, "Well, there's been so many, so much advances made, it will keep, you know, it keeps for a couple of months like, you know." Anyway they changed with it, and they give me a job as an instructor there, but because I'd only been in the navy a short time, you had to be in 12 months before they could give you any rate, so I was a temporary unpaid leading hand, and this was instructing

09:30 the cooks. The method I developed there was to get ten pound of flour and make the bread from ten pound of flour which gave them an idea that when they went to a ship all they had to do was multiply the ten pounds for the amount of bread they wanted. And it was very successful as a matter of fact, whereas the fellows couldn't mould, I taught them how to get a result. And we turned them out, we used to turn out about 30 a month in those days. Anyway I stayed in Flinders,

10:00 and I got sent to the HMAS Birchgrove Park, which was a minesweeper being commissioned in Sydney. And I just had to report on the ship at nine o'clock of a morning, potter around and do a bit to help towards getting it ready to go to sea, and then go ashore the rest of the day. I used to go up the Anzac Buffet and help there and have lunch there on the free of course, and then used to sleep on Wynyard Station.

10:30 I used to go down and sleep on the seats there of a night time. Quite a common occurrence in those days because it used to cost you, in those times, to get into a hotel, you know. Anyway, the Birchgrove Park was commissioned and it was a coal burner and the first thing I was faced with was the coal ship. Everybody on a coal ship has to work carrying these big baskets of coal up the gangway and tip it down

11:00 the shoot, and then you had to go down below and level it all off, that sort of thing. The coal used to get down your back and in your hair – you can imagine what sort of job that was. Then, we used to go out from Sydney, from Watson's Bay and we'd sail all morning with the minesweeping gear dragging and we'd sweep a path out and we'd just about lose sight of the Harbour Bridge and we'd turn around and sweep another path on the way in. And on the way in it very often got pretty rough.

11:30 It was a flat bottomed thing this one, and they used to sing out, "Up sail," and they used to put the sail up and it used to steady the ship. So I had the rare honour in the navy of having sailed before the mast and also a coal ship. Anyway the Skipper he said to me, "You suffer seasickness." I said, "Yes, something terrible," like you know, so he said, "We'll get you a bigger ship." So one

12:00 morning I looked out when the Canberra was coming through the Heads and I joined the HMAS Canberra and then that started a whole new life sort of thing, on the cruisers all dressed up and that sort of thing. And I went aboard and the ship had just come back from patrolling over in the Indian Ocean and I was standing on the deck with all the other sailors taking all the plaudits and everything, of all the public I mean,

12:30 and that was when I joined the Canberra. And then the Canberra sailed and we went across to New Zealand, picked up a convoy, took them down the bottom of Tasmania, across to Fremantle and then almost to Trincomalee, that's in Ceylon and then we turned around and came back. And we came back to Sydney and we went to Port Moresby, picked up the Aquitania and it had seasoned troops.

13:00 These troops had been in Darwin, had been in Port Moresby and they wanted them for Singapore. This was in, just before Christmas 1941. Anyway it was just before Christmas, took them down to Sydney and they had leave in Sydney and we went around to Fremantle and then we took them up to Sumatra. And when we got to Sumatra, they thought

13:30 the Aquitania was too big to go into Singapore because Singapore were on the verge of falling, so they changed them into six Dutch ships, little Dutch ships and made up a convoy, headed for Singapore. We got within a hundred mile of Singapore and heavy rain at 4 o'clock in the afternoon they decided they'd send the ships in on their own, because under cover of rain and darkness they'd arrive. So we were

14:00 two days within the fall of Singapore and that was one of our lucky escapes. We came back to Java, Tanjung Priok, that was the harbour for the Batavia, it's now, I forget what it is now, anyway doesn't matter, and we came back to Sydney, no came back to Fremantle. Went out with a convoy to start off the Middle East and

14:30 our job - one ship had to go out and do a three day sweep to see if it was clear and then come back. And we went out and did this sweep and we got a oil leak in the magazine, so that decided to send that to Sydney and they sent the HMAS Sydney. That was the end of the Sydney then. Anyway we came back to Sydney and we were in Sydney Harbour when the Japs'

15:00 submarines came in. That was the 31st of May and they fired one torpedo at us, it landed up in the Domain in Sydney and they sunk the Kuttabul, that was a ferry ship that sailors slept on. They had fired at the Chicago but the setting was too low. Anyway, we sailed straight for Brisbane, we came up to Brisbane and we sailed from Brisbane to Wellington.

15:30 And the force was mounting up there to go to the Solomon Islands, and we set sail from Wellington and we got to Fiji and they did a practice landing there and it was the first time that there was ever any move towards the Japanese like you know, and they finished up, we lost quite a few men in Fiji because they found out that there wooden

16:00 slats in the bottom of the Carly rafts when the sailors jumped in – when the army jumped in they went straight through the bottom and the Yanks used to carry a hell of a sized pack. They had everything in their pack, they used to go straight through the bottom and didn't come up. So anyway, the idea was for each ship to fire a couple of shells. The sailors, the army went off in the barges as they intended later on and that took about three or four days. And then we went up to Guadalcanal

16:30 and the Australian, the Hobart and several other ships went into Guadalcanal but went around Savo right to Tulagi. That was on the Friday, and we landed the troops on the Friday and there was a bit of activity in the air. There were some planes coming over. And then on the Saturday morning, torpedo bombers attacked us, and we shot down a couple of those and then on the Saturday night,

17:00 on the Saturday afternoon, about six o'clock they told us that the Japs were on the way to attack us and they said that they'd be there at four o'clock in the morning, but unfortunately they arrived at two o'clock. And it was amazing to think that there were two destroyers patrolling between two points only about twenty or thirty mile apart and they missed seven Japanese ships coming in, and they

17:30 sailed in past them. There were four cruisers, four heavy cruisers, the Canberra, Astoria, Vincennes and another one and we sailed along, and our job was to bombard the shore as required and then come around and go around again. And we were just going to make the turn and the Japanese opened fire, and the Canberra lasted about three or four minutes. They hit us with 22 shells and a torpedo – that's another

18:00 story and the ship was completely wrecked, there was no power. The ship was on fire at midships and the Japs then went from the Canberra to the other three ships and sunk them in succession and then fortunately for us, the Japanese decided to get out of it, had they known they could've gone across and sunk half the transports because they were still in the harbour. And anyway, the ship

18:30 was hit and I was in the magazine at the time and there was a shell come in just above the magazine and instead of spinning ordinarily, it was turning over and over, it hit a wave and it was spinning over, hit the side of the ship and made a hole you could've driven a car through, landed on the greasy deck. The shell handling room was a big round circular affair with all the shells standing up in it and as they ordered the shells, they just pushed

19:00 whichever one was required in the hop and up it'd go to the turret. And they sound "action stations". We already had action stations, which was another thing. They said we weren't prepared but I say, "Why would a cook be sleeping in the magazine?" And we were already second degree, anyway we didn't get a chance to even fire a shot. And when you go in the magazine

19:30 you go down the hatch, the hatch is about four feet by four feet and about six inches thick of steel and is operated by a block and tackle. And they, the 24 fellows go in the magazine and the lid is put down and

they put the dogs on, the dogs are the clips and they lock it from the top. There's no way of getting out, so you're locked in the magazine.

20:00 So anyway, having been locked in the magazine, the shell hit the shell handling room and somebody got the smart idea, they saw the smoke coming out near the magazine, got the idea to flood the magazine. It's been denied that it was an order but it did happen. The official report says it wasn't flooded, but I was up to my knees in water and so were 24 other fellows and try and tell them that it wasn't flooded. Doug Blainey, my brother-in-law now,

20:30 had a friend called Keith Scott and he was up in the shell handling room and he saw what happened, he saw the magazine being flooded and he and Doug were choirboys together. And he decided – he let us out and he came and opened the lid and we all got out. There was 24 fellows that would've still been in the magazine. And we went up top and when we got up top, the ship was on fire at midships, the plane was burning, we had a

21:00 plane we used to fly on, it was burning in the after part of the ship. There were two 500 pound bombs on the tips of the plane and as the middle of the plane burnt these bombs were just going down towards the deck and anyway they were taken off and thrown over the side. All the hoses were holed, all the canvas hoses, they were all blown to pieces because the Japanese used these

21:30 anti-personnel shells that fired little bits of stuff to kill the people rather than do any other damage. And we had buckets on ropes, putting them over the side and throwing the water down onto the fire, and the water didn't put the fire out but the steam did. And the heavy rain as well, it rained, and the fire went out at midships. And then, in the navy you've got three or four access teams, I was the cook

22:00 on the one hand, and then I was the magazine handler on the other, and then if anything happened in the magazine, you had to take up the medical port. You had to report to the medical. I reported to the fellow down on the quarter deck, Charlie Dowyn, and then as the wounded came up, we were sort of treating them as they came up. And the other things was, we had to go down below and see any wounded and bring them back up. And I remember

22:30 there was a ladder that leant up to the upper deck, and you brought the fellow along on the stretcher and the doctor looked at him and he said either behind the curtain or up top. Behind the curtain was the fellow that died and they laid him out. Eighty-four died altogether and they laid him out there. And about 5 or 6 o'clock in the morning, things got a bit – the fire was out, the ship was dead, the Japs [Japanese] were gone

23:00 and the USS Blue [Ridge]– no, the Patterson had come alongside to take all wounded. And another thing that happened, I don't know whose fault it was, the USS Chicago was steaming towards it and it saw the Patterson taking all wounded at the focsle , they thought they were taking off prisoners, and they fired a couple of star shells, and that's where the falsehood comes in that the Yanks sank the

23:30 Canberra - all they fired was star shells, and they identified it. In the meanwhile the Patterson shot away, just broke the cables and just went straight away. Later on, about half past five or six in the morning, the Blue came alongside and with a loud hailer, the skipper said, "Shall I come along side." And there was about seven hundred blokes on the Canberra and the seven hundred blokes said, "My bloody oath." Anyway, he came on board. He took about three hundred and fifty

24:00 survivors and then the Patterson came along side forward and it took another three fifty. The ship was deserted and they said that the ship had to be sunk if it couldn't make steam by eight o'clock in the morning. Well don't you know, having been hit with 22 shells and a torpedo it wasn't capable of making steam so they towed it away and they took off the personnel and they towed it away and they tried to sink it.

24:30 They fired five torpedoes and 240 shells at it to sink it, and the reason for that was the Canberra was as long as two football fields. You just imagine two football fields, one against the other, 620 odd feet. And each compartment was watertight. All the watertight doors were closed and they took all that time to sink it, and then they tried to tell us that it couldn't been saved. It took all that trouble

25:00 to sink it. We went across to Guadalcanal to a ship called the Barnett. It had taken troops in and discharged them. And when the Yanks go to shore they just strip off all the clothes they've got and put on new clothes and all the rest are left in the heap on the deck. And most of us were either in overalls or shorts or whatever it was, so we all dressed ourselves up as Yanks and that, you know. And we joined this Barnett, we came down to

25:30 Noumea and then in Noumea was the USS President Grant, a big ship, it'd been sunk one time and they decided it wasn't any further use, but they raised it and it had just taken a big load of horses and mules to Noumea. There they use horses and mules instead of jeeps and that. They tipped the horses out and put us in. I'll never forget, there were survivors from the Lexicon, the Hornet and there was several ships that had been sunk,

26:00 American, and there was Alaskans and there was Chinese and all sorts of people. About 2,000 people went aboard this President Grant. But before they took them aboard, they all were in barges going around and around the ship waiting to be called and the call was for, "The cooks on the Canberra, report to the gangway." And the cooks had to cook for the lot. The Canberra cooks. And I went up in the bakehouse and it was only

26:30 a small bakery and I found that the only way to do it was to make bread rolls, ‘cause the bread would take too long to bake. So another chap called Murray Ross, and I, we were the bakers all the way from Noumea to Sydney. We got to Sydney and we pulled up beside the Manoora and one of the Admirals came aboard, started this speech about what heroes we were and everything, and they said, “When are we going on leave?” Anyway, one of the most marvellous things

27:00 I’ve ever seen was, we walked off the Manoora – we walked off the President Grant on to the Manoora, as you walked on the deck, they said, “What’s your name? Where were you at the time of the action? Did you see anybody killed? What’s your home address?” And they give us a telegram form to send a telegram home. The next fellow give you a kit bag. The next fellow give you a pair of boots and so it went on until such time as you got to the end and you had

27:30 a full kit. We had – I think it was six pound they give us. Anyhow they give us some money and a rail ticket to Brisbane. Queensland roadies went off first. They took us across the Man of War step. When we got there the news boys are running around “HMAS Canberra sunk.” And we said, “We know well it was.” It had been kept secret for a fortnight. Then we went off to Central Station and north to Brisbane. And I got a photo there when we arrived in Brisbane.

28:00 We were given a fortnight survivors leave. And then we was in Brisbane for about a month or so afterwards and then they called me up one day and they said, “Read that.” And I was on draft to London Depot for HMAS Canberra II. And I said, “I feel like I want to go,” you know. Anyway, they give us the choice and that. And then we set sail for London,

28:30 went to Sydney. We got on a thing called the President - Mount Vernon, it’d been on the Atlantic run and they put us aboard the Mount Vernon, it went across through Wellington and then up to San Francisco. Got in the train in Frisco, went across the Rockies and right across America and to the Brooklyn Navy Yard. We were the first troops to get back to America after Guadalcanal.

29:00 Because they could really pin down there like, you know. And they put us in a big train that had white carriages and on the side they had ‘Heroes from Guadalcanal’. And there was 200 air force fellows who were going over to join that empire scheme in England, they were with us and there was 200 survivors of the Canberra. And we went to New York, like Brooklyn Navy Yard,

29:30 we got a thing there called the Mataroa, a Shaw Savill, ‘slow starvation’. We went aboard the ship and at four o’clock they piped, “Cooks to the galley,” and the cooks went to the galley to get the meal. And there was, like four o’clock, late in the afternoon, tea time – there’s four meals a day in the navy and four o’clock was afternoon tea sort of thing. They give us a tin of peaches

30:00 and a loaf of bread for every six people. And we had that, then at six o’clock we went up looking for supper and they said, “You’ve had it.” And that peaches and the bread, the dry bread, that was the meal for the night. Anyway, we went across the Atlantic, a few instances there. The mess deck was so crowded that the sailors used to sleep in their hammocks and the air force fellows

30:30 were spread over tables and on the floor. And through the night if you wanted to go to the toilet you had to sort of have a peep out the side of the hammock, have a look for a pathway through and run across the top of the bodies, go to the toilet and then come back, and wait until they’d all got to sleep, and then run back over and get back in your hammock. A couple of days of this,

31:00 we decided we’d go and sleep up on the upper deck. We had a big canvas cover, we used to sleep under this. One morning I woke up and there’s all this red flashes on the horizon like, you know. Someone sang out on the bridge, “Gunfire on the port side.” And an old English fellow said, “Cor blimey,” he said, “that’s only the Aurora Borealis. So we saw the Aurora Borealis. We went up to Reykjavik in Iceland and picked up a four stack destroyer which escorted us back down to Belfast. Went into Belfast and they put the balloons

31:30 on the ship with the wires hanging down to stop the planes from diving at the ship. There was a funny incident there, they decided they’d give the crew a little bit of a run ashore. So they said, “You’re to be taken for a trip, a tram trip.” So anyway, about 40 of us got onto this tram, and we went out and when you got into the tram, they had big high sides on them, and you could just see above the top and that was because of the riots. And anyway we started off and the riots started,

32:00 so they turned us back and we went back on the ship and we would’ve gone no more than about half a mile. So that was our trip around Ireland. Went across Avonmouth, got in a train and went across to Chatham. We got to Chatham about two o’clock in the morning and there were sailors there to meet us, and as we got off the train, you had your hammock and your kit bag, a sailor took either one or the other, you had to put your hand on his shoulder, it was all darkened out, and he led us into the

32:30 depot and we went into the Chatham Depot, we were there for two days and we joined the ship. In those days it was HMS Shropshire, it was still and English ship. And we joined it and it was under repair like. The dockyard workers in Chatham, they went right through the whole ship. There was all the gunneries were checked, there was new guns put aboard, the engine room was fully reconditioned, the bakery – that was my worry, to get

33:00 the bakery right. In the winter time you want everything nice and warm and in the summer out here,

you want everything cool, so whereas the bins that held the dough were up against the oven, had to get them against the side of the ship and all that sort of thing, so we got that all organised. We had, our first draft over there had almost six months in England. And we used to work on the ship, we were cooking in the shore galley, there was

33:30 a shore galley. One incident there, one night – one early morning, there was an air raid and you're supposed to douse the fire, put water on the fire and you're half way through breakfast, you can imagine what it would be like putting the fire out and then trying to light it up again. So we decided instead of doing that we'd put some fine coal on the top and that'd sort of smother things. Anyway the air raid lasted a bit longer than we thought, the coal caught fire, flames went up the chimney, the

34:00 soot in the chimney caught fire, the big flames about ten feet high lit up the whole dockyard. And there was quite a to-do about that, but we finished that, got out of it. We used to see those thousand bombers going over to Germany. A plane used to come up and used to put up a little red cloud in the sky, like exhaust, they put a red spot in the sky, planes would come from all over England

34:30 and they'd all sort of work around this and the planes would be going out for about an hour, hour and a half, probably two hours, all the squadrons going out on the way to Germany and that'd be about four or five in the afternoon. And then early morning they'd be coming back and there'd be bits hanging off the wings and some of them they'd bail out as they came over Kent, they'd bail out and the pilot'd turn the plane around, turn it back to Germany and he'd bail out and the plane'd go and crash in France or somewhere.

35:00 We saw that. We had to go on leave in London and when you're on leave, whenever there's an air raid you had to report to the nearest policeman and then he'd give you a job. You might be, you often'd get people out of bombed houses or perhaps air raid watchers and that sort of thing. They'd give you some job to do. I went on leave up to Scotland

35:30 and having served in the Cameron Highlanders, the Edinburgh Castle was the headquarters. And I was the first Cameron Highlander to get back to Edinburgh Castle, so I went in and reported at the Lion Gate and told them who it was. They took me up to the Officer of the Watch and he said, "Alright." They got this big book, it'd be as big as that table, had bamboo rods in the leaves, and two fellows turned it over. And he said, "Who do you claim to be?" And it started off with Archers and

36:00 Lances and all sorts of people and he turned the pages over and I said, "Private Edward George Trappett, Queensland 61st Battalion." They turned it up and they said, "What was your official number?" And I told them, "240218." And I was a guest of the officers for three days, their sergeant for three days and the men for three days, and then they tipped me out. While I was there I met a fellow whose brother was coming out of the shops, a bloke called Ocker Collins and he was

36:30 an air force pilot and his job was to take up these Hampden bombers, after they come back from the raids on the coast of Germany. He used to take them up, do a four hour – they used to take out all the instruments, check the instruments, put them back in and he'd do a four hour flight to check them. And I used to go with him. Used to take off in these great big Hampden bombers and I used to sit up in the nose of these things and we flew all over Scotland, we used to go across to -

37:00 don't know where we – used to come back to Arbroath and then back to Lucas, which is outside Dundee. I had friends in Australia give me the names of people in Dundee and I stayed with them with a dislocated arm that - I had a full dislocated right arm while I was there, skating. And then anyway, we did

37:30 all the usual things in Scotland, Loch Lomond and all that sort of thing. Came back down to Chatham, the ship was ready to sail. As we sailed down the Thames to go up through the Channel, Lord Haw, the German fellow came on and said, "The Shropshire's finished," he said, "it's going up to Scapa Flow," he said, "but it won't get there," he said. He said, "They've got no chance of getting back to Australia, we're going to sink it." You can imagine the panic on board. Anyway we went up the Channel and no sign of any

38:00 German activity. We got to Scapa Flow, joined the home fleet and then we had a shakedown crew – that's getting the crew ready to handle all the new gear, and then we used to run across toward the ice rank in Iceland. They used to take convoys to Russia and we'd escort them some of the way, only the elementary part, that was about two months, and then we came down through Greenock, outside Glasgow and had a run ashore at

38:30 Glasgow. Picked up a convoy for Gibraltar and went down to Gibraltar, on to Freetown, Sierra Leone, Cape Town, Durban and then across to Australia. We finished up, we left Durban and headed toward Australia which was several thousand miles through the Roaring Forties, the weather was rough and it rained and that sort of thing, didn't see the sun at any time and

39:00 one morning, we'd been to dawn action stations and the Skipper said, "If you go up on the upper deck and look ahead, you'll see Rottnest." That's the island off Perth. And sure enough, there it was, a little spot on the horizon. And I thought to myself, what a marvellous thing, fourteen days tossing around in the Roaring Forties and then you could pin point it. So we went to Fremantle, put the Western Australian fellows off for leave. Went from there round to Melbourne –

39:30 not Melbourne, Sydney. And when we hit Sydney, we came into Garden Island and there's a whole heap of sailors on the wharf, would've been over a hundred sailors, and Capt Collins said, "What's that on the wharf?" And they said, "That's the draft in, sir." He said, "What do you mean draft in?" They said, "They're going to join the ship and we're going to take fellows off the ship." He said, "No way in the world." He said, "These fellows have spent the last six months seeing this ship being rebuilt

40:00 and repaired and everything." He said, "There'll be no changing of the crew." And that had a bad affect from the point of view that there was no promotion. If you joined the Shropshire as a cook, you stayed a cook. And I'd lackeyed up to be a leading cook. There was only about 200 people that would have joined the Shropshire union's active service from the time that it got to Australia until the war finished. And you had to carry 1250 men –

40:30 can you imagine 1250? I had the bakery, but I also had to do a certain amount of time up top to keep a hand in, cooking in the galley, had to watch over four people, and we used to cook for 950 people and that was three times a day. That was 2700 meals a day and there was no cold rooms or refrigeration attached to the galley. There was the freezers down below,

41:00 and that meant that all the food had to be brought up on that particular day. Ordered and brought up on the day and used that particular day. We were lucky enough to have a cafeteria which meant we cooked the gear, sent it down to the cafeteria and it'd be held nice and hot there. Everyone got a hot meal. In the bakery we finished up, we used to make about four to five hundred pound of bread every day. And my brother-in-law and I were the two bakers.

41:30 We must've had about two and a half, three years together in the bakery on the ship.

Can we just stop you there? We're just about to run out of tape.

Tape 2

00:30 **And the King came on board.**

The King came aboard in Scapa Flow. He was the queerest looking person that I've ever seen in respect that he'd just come back from Malta, and he'd been severely sunburned in Malta and his face was covered in that Tannafax [?]– remember that Tannafax they used to put on, that clear stuff? And anyway he came aboard and inspected all the troops, and when anybody notable comes aboard, the Chief Cook,

01:00 the Chief Officer's Cook runs around and tries to anticipate what he might like for lunch. And they had venison, they had pork, they had lamb, they had every possible thing they could think of, and they said to this Chief Steward, "What would his Majesty like for lunch?" And he said he'd heard that they got white flour on the ship. They'd sent the flour and a lot of the stuff over straight from Australia for the ship and he said, "I'd like some white bread sandwiches." So they come up the galley -

01:30 come up to the bakehouse and told me so I straight away made up a sign 'under Royal patronage' and hung it on the bakehouse door. I also took the care to make up a quick dough and make up a big bundle of fresh rolls and fancy bread and everything and send it down to the palace. And that was in Scapa Flow. But the Shrop [Shropshire], she was a happy ship, they had every possible organisation on board,

02:00 there was a pistol shoots, there was the bathing people and they had various lodges: Buffalo, Masonic and the Roman Catholic people used to have a session every morning and it was one of those really happy ships like, you know. But we, where'd we get to? We came to Sydney… Where'd I finish up last time? We were in Sydney I think.

Yeah you'd just got to Sydney.

02:30 Just got to Sydney, then we sailed from Sydney up north and our first action was at New Britain. We landed troops there and then we did a series of landings up the coast: Tanamera, Tanamera Bay, Biak, then to Manus and the big one was across to Leyte in the Philippines, and that was really big, 600 ships involved there.

03:00 And we went to Leyte, we bombarded early in the morning and the troops went aboard. In the afternoon, boats came around the bows of the Shropshire, who was on it but old MacArthur himself. We actually saw him land. On his way in, there was a gun in the mountains, they fired a shell at the barge and just missed it. And one of our gunners saw the flash where the gun fired,

03:30 and they fired a four inch at it. They missed the gun but the hit the ammunition truck beside it and blew it up, and the ship got a slight taste of that one. And the Australia got hit, we saw the Australia get hit and caught fire and everything and she had to leave at four o'clock the following afternoon. Then we had to put in the rest of the time in Leyte Bay and called upon for

04:00 bombardments and that sort of thing. And then the next thing was the big one, the Surabaya Straits. The Japanese were coming up from Singapore, two battleships and several cruisers and destroyers and they were going to come in and annihilate the transport they reckon. So we sailed to meet them and we were laying in wait, and the Shropshire was the only one with radar. The Japs had jammed the Yanks

04:30 and the Yanks had jammed the Japs radar. And the Shropshire was out in the middle reading the ranges. We were frightened of the Japs but we were more frightened of the Yanks behind us. There were six American battleships firing over the tops of us. You can just imagine the way we felt with all of that sort of thing behind us. Anyway, after 20 minutes they told us to open fire in the first couple of salvos we hit the ship, we finished up we fired

05:00 two hundred and fifty-six shells in 20 minutes which ruined the guns of course, and we got 16 hits on it. And she'd fired back and there was four shots went over and two fell short, which would've meant the next one would've been it. In the meanwhile we hit the plane on the stern of the battleship and it lit up like a fairy tree, and the destroyers

05:30 were sunk and one battleship got away, it turned and fled. And we saw that and we went into Tokyo Harbour later on down by the stern into Tokyo Harbour, it'd actually got home. That morning was a victory for us because we were up front and they said, "Make as much speed as you can going back towards the transports."

06:00 And the Yankees sped off in their pretty new ships, there was ships that had been built a couple of years. The old Shropshire, she was built in 1928 and reconditioned in '42 and we lead the stream, we were doing 32 knots and that's 10,000 ton, or about 14,000, during the war, tons at 32 knots, which is up around 40 mile an hour.

06:30 We raced back to the transports but the raid didn't eventuate. We had to come back to Sydney then. We had to come back to Sydney to get the barrels replaced and then we came into Sydney. As we passed Port Moresby, the dockyard workers had been flown up from Sydney and they came aboard and they were getting all ready to take the barrels out, they had to replace the barrels and by the time

07:00 we got to Sydney everything was ready just to be lifted out. We came into Sydney and the crane drivers were on strike. All the dockers were on strike. The Skipper took the ship in himself and the crane drivers all surrounded around the crane, all the dockers and the Skipper said, "Form up the guard." And they formed up the armed guard and we marched

07:30 down the gangway, marched right down the middle of these people, turned outwards and they fixed bayonet and the crowd disappeared. Our crane driver, little miserable little bloke he was, I'll never forget him, he went down the gangway, went up in the thing, lifted the barrels out, put them on the wharf, picked up the new barrels and slotted them in position. We were in Sydney Harbour for four hours and we sailed and the dockyard people had them all rigged up before we got back

08:00 to the Philippines. I'm just trying to think of what happened next, we either – we went to Lingayen then, Lingayen Gulf, that was in the north of the Philippine. And we landed there and the troops worked their way across to Henderson Field outside Manila. And we were there for about, only a month, but the Australia got hit again and had to be taken away. That was the end of the Australia, that finished its war career.

08:30 After Lingayen we were called to go down to Corregidor. Corregidor was an island in the mouth of the Manila Bay and they'd been holding up ships that they couldn't get in to go to Manila. So they sent for us and we sailed in and it was just like Sydney Heads, there was a big cliff and then it sort of tapered away behind. And there was a gun in the side of the

09:00 cliff, we found that with the radar and finished that off. The Shropshire could fire I think it was an 80, 80 something degrees up and over and we fired shells up and over and knocked out a big gun there which left the way open for the ships to go into Manila. When we entered Manila Harbour there was 600 ships sunk there: Japanese, British, all sorts of ships; and we went down to Manila, we were one of the first troops in there.

09:30 Fellows went off to the university and they found these British prisoners of war and they were sitting on the tiles on the floor and underneath was a greasy patch and some of them hand their hand handcuffed up behind them. Anyway they got them out and I believe that there was one part of it there, there was a bit of machine gun fire out in the alley and the

10:00 Yank walked in with this broken gun and says, "Why there man, they tried to escape." And anyway, the fellows carried these blokes back to the ship in their arms, they were so crook. We spread them out in the messes and said, "Feed them up, give them whatever they want because they won't be able to keep it down." So we give them – we had roast beef, we had all sorts of things and fed them up, we had them for about three or four days and they went away on a hospital ship. Manila was a town completely burnt.

10:30 The whole lot. Every shop, every house was burnt. And it was an open town, it wasn't fought for, but the Japanese before they left, they decided to fire it. They fired everything. We went back out to sea and the next call was to Borneo. We went down to Borneo and we bombarded Balikpapan, there were 14 oil tanks in the hills and the Yanks had been there for a couple of days

11:00 trying to bowl these things but they used gunpowder, we used cordite. The difference was, we had more lift and we could fire further I believe. And anyway, we were there for four hours and we set the 14 of them on fire. The oil there was so pure, they used to get it out of the wells, pump it up in the tanks and they had pipelines out to sea and the ships used to take it from those tanks and use it, it was so pure.

11:30 And we did Balikpapan Tarakan, Brunei Bay. And we went back up to the Philippine and we were in Subic Bay and we got the message the Japs were going to give it away. So we went up to Tokyo, we went to Tawitawi first and oiled, then we went up to Tokyo. We were in Tokyo on the Friday before they signed the peace on the Sunday.

12:00 We were in Japan two days before they – while we were still at war. Some of our fellows got in one of our boats and sailed towards the shore, they were going to land in Japan they reckoned. And when they got to the shore these big Korean fellows there, shaking their fists like don't come aboard and all this, so they turned around and come back to the ship again. And on the big day, the Sunday, the day dawned, it was nice and fine and everything

12:30 and then the next thing, about nine o'clock, hundreds, almost hundreds of planes flew over the top and they dropped parachuters and they had fighters and they must've been going in a circle because there were so many of them, and they signed the peace at ten o'clock. And there was a chap on the Canberra, Commander Walsh, he lost an eye, his eye was – I saw him as a matter of fact, he come

13:00 to where I was and his eye was out on his cheek and they just put it back in and tied it up like that – anyway he lost his eye, and then he came and became the commander in Brisbane. And I was in the dockyard police at the time when he was there, and had to go up and see him one day and I said, "They did a marvellous job saving your eye, sir." And he said, "They didn't save it." And I said, "What do you mean," I said, "I saw it was hanging out on your cheek like, you know." And he said, "That's a glass eye."

13:30 And he was telling me that it was made so as if he turned his head quick enough, the eye would turn with the other eye, and you couldn't pick the difference. Anyway, he was hit at Guadalcanal and instead of going outside, they kept him on and his job was to make out a list and a plan to get rid of the navy reserve when war finished. Now the Shropshire had 1250 men aboard and they got rid of

14:00 250 and there was a point score. You got so many points for being married, so many for being at sea and so it went on and on and all these points added up and I had 270 points out of 280, so on the Tuesday they put us in the Hobart and the Hobart left Tokyo on the Tuesday, and I was in Brisbane fourteen days after the war finished. I went into the Brisbane depot, was there about a fortnight and

14:30 the Master at Arms came around, he said, "I want a leading cook for the Westralia." I said, "Help yourself, there's six of them there." I said, "I'm just back from the big battle." Anyway the first fellow had dermatitis, he couldn't go and the next bloke had crook ears and I finished up going. I was sixth on the list and I finished up the only one healthy out of the whole lot. And some of those fellows had been there most of the war. They'd fought the war in Brisbane. And I went to the Westralia and

15:00 went to Darwin and Rabaul. And we were bringing back the troops, they'd finished their time there and we brought them back. We were sailing outside, we were headed for Tokyo one day and we were just going down the harbour and the officer came to me and he said, "Your discharge has just come through." He said, "do you want to go?" And I said, "Yeah." And he said, "Right, pack your bag." And they put me off at the Heads, put me in a little boat, in one of the pilot boats.

15:30 Then I came to Brisbane and was discharged – you weren't actually discharged. In the navy they don't discharge you, they only demob you, which means that you're demobilised, they can call you again. And I was demobilised and that was in '46 and I took a job in a bakery and I was quite happy working away there. I bought a house,

16:00 bought it cheap, had to be finished. I finished it off and then we bought a block of land and the wife and I built a house. We drew the plans and the difference in the building regulations now days – I drew the plans, took them in, put them on the counter at the city hall, asked for the building inspector, he came and he looked at them and said, "I'd put a heavier bearer across the window there, you've got three windows," and a few other alterations, and stamped them and away I went and built the house.

16:30 It took us two years to build it and it was three bedrooms and L-shaped place and still standing. And we sold it recently for $118,000 and it cost me $1,350 for the land and the house. Then the next thing – before I got ship to Sydney we had all these kids, we had seven boys and a girl and we found it a bit rough on the wages.

17:00 I was on a petty officer rate in the dockyard police, a constable was a petty officer and I was getting, I think it was fourteen pound a week I think it was, or fourteen pound a fortnight, anyway it wasn't enough, and I started a fencing business and I was fencing, doing fences for builders. And anyway I got a ship to Sydney and I went to Garden Island and I bought a house at St Mary's and got shifted up to Kingswood

17:30 Airforce Navy Base there, and I was there until 1969 I think it was, or '66. Anyway I give it away, took a job in a bakehouse for 12 months while I built up a catering business and we finished up at the Penrith Golf Club and I used to swing functions to take place in the golf club and then to do them I had two Morris trucks on the road and call on 20 girls.

18:00 And we were there until 1975 and then we finished up, we sold the business, did the world tour and

then came back and came to Brisbane. Went to holiday in Tasmania, we came to Brisbane and we came here and Chris said, “What you going to do Pop?” And I said, “I don’t know.” I said, “I might buy a house down the coast, I might go up the coast.”

18:30 And I was going to play hell like, you know. And she said, “Wake up to yourself,” she said, “I’ll build you in underneath the house and you can move in here.” So that’s what we did and we’ve been here since 1975. Been a quite happy time you know. I found me experiences in the navy they were very satisfactory, everything went according to plan. I got a bit of a fright when the ship got sunk though.

19:00 It makes you stop and think. In the meanwhile I joined the Masonic Lodge and I become a Master in 1956, I think it was. The lads were in the scouts and the Scout Master give it away so I did the course and become the Scout Master and I was the Scout Master for about six or seven years until I got sent to Sydney. And we had the years where I was

19:30 stationed at the Boom Depot as the dockyard policeman. I’d asked the officer if I could use the, all the sailors had marched out, use the depot for the scouts. What a fantastic turn it was, with the boat there, really good it was. What else was there?

When you talk about growing up, what was school like?

School was a funny outfit.

20:00 It was the usual thing, barefooted, never ever wore shoes. Barefooted and I’ll never forget one time somebody gave the mother a pair of girls shoes and they cut the strap off – they had an ankle strap on them and I wore them to school. They give me hell over that. They talk about bullying these days, I was really and truly bullied there.

20:30 Nundah itself was a very bigoted, well the whole of Australia was in those days, very bigoted. You was either one of them or one of us, you was either Roman Catholic or Protestant. So much so that the local store, Dyers, was the Protestant fellow, if you were Protestant you dealt at Dyers. Crowes was the Catholic one, if you were Catholic you went to Crowes. And so it went all through and it was really bad and that was one of the good things that came out of the war because

21:00 in war time you didn’t ask anybody where he come from or where he was going. But it was very bigoted those days. As I say, winning the Sunday school medal was a big achievement, I’ve fallen by the wayside since.

How did you come to be so knowledgeable in all the scripture?

That’s a good question, I’ll answer it shortly. The Minister’s daughter,

21:30 Reverend Weller’s daughter, she took six of us under instruction. “Now,” she said, “there’s three or four patches of the Bible that you’ve got to know about,” and she said, “First of all, learn them off by heart.” Which we did do. We could intone these things much as you like. Then we went back and we phrased them up, got it all phrased up. And then we went to the import of the thing, and so was taken one stage at a time.

22:00 So when the exam came, it was such that another girl and myself tied for first place with 98.8% result. That was the reason, there were those four particular parts of the bible and then we just concentrated on them. That was quite a big turn that one. Those days I was a Baptist. We moved to Turnbull and the nearest church was the Baptist church and

22:30 whereas the mother and father didn’t go to church, they made sure we all went to Sunday school. And I was with the Baptists and that’s where the YMCA was, they had that attached. And then later on the Presbyterian people built a place in Rhode Road and the Minister was Reverend Elfinstone Moffitt. He was the padre when the father was in the army at the end of the war. He never ever got away but he did about

23:00 six months at the time. And so we changed to Presbyterian and I’ve been Presbyterian ever since.

How did winning that gold medal affect your life at the time?

It give me a lot of confidence, like you know, I was just one of the ordinary mob prior to that. But after that, I’d won the medal like you know. It did give me quite a lift to be truthful and people used to say, “You won the medal did you?” And, “Never been won by a Nundah boy before.”

23:30 They were quite pleased about it. That taught about the Depression, I remember the Depression, we used to live on sheep’s heads and then we used to go into Anderson Camerons in the Valley and buy a tray of meat for two and six, and we used to have vegies in the garden, and the father used to, he used to jump the rattle. A train used to go past, a goods train, at about twenty past six on a

24:00 Saturday morning. And on the way up the hill junction, it used to get a bit slow and about six of them used to jump on board with their sugar bag under their arm and they’d go right into Roma Street and the train would pull up at the shunting yard there, and they’d get off and go to the markets and buy a lot of cheap fruit. You’d buy for practically nothing those days, and fill the sugar bag up with fruit, and they’d get the train back to Kalinga and then we’d be over there with the pushbikes to meet him and

24:30 ride home with the food. We used to keep ducks and fowls and all that sort of thing. Really during the war, during the Depression, we were quite well off.

Can you tell us about the lambs head, how it was a bit of a delicacy if it had the brain in it?

Yeah. We used to get the sheep's heads and sometimes the brains would be taken out and sometimes they were there. And other times they'd be cut in half and you'd get half a sheep's head and

25:00 the mother used to cut all the meat off and make a brawn out of them. They were quite a delicacy they were. And then of course there was the liver and the hearts and all that sort of thing. As I say, you could live pretty well those days. Of course we always had the ducks and the fowls and the eggs. And then later on we kept a cow, we had this cow and we used to milk it twice a day, always a pain in the neck. We had to park it in a paddock away from home

25:30 and we had to go and get this thing and bring it home and milk it and then take it back again, twice a day. Always had to take our turn. But we used to go out every few months and get a load of logs, ironbark for the stove, and cut it up with a cross cut saw. And then along the side of the railway line we used to go get coal along the side of the railway line and use that in the range. It was quite a

26:00 comfortable life. And some of those concerts we used to have, used to bring out some talent. But even after the war when I built this place, it was a kitchen, dining room, lounge and a bedroom, but I never ever put the partitions in, and I had this big long open affair. And when we had all the kids, I say no-one ever invited you out, you never got an invite to dinner or anywhere, so that we did the right thing, we used to

26:30 invite people to our place. Used to have these card parties, and we'd get all the dockyard policemen and their wives and brothers and all the family used to get together. We'd have about anything up to 20 people, and the big long table and we'd play cards. We had a skiffle band, you know a washboard and bottle tops and all that sort of thing. And then we used to play one end of the room and have sing songs and all that, and the navy used to come and sit in the front

27:00 yard and join in. And then when I was fencing I used to bring, toward Guy Fawkes Day, I used to bring home all the posts and rails and put them in a nice pile, and we'd have a big bonfire night, and the fire would burn for three days. I'll never forget one Guy Fawkes night, I was working down at the Boom Depot and it'd closed down and there was all sorts of stuff laying around there and I come across this, it was a cylinder –

27:30 it used to light up stuff, magnesium cylinder. I thought that might be interesting, it had – you put it in water. Anyway the bonfire started about, it's just on dark and it's six o'clock and all the kids out there with fireworks and we had the bar-b-que going strong, so I sneaked down the back, bit of a creek there and threw this thing in the water. Well you never saw anything like it, it lit up for

28:00 miles and miles, all this – the fire brigade came and the coppers came and everybody and they're all trying to work out what it was I'd – never ever told them. I'll never forget that time. Magnesium flare.

Can you remember Guy Fawkes Day when you were a kid?

Yeah. We used to do it completely safely, I used to build this big fire, nearly as big as this, all with timber, and we'd light the fire and there'd be a big ceremony lighting the fire and everything

28:30 and then we used to have a sand table and they used to let their crackers off in the sand. There was never anybody burnt or hurt or anything. But it was just super visual. And then the kids'd go to sleep and there'd be young kids'd go home and we'd sit around the fire and yarn and anything up til two o'clock in the morning. They were really good those days.

What sort of chores and jobs did you have to do as a kid?

29:00 We had to take our turn at wiping up, had to always do the wiping up. Keep the firewood up, chop the wood, see that the kindling box was full of kindling for the morning and – what else we had to do? Wash the dog. He had to be washed every week, and of course feed the fowls, that was another big thing. Of course gardening took a lot of our time. And then we used to

29:30 run the ducks and fowls on sawdust, used to keep them clean and all that sort of thing. Those Depression days, they sort of brought you together.

So what did you do for fun then, in between jobs?

I joined a bike riding club and

30:00 I was a telegram boy.

Sorry, is that light a problem, behind Ted on the green screen?

One instance there, when I went to get the job at the bakery, it was a Catholic bakery, old Camerons was the Catholic fellow in the town. I was a Protestant you see, so I thought what am I going to do? So I went in to view

30:30 the boss and he said, “Do you go to the church up the hill?” And fortunately the Presbyterian church was up the hill so I said, “Oh yeah.” And I got the job. Those days that Catholic - Protestant, it was a really bad thing. Of a Sunday morning, they had two trucks, these bakeries, 1939 Chevs they were, they were quite well done up. They used to go out and park at different Catholic churches

31:00 so as the people’d know that Camerons was a Catholic bakery. And there was a lot of that sort of thing went on. And then the public service, it was rotten with it. It was all Roman Catholic. And when I joined the navy, they used to have church service Sunday morning, and these formal divisions all dressed up and everything and when the religious part started they’d say, “Fall out the Roman Catholics.” They had to go and hide behind a turret.

31:30 And out of six or seven hundred men, there’d only be 30 or 40 and they weren’t too keen to join early in the piece. And then the first Roman Catholic senior officer was Admiral Collins. He was the first Catholic fellow to raise to get above the rank of commander. So it was quite rotten right through. But, as I said before, as the war progressed, they forgot all about that.

32:00 **When you very first joined the Cameron Highlanders, exactly, what sort of training did you do there?**

The first thing, we had to raise the twelve dollars, we got the twelve dollars, we got the kilt, the uniform and that. Tuesday night we go over to Kelvin Grove and the very first night they divided us into different platoons and I was the thirteenth platoon, I was a machine gunner. So they led us into this room and in the

32:30 middle of the room there was this machine gun all mounted up. And the officer said, “Well,” he said, “this is it.” He said, “there’s a Vickers machine gun, a wonderful weapon in attack and defence.” And I thought to myself what have I done, first in last out. I wasn’t too impressed at all. But they took us through all the exercises. There’s a lock on the thing, a thing about that big, that’s the main mechanism of the machine gun and they had

33:00 to teach you all the different parts of it. You had to recognise all the parts, be able to take it out, take it to pieces and put it back together again in the dark. And they used to put a mat down and put the lock on it and say, “Alright, go” and you had to have it all done up in so many minutes and you had to put it together again. Yeah there’s one part there, when the prolong case or the left side plate engages in the recess in the feed box – that was number one stoppage.

33:30 And that was the sort of garble that you had to learn. And one time there we had the machine gun, they said, “It’s a wonderful weapon, you can go out in the dark and set it up and then fire it in the daytime.” Anyway we took this thing out this day and we got it and put the tripod on the ground and everything, and we all stood back and they fired this thing, and it came loose and here this machine gun chattered around

34:00 toward us and all the fellows going for their life. They were happy times, they were a good crowd, social as much as anything else. They used to have highland dances at Cloudland there; they had the Highland Ball every year. They used to teach you the ‘Dashing White Sergeant’, the ‘Quadrilles’ and all those Scottish dances - used to learn all them. When I went over to Scotland I was quite a hit over there because I could do all the dances. One of the girls over there said, “There’s a

34:30 dance on Saturday night but you won’t be able to go.” And I said, “Why not?” They said, “They do the dancing, the White Sergeant.” And I said, “I’m right up top.” The people in England, they were very badly off during the war. We used to feel really sorry, the ration was one egg a month, one egg every month. And most of our stuff come from Australia. They’d send a ship over, full of gear and we’d be sitting down to three or four

35:00 fried eggs. Another thing that happened in England, when you used to get your vegies, there was a shortage of labour of course, and we never ever seen broccoli before. Anyway this broccoli arrived on board. What they did, they pulled it out by the roots and bundled it up, sent it to the ship. And of course, the cooks looked at it and said, “What the bloody hell’s this?” So we cut the flowers off and threw them away and cooked all the leaves.

35:30 And then of a daytime when you used to have to ditch all the rubbish from the galley, there’d be all the old discarded food, all the dockies would be ratting round the bins and you’d tip the stuff in and they’d be diving in, grabbing stuff and taking it home. It was terrible. But it was just part of their life. But several dockies, I used to go home with several, they’d take us up home and the way they lived, it was shocking.

36:00 One thing they started over there was ‘Carry On Britain’. And that meant when the Germans had been bombing half past five, six in the morning, and then the same in the afternoon to catch the people going to work and coming off work, try and catch them and they’d get held up from work. So they started this ‘Carry On Britain’, which meant when the air raid came on, you kept working. And I used to feel embarrassed, you’d be walking down the street and there’d be women with prams and carrying babies and everything

36:30 and the air raid siren would go and I used to go straight to the nearest shelter, I couldn’t get there quick enough and they’d stay up top. That’s like that favourite joke they had, you’d all get in the air raid

shelter, the warden would come down and, “Anybody pregnant?” And the answer was, “Not yet.” It was quite a good… I used to sleep on the underground stations over there. Used to buy a newspaper and the first couple of pages you’d put

37:00 down on the floor and then you’d take off your boots and put your boots down, and then your cap on the top and get the rest of the paper and stuff it up the leg of your pants and go to sleep. Of course all the other people sleep around you. And the trains’d rattle through during the night and you’d wake up. Yeah I had a terrible admiration for the people over there. They really got it tough.

37:30 **So had you experienced some actual air raids in…**

Hmmm?

Had you experienced some actual air raids while you were there?

Yeah, we were at Chatham, and Chatham is you know, England’s like that at the bottom, there’s Kent and London’s there sort of thing and Lexington’s up here, Chatham’s on the bottom part of the Thames there. And the Germans used to come across trying to get to London and if they couldn’t get to London, they had (UNCEAR) mirages and fighter pilots and all that sort of thing and they couldn’t get, they used to drop this

38:00 stuff on Chatham and Cheltenham and Rochester and all those places. And there was quite a few air raids there and then two days after we left, they bombed our favourite hotel. If we had’ve been there we would’ve lost 30 or 40 fellows. And then while we were there, a plane come over and dropped a bomb on the New Zealand ship the Ajax. Two bombs they dropped, one hit the ship and killed four people and the other one hit the toilet and killed 40.

38:30 They were all hiding in the toilet, stand easy time. They were the air raids there. And we used to play hockey there and the hockey field used to be like a bowling green. Gee, they were beautifully kept. Another thing we used to do was to go down to Maidstone and that was on the Medway River and you used to be able to hire a boat there and used to row up the river and there was a little corner there where there was an inn

39:00 underneath the old spreading chestnut tree sort of thing, and they used to put on a roast meal. Where they got the roast from I’ll never know, but we used to go up there and have a meal up there. And then another lurk we used to get up to - I had a mate called Bruce Harp and he could walk on water this bloke, and we used to go around the walkways on the side of the Medway River and they had a lot of swans on the river, and they’d be swimming around happy as can be, and every

39:30 swan in England that’s got a gold signet, gold crown on its beak, they belong to the Queen, and of course, no-one can touch it. So one day, this Harp and I, we’d had a few beers in the morning and we went down in the afternoon, Sunday afternoon, and everyone’s out walking. We swims out and our trick was to go underwater, come underneath the swans and grab them by the legs and pull them down to let them go. They used to fly about four feet out of the water. Anyway we

40:00 were doing it for a couple of hours there one day and a couple of sheilas on the edge of the water holding our clothes. And the copper took our clothes and all we had were our jockey shorts and we had to go to the police station to get our clothes. They was one of our tricks we used to get up to. Another night, the English people were terrible patriotic, they really meant it, they used to sing that, ‘There’ll Always Be An England’ and they meant it. And one night we were in the Navy Club

40:30 and it was getting towards closing time, like everybody’s had a few beers and that and they started to sing ‘There’ll Always Be An England’, some of the old sailors, and this Harp chimes in, “As long as the stones are here.” And it started a riot. We got beat up that night.

Tape 3

00:31 **So why was the Canberra named the Shropshire in the end?**

The HMAS Canberra was sunk at Savo Island and the British Government decided to give us a ship to replace it. The Government at the time thought the suitable name would be Canberra II and the draft that I got in November ’42, was London Depot

01:00 for HMAS Canberra II. But in the meanwhile, the Americans, they had a ship and they decided to call it the USS Canberra, which meant that we couldn’t have two Canberras. So then the government had to find out a name for the other one. So the people of Shropshire heard about this and they decided that they’d want the ship to be named HMAS Shropshire. So in

01:30 navy week, they collected two million dollars and they bought the ship and gave it to the Australian people provided that we call it HMAS Shropshire. So that’s how HMAS Shropshire was born. The people concerned were mainly in Shrewsbury, that’s in Shropshire and the Lord Lieutenant I think he called himself, was the head councillor,

02:00 he was the one that dealt with all the details and when a ship is commissioned, there's a whole lot of silverware goes with it. There's candelabra and there's sugar basins and all that sort of thing, all the silverware for the table and they decided that they'd hold that in Shrewsbury Castle and it was held there the whole of the war, and then when the Shropshire went on the victory tour, they picked it up and brought it back again,

02:30 so that was another connection they had with it. The Shropshire Bell, the HMAS Shropshire bell is in the Canberra War Memorial, the HMAS Shropshire bell hangs in the Council at Shrewsbury and it's used to rally the councillors. When they ring the bell they start the meeting.

03:00 So that's where the ship's bell went to.

Do you recall how the people of Shropshire treated the sailors when this was all happening?

Yeah. There was no, very little direct contact with them except when we had a couple of dinners up there. They took us up to the castle and we had dinners and that. But the people of Shropshire, they were too busy with the war to be socialising and it was a long way from Shropshire to Chatham.

03:30 But they were interested and kept in contact. And then during the war we used to contact various people. The Lord Lieutenant, he was the fellow that was concerned.

Why do you think it was so important to them, that the ship remained the Shropshire?

Well it was like everything else, when I say what's your father's name? Would you like to maintain his name?

04:00 The Shropshire was the only ship called Shropshire ever named in the RN [Royal Navy] after the Shropshire so they were quite pleased to have it. Now, like next week the HMAS Canberra comes in next Friday, and I've been invited down there to go aboard because I'm a survivor of the other one. And – they took a lot of pride in the name. Yeah, that trip on Friday, there's a chap down the coast,

04:30 he's a hundred years old and he served on the Canberra before the war and they invited him up to come aboard the ship on Friday. There's about 12 of us going down to it, and all we could find up here was three survivors. There's the brother-in-law, myself and another fellow. And there's a couple up the coast and three or four down the coast, but there wouldn't be any more than say eight or nine in Queensland. And

05:00 after the ship got hit there was about, I think it was 19 or 20 or something, quite a few of us. It'll be good. I've got a whole heap of memorabilia to take down to show them. That's the thing I gotta worry about, all these people come looking at the memorabilia and you lose half of it.

I wonder if they'll let you go and have a look at the galley?

Oh yeah. Tell you what, it's a bit different now-days.

05:30 The galley we had, there was three steam coppers, double jacket coppers, that was a jacket went within one, and steam running through in between. Now that was the method of cooking, those three big coppers, they would've been about 50 gallons I should imagine. There was a steam press, a wire basket used to go in and you'd turn them on and cook. And the big range. The range would've been about 12, 15 feet

06:00 across and it was fired by oil. And with the steam press the cooks on the Shropshire were the ones who found out how to pressure cook. It happened one day, we put the potatoes in the steam press and they used to take about 20 minutes at a certain pressure, anyway something had happened, a potato had got down in the exhaust, the steam used to run through, and

06:30 a potato got caught in the exhaust and the thing built up. And somebody went in and the steam, instead of reading what it should have read, it read about two or three times that amount. So we straight away turned the steam off and cooled it down and opened it up and the potatoes were cooked in about ten minutes. So after that we used to put the potatoes in, stuff up the exhaust, turn it on for twelve minutes and take them out. And they used to make

07:00 sponge puddings like plum duff and all that sort of thing and they used to make them in the steam press. And the galley, a big oil fuelled galley, had a big tray that would've been about four feet by two feet, you used to cook the meat and that in, and during action stations you couldn't use them because the fuel was in a ready-to-use tank up on top, and they were frightened that if a shell hit it all the oil would come down and set fire to the galley.

07:30 So you couldn't use the range in action time. There were four action cooks, I was one of them, there were four leading hands and we had these three coppers and one was full of chai, like coffee – chocolate like, and the other was full of meat, it was fresh meat the first day or so of the action and then after that it was bully beef and that sort of thing, and the other one was vegies. And during action there was no times for meals,

08:00 they could come any time and get a meal. And they had to have these little funny little trays and they used to cover them with grease-proof paper. They used to come and used to get their coffee and their chai and the meat and that and take it back to their station. I used to bake about three or four days of

bread and there was a free run on the bread. Tinned butter and then there was milk and all that sort of thing, all readily available, so during action time

08:30 they didn't do too badly. One time there we were closed up for a thirty days on end. Up at Lingayen, first degree all that time. And we had to keep the feed up. The butchers shop used to be on the upper deck and they used to put the ready to use stuff in the butchers shop, all the tinned stuff and all that sort of thing, used to go and draw it from there and cook it. As I said before there were no cold rooms,

09:00 all you had was ready to use, cook it that day, send it down to the cafeteria and that was it. You couldn't cook ahead or anything, which made it very hard to cook.

As a leading chef, did you have to work out how much you ordered for each day? Can you talk me through that?

The set up in the navy is you've got a chief cook, and you've got a petty officer cook, and you've got a leading hand

09:30 and then you've got the cooks. The leading hand and three or four men constitute a watch and they work in three shifts. The one come on at eight o'clock in the morning, they peel their own vegies for the lunchtime and then they stay and do the supper and the breakfast the next morning. That's the one shift. The other shift comes on at

10:00 eight o'clock in the morning and they get the lunch, they actually prepare the lunch, serve it and they're finished. And the third one, they're off duty. So you've got the three watches, that covers the whole day. The meat had to be cooked at four o'clock in the morning and all out by eight o'clock so that the shift coming on could carve it, and keep in mind they had to feed 900 people so that's quite a bit to carve, carved in dishes and

10:30 covered up and be put in the steamer and heated up. And then the roast potatoes, used to have the roast potatoes in the range, and then you had to be careful not to have apple pie and roast potatoes the same day. If you had roast potatoes you had to have a wet dish, like creamed rice or something like that, and when the stores got short, they went on to dry stores and that was the bully beef and

11:00 things like navy beans and spaghetti and all that sort of thing, dry stores. That's when they used to get unhappy. It was terribly monotonous, it was filling and it filled the bill but the monotony of it. Bully beef, we used to do bully beef in about a dozen different ways. We used to put it between pastry, we used to serve it as a stew, used it serve it with stew and vegies, serve it cold with a

11:30 salad if any salad was available and then – we used to have all these different ways of serving it. The sailors weren't too bad, you used to get a clique like, a clique used to start moaning about food, they'd be a bit homesick or something and they'd straight away worry about the food. But the navy have four meals a day, there's breakfast, there's lunch and then there's at four o'clock there's teatime. And you used to get bread, butter,

12:00 jam and well it might be a rock cake, then tea and milk and that sort of thing and then six o'clock was supper. Used to get supper, that'd always be a hot dish. So there's four meals a day in the navy and with the bread I had to keep the bread a day ahead. And what I baked today was used tomorrow. And the idea behind that was if you served it down hot, it finished up they'd eat a loaf each. So we used to have it

12:30 served a day old. And then any small ships, they had a call on the bread, they could come along side and demand bread if necessary, they'd come and say, "Give us a hundred pound of bread." They used to pay a penny a pound, but the thing that used to happen was, you'd sell a hundred pound of bread and then the next day you'd have to be serving some fresh bread and you'd be a couple of days catching up. Yeah, a penny a pound.

13:00 **How much bread did you bake a day?**

Roughly half a pound a man, it'd be about between four and five hundred pound a day and that was in 150 pound bags.

So how much bread would go into the ovens you had? Like how many different…

It was quite a good oven, it was what they called a four tray oven, cancel that, six tray oven, that's ordinary trays. And it'd

13:30 hold about 200 pound of bread altogether. Electric and quite efficient, really good. They had a big base on them and then the bakery used to bake off a lot of the stuff for the galley, apple pies and things like that. Every Friday used to be boiled eggs and bread roll, used to make bread rolls and serve the boiled egg

14:00 with them. And of course, you know the story with eggs, you take them on board and an egg should be turned every day because the yolk gets nearer the shell and it sticks to the shell and when you break them it's a mess instead of the yolk being in one piece. So for the first week or so you serve fried eggs, and then the second week scrambled eggs, then the third week when things are getting a bit shaky, curried eggs.

14:30 And then they're fresh out. We used to have a good system to sort out any bad eggs that happened, we used to have a long piece of drainpipe, used to crack them at the top and they'd slide down and you'd have time to catch them if they weren't the best. But just imagine fried eggs for 900 people, that's 1800 eggs. Now a fried egg is pretty hard to keep

15:00 from going hard or anything like that, and the way we used to do it, we had a big tray with indentations like a cake tray, and we used to have a paint brush and a thing of fat, paint it over, break the eggs into it and then as soon as the bottom of the egg set, the top'd still be clear, we used to take them out with a flat spoon and put them on to one of these trays on grease proof paper and then pack them aside. We used to start frying them about

15:30 half past three, four o'clock in the morning, start frying the ones for breakfast, you'd pile them all up, have them all stacked up in suitable places, and then when they served them, you had your steamer hot, you put the tray in the steamer and the steamer would cook the top of them and just cooked too, and then you'd take them out and regulate them as to how fast they were going through the cafeteria and send them down and everyone got a nicely fried egg. Worked quite good.

16:00 And then with the scrambled egg, you'd make up a great big container full of the egg and milk and all the various things, and you'd have these trays on top of the oven, big trays, and you'd get a dipper full of this liquid and pour it in and scramble the eggs and send that down, and clean it up and then put the next lot in. And then they had the dried egg,

16:30 but we used to jazz them up with bacon fat, when we had bacon, we'd keep the fat and we'd add that to them. And sometimes we'd put onion through them, anything to take the taste of the dried egg off them. The dried onions was good as fresh onions, we used to soak them and get all the soda off them and we used to fry them. Fried onions were quite good with steak and that when we had steak. They were quite

17:00 good meals and they used to take on the stores, and the fresh stuff would last three or four weeks. And they had the big freezer for the meat, and they'd put a side of beef in and wrap it up and put the next side of beef in and when they came out they'd be, you know. Always had a lot of butter, there was always tons of butter on board. And for when times got a bit hard, there was ghee, that was a butter in a tin

17:30 and so they never ever went short of fresh bread, fresh butter and jam. They always had that of an afternoon. And every meal there was bread for them. We still used to get the whingers, but generally speaking they all understood it wasn't the quality of the food or anything, it was the monotony. They'd come up and say, "What's for breakfast tomorrow morning?" "Scrambled eggs." "Oh no, not scrambled eggs." We used to do spaghetti and all that sort of thing.

18:00 **You spoke before about bully beef and trying to do it different ways, in your opinion, what is the best recipe that you did with bully beef?**

Half the war I worked at the Riverstone Meatworks and the beef there, the bully beef was pure beef. There was very little fat and it was cooked, put in the tins and then cooked in the tins and it was

18:30 100% meat. Now it was quite good to eat, except of course for the monotony. But the best way to eat it of course was sliced, like cold, and sliced. And to obtain that you had to time it according to the weather. When you got it up from the cold room, the butcher would get it up and he'd deliver it at the galley and then at about half past ten, quarter to eleven you'd start to carve it. And you'd be carving while they were going through for the meal. I think that's the best way,

19:00 but then again it's quite nice between pastry, it's quite good.

You spoke earlier about a little pastry that you invented yourself, can you tell us about that?

I invented that down at Flinders Naval Depot. The fellows used to go on leave and they'd go up the line and have a few drinks, they'd get the train that night, they'd go off at about nine o'clock in the morning and then have a few hours in Melbourne and then they'd get hungry through the night and there probably wouldn't

19:30 be anywhere to eat, so they were always complaining about something to eat so I thought there's a way out here. So I finished up and made what I called a double ended 'titiogee'. Now a titiogee is a pasty, that's the ordinary pasty folded over, meat vegies, so I made them about a foot long and perhaps a bit more, quite big, a couple of inches across. At the one end I put the mince, at the other I put apple, or sometimes apricots, anyway, just whatever we could sort of

20:00 get out of the galley and used to make these and used to wrap them up in paper of course, in the grease proof paper, and we used to get two and six a time for them. And the sailors would get them, they'd have them in their ports or kit bags, they'd open up their kit bag, they'd nibble a bit off the one end, turn them around and have their sweets, then fold it up and put it away for the next time. They were quite a big hit. That's another thing I used to serve quite often, was titiogees, we used to make them

20:30 for the sailors and they'd have them on a plate with vegies. And on the Australia they used to make the titiogees for action stations, make hundreds of them. And that used to be their action food like you know, how the ships used to do sandwiches, bully beef sandwiches.

What was your action stations food?

In the galley. In the Canberra, I was in the magazine but.

Sorry, what did you serve them, the men, did the Canberra have a specific action stations food?

21:00 No. The Canberra was… what did they have there? I just forget exactly what they had in the Canberra but it would've been stuff made up and served out at mealtime, served out of the tray, go to the galley and get it, that sort of thing. Each post would have so many men, they'd come in and say, "Number one turret." So many men, do it that way. But the Shropshire, we had the four action cooks

21:30 and the three coppers and the steamer and we used to have no set time, whenever they got hungry they'd come and get stuff. A bloke'd bring his tray up and say, "Give us stuff for four will you mate?" And away they'd go, and there were four. Some fellows were quite inventive, some made up a canvass sleeve to go over the tray. They'd get their food and put it in this canvass cover and that'd keep it hot until they got to the various places, because as I

22:00 said before, that ship was 620 feet long, the size of two football fields. The galley was up forward and the fellow down aft, he'd have a long way to walk before he even got back to his station. I think they were pretty well fed during the war. There was the one case of malnutrition. And then one time there, they all broke out in hives and they blamed the food, but it was about 100 degrees and it was caused mainly through the

22:30 body heat. It wasn't the food at all. But you couldn't tell the sailors that.

What were the working conditions like in the galley? Was it extremely hot or was it pretty good?

Extremely hot, there was no air conditioning, the whole ship wasn't air conditioned. For the cafeteria itself where the sailors eat, it was quite a big part of the ship, across the middle of the ship, quite big. And the engineers went

23:00 ashore one time and got a lot of piping, water piping and they put it around the side of the ship, they had a pump rigged up and they used to pump it and the water used to run down the side of the ship. And that wasn't too bad. Then they had the ports, the ports'd be open most of the time. They weren't told you had to keep them shut, but the ports'd be open and you'd get a bit of breeze in that way. And then in the galley itself, of a morning, you used to have to close up for action stations and that meant

23:30 that you had to close all the doors and all the hatches at the top and everything, and it'd be all sealed up and during this time you'd be cooking the meat, and to turn the meat, you had to go and turn it on, the heat used to be unbearable over about four feet like. You used to get, the higher you get the hotter it gets, you used to have to go in on your hands and knees, undo the oven door, pull the trays out and turn the meat

24:00 and crawl back again. And we complained about this because we said, "Why can't they open the hatch and have someone standing by and if anything happens they can drop the hatch." They said, "no that is no good." So one morning there, we inveigled the pay master, he was our boss, we inveigled him up to the galley and we put him inside and shut the door and locked it and he was pinned in there and afterwards he was very sympathetic towards

24:30 our complaint, but we still had to do it the same way. I'll never forget that, we locked him in there and he come out covered in sweat and that. But generally speaking the galley was on the upper deck. And that's another point, during the bombardments, the ship used to shake of course. They'd fire these eight 8 inch guns like this, fire them broadside and that and the stokers would come up after the operation and they'd be covered in this white powder,

25:00 and it was the asbestos. And the asbestos was laying on top of the various motors and that, in the engine room, and when they bombarded, it used to fly everywhere. They used to come up brushing this stuff off, and the navy denied for quite a time that there was no asbestos caused things in the medical thing, fellows were

25:30 going down with asthma and all that sort of thing, but they changed their mind afterwards. The asbestos was loose, but they said, one fellow put in for a pension and he said, "The food was contaminated, it was dropping off the pipes that ran through" – they were insulated with the asbestos and he said, "The asbestos was dropping off the pipe." But that wasn't right because the asbestos was put on in like a rope around it

26:00 and then on top of that was a hessian, the same as they have in potato bags, that was put round it and wired and then we had about 14 coats of paint on it. There was no way there'd be any asbestos in the galley, but on some of the mess decks, there was parts where it leaked. And as I said before, the stokers used to come up from down below and they'd be brushing it off them. And it's a big thing now to get the pension through the asbestos.

26:30 Anyone whose got a pain in the chest reckons they've got asbestos.

Can you talk about hygiene in the galley?

Oh yeah, that was strict. It was – just imagine the set up of the galley, all sailors, a few people did come from cafes, some were café cooks, a couple were bakers, a couple of pastry cooks, a couple of fellows – one was a – a couple were merchant sailors,

27:00 and they were all conscious of the trouble that any fool could cause. And you'd go up of a morning, had to show your hand, fingernails and they'd have a look at them and made sure. You couldn't wear a Jackie Howard's thing, you had to wear one with sleeves in it otherwise the perspiration it would drop into the food. And you had to have clean boots. And there's a terrible lot of bakers and cooks ashore have never ever cleaned their boots, but in the navy you had to do it.

27:30 And you had to wear a long apron, if you wore shorts you had to have an apron down to your ankles, and they were very strict on that. The doctor used to come up every now and again and inspect around the place to see if there were any cesspools of... causing, you now. But no, they were pretty strict on that. And there was never a food poisoning case on the ship ever. And that's not bad for 2,700 meals a day.

28:00 No it was a pretty good life. Personally I felt as though I was doing something worthwhile. I was using my trade and I was one of those who worked every day. The seamen used to get afternoons off and they'd come in in the afternoon. They'd work from eight o'clock in the morning until midday and have the rest of the day off. But they still come up for their meal of a night time, had to be fed. And there was a few privileges for the cooks,

28:30 we used to get off at nine o'clock in the morning. The general leave used to be one o'clock. We used to get off at nine o'clock in the morning, what they called watch keepers leave. Used to go off and be there for when the pubs opened at ten o'clock. The cooks used to have a good thing. A few times when we were here in Sydney, we used to make up a big heap of sandwiches and put them in a box and to smuggle them ashore we had various ways to get them ashore. We used to go up to the Wynyard Hotel and

29:00 we used to go down the ramp and go to a bar there, there'd be about ten or fifteen of us, and we'd put the sandwiches on the bar and eat and drink at the same time. And by doing that you don't get drunk. You get very merry, but you don't get drunk. And then at two o'clock, they used to throw us out on the ramp, lock the doors to clean the place up. And we used to lay down on the ramp and go to sleep and at four o'clock they'd wake you up for

29:30 another session. That went on in the days before I met me wife. And I was ashore one night and met her, and it was Saturday night at a dance, and I met her and she was 16, wasn't even 17, 16 she was and the first time she'd ever been out, out on the loose like you know, and this girlfriend of hers had taken her. Anyway I make arrangements to meet with her

30:00 the next day and I met her and she said, "They want you to come home for tea." And I thought that's not a bad idea. So I went home for tea and the old fellow, the old father-in-law and I struck it straight away. He was in the lodge, he was an ex-digger, first war, and he summed me up and he said when I was going, he said, "There's a spare room here," he said, "if you ever think you'd like to come and sleep the night you can stay." So I

30:30 moved in, and I moved in for about two years. And I always intended on getting married but my idea was to wait until the war was over because I'd been on the Canberra and it'd been sunk and I thought to myself it could happen again, can't be lucky all the time. And anyway, me mate Doug Blainey, he was in the bakery with me, and he said, "Any more at home like that?" And I said, "Yeah, got a twin sister." So he said, "Take me out." So I took him out and he got along well with the old man.

31:00 So the two of us used to live out there when we were in Sydney, used to live out at Leichhardt. Anyway he finished up, he decided to get married so I said, "Right, we'll get married too," so we had a double wedding. I think there's a photo there somewhere.

We can have a look at it later since you're all hooked up there.

So anyway we got married and then, we got married on the Saturday and on the Wednesday

31:30 they decided to finish the war in Europe and we met up with, we went down to the local hotel to have a beer and we met up with some fellows we were over in England with. And they had a fighter based in Bromley, just south of London and we used to see them quite regularly, used to play hockey with them. Anyway we stayed at the pub a lot longer than we should have and very nearly divorced the first week, and anyway went back home and got called to sea on the Friday.

32:00 So we had a week's honeymoon, and we went up top there for nine months, nearly nine months. There's three of ours stayed away most of the time – during that time, except for one run in Manila, was the only time I ever got ashore in that nine months. On the ship the whole time. They had tons of entertainment, they had a section of every part of the community, there was boy scouts,

32:30 there was rangers and debating clubs and pistol shooting and did everything, just a matter of whatever you wanted to join.

Just speaking of entertainment, before you mentioned there was horse racing on board the ship.

Someone got the idea we should have a race meeting. They come up with the idea, they had a rod it would've been about ten foot wide and about eight or nine horses on it.

33:00 And the rod had like big cotton reels on it and a thin cord running to the block of wood on which there was a horse on the top. And they'd take that down about twenty feet. And a fellow with his back towards the horses would wind the handle and as he wound the handle, the rope would either come and go evenly and the horse would move slowly or it'd pile up on the end and the horse would move quickly. So anyway, they used to, they had

33:30 a totalisator, they had a tote bet, used to go and get your ticket and everything and every horse had a name and one was 'Projectile Out Of Gun by Cordite' and that sort of thing. They had all these various horse names and then they'd pay the percentage to the canteen fund and the rest was divided among first, second and third. And they used to have those meetings and there'd be about five meetings in an afternoon Wednesdays to Saturdays.

34:00 And there'd be all the chat around the tote and they'd be talking about who'd win on Saturday and all the usual carry on like the same at the horses. Then we had deck hockey, used to play deck hockey and the cooks used to play the stokers and the stockers would play the seamen and so it'd go on and on. Boxing, used to pop up now and again, used to get the Yanks over and belt them. And then a couple of times there was a few

34:30 recreation islands in the Pacific, used to take it off, used to play the Yanks baseball and beat them every time. The thing we used to beat them most at, there was grid iron. They used to turn up in the tropics, it'd be about a hundred, hundred and twenty degrees and they'd have their helmets and their great coats and their pants and everything and the navy used to turn up barefooted and shorts. They used to

35:00 race at us and we'd give them ramp because they went past and we had a hell of a time, but we used to beat them every time. But it was all good fun.

Just going back to the horse racing, what were some of the names the cooks gave their horses?

I can't remember.

Or even some of the names that some of the others…

As I said before, 'Projectile Out of Gun by Cordite', that was one, and

35:30 'Bully Beef Out of a Tin by Can Opener', and all these sorts of things, they just made up whatever'd come out of their mind. But they used to be registered and everything. You had to be registered and they'd put the fields up on the wall, a lot – it was all done in good fun. And then every day in the lunch hour, they'd have housie like Tombola, I think that's the same, like Housie at Bingo and they used to run that every day.

36:00 And you used to have to put in to be able to run that and you kept a percentage to yourself, it wasn't terribly big but you kept a percentage to yourself. I ran that a couple of times. And there's a couple of firms on board that weren't legal, there was one there, 'a pound for 25' and you could borrow a pound and you had to pay back 25 shillings. And I had an experience of that down at Flinders, that Cec Ashton, I was telling you about, he was a wiz man and he said,

36:30 "We'll start a money lending business." And we started this money lending business and mind you the wages those days, an assistant cook was on about three pound ten a fortnight and we were getting five pound ten a fortnight, and he said, "We'll start this business." So he said, "Alright a pound for 25." So fellows would come and they'd say, "Give us a quid," like we'd put them down in the book, and then payday they'd come around and they'd pay us. One bloke came one day and he said, "I want twenty bucks."

37:00 It was like asking for a fortune so we said, "Sorry, we can't do it mate." He said, "I want it bad." We said, "What for?" He said, "I'd rather not discuss it." So anyway it finished up we knocked him back, we wouldn't give it to him because those days everybody was on the verge of being sent away. It was down at Flinders like, you know. So anyway it finished up, on the Sunday morning, this fellow was up at St Kilda and he got dressed up in his uniform and everything, waded out to sea

37:30 and kept wading. Committed suicide. So we found out afterward, he had a girl in trouble in Tasmania and that's what he wanted the money for. If we had've known we would've given him the bloody money. That's what happened to him. So that's what happened to the money lending business. But this Cec Ashton, he was what they called the Regulating Cook and his job was to elect those to go on draft.

38:00 If you owed us money you didn't get a draft. So a lot of shrewdies used to borrow money and then not pay it back so they wouldn't get a draft. But he finished up, he decided it was time he got out of Flinders and he, Cec Ashton and another fellow, they went across to England to pick up two Q-class, Quickmatch and Quiberon, and they went away about six months before I did, and they joined the ships over in England.

38:30 And when the Shropshire was coming back from England, we called at Durban and I went ashore and there was a queue for a café and I'm on the end of the queue, and at the other end of the queue I could hear this bloke singing out and I thought Cec Ashton. "Ye gods, Ted Trappett here, come up here." And

this bloke, he had his finger on the pulse all the way along the line, he knew everybody, he knew the head waiter and he said, “What do you want?” He said, “We’ll be in in a minute.” And so I joined up with him and away we went. Sit down at the table and, “What do you want, the usual?”

39:00 Steak, eggs and … and so I struck him then. And after the war him and Cec Ashton bought – Cec Ashton had married a girl, I was his best man and someone, Cec Ashton was the best man and I was the groomsman and Austin married this girl and when the war was over her father gave him a bakery. He was a cook and he

39:30 got this bakery and Cec Ashton was a taxi driver at one part of it, and he put his taxi on chocks during the war, put in to draw a taxi and he drew one, so he had two taxis. So they sold the taxis and the bakery and they bought a big ranch up at Tamworth and raising sheeps and that. And then they finished up they went into horses, and they had Miss Shropshire and Miss Canberra and Miss… and they had all these

40:00 horses. They did quite well with them. And then Bob Austin turned bad, he started juggling the bloody the winners, he was winning when he shouldn’t have and all sorts of things so they parted. And I lost sight of Cec after that turn in Durban and I met up with him again. I was at Riverstone Meatworks, I used to work on the side there, shiftwork. And they were talking about this Cec Ashton, I said, “What sort of bloke’s

40:30 this, baldy bloke?” They said, “Yeah, yeah.” And it was the same fellow and he had a property at Riverstone and he was ploughing fields. He had a tractor and he was doing contract ploughing and so I met him again. And that had a sad ending. He got sick and he went to Blacktown Hospital and he hadn’t spoken for a week and I’d been in touch with his wife and I went to see him and stood at the bottom of the bed and said, “Ashton, wake up.” And he woke up and said, “Ted Trappett.” And died. Died on the spot.

41:00 And the last word he said was “Ted Trappett.” But he married, he’d been divorced like, from the first girl, and he married Colonel Robertson’s daughter, in Brisbane. He married her. Yeah, I’ll never forget that.

Tape 4

00:01 **You’re in the Cameron Highlanders and you decide to join the navy, can you remember what it was that made you decide to want to join the navy?**

There were several reasons, the first, the foremost reason was all my friends who were in the Cameron Highlanders, not all but most of them, they transferred to AIF and they were on their way over to the Middle East. And here I am still at Redbank,

00:30 waiting to have a call to the navy, waiting for a call to anywhere. So anyway Ernie, there were two mates, Ernie and Graham, Ernie was a butcher and his cousin was a major and he formed the miscellaneous branch of the AIF with the army service corps and he wanted a sergeant butcher, so Ernie joined as a sergeant butcher, straight off as a sergeant.

01:00 And Graham had had the benefit of secondary school and he decided to have a go at the air force and he become a wireless air gunner and I used to meet him in Melbourne every so often. He went to the Middle East and he was flying in Sunderlands and the Bay of Biscay and North Africa and he was in Burma, he was everywhere. So while this was happening, I’m still at Redbank, still waiting for my call to the navy see. So I thought to myself

01:30 early in the piece, that one in the air force, and one in the army, the navy would be the obvious thing. So that was one angle towards it. The other angle was, a friend of mine lived up the road from my place, a girl it was and she says, “George is coming home on the weekend.” And this George was on the Australia and they’d just come back from England. So I go up there and George arrives and he’s got these bags and bags of this stuff he’d bought over in England, and all these souvenirs and photographs

02:00 and I thought that’s for me. So I thought well, the navy. So combining those two together was perhaps the real cause of me joining the navy. But also we did a camp in the Cameron Highlanders, we marched from Ipswich to Marburg in kilts in summer and we camped out in the open and of a morning there, they used to call us of a morning and they had this long couch grass,

02:30 and we’d been through it and cleared off all the rubbish from it and of a morning we had to strip off and roll in this grass instead of a shower, there was no water available, we used to roll in this grass and then towel yourself down and start the day off. And I thought to myself, that’s for the birds. So I wasn’t terribly impressed, and the other thing was, being a machine gunner, I looked at the gun and I thought to myself first in last out, I don’t know if I’m even that brave or not. So

03:00 that was another contributing factor. But always had a liking for the navy, when the ships used to come in and I used to go down and go aboard them. I remember one time, a German ship came in and a fellow lived behind us, he got an invite for he and his son and his wife to go aboard. His son was about four or five and he said, “There’s not much good taking him, would you like to come and be my son.” So

I went aboard this Coldrule [?] and

03:30 all the guns were covered up but they took us down below and they treated us to a film of all the German preparation for war, they had all the soldiers and sailors and all the aircraft and everything, they even finished up with people carrying picks and shovels and the whole lot. It was a propaganda affair and I was really impressed with that. Tied up in the Brisbane River. Yeah, I'll never forget that, this fellow, he had a German name, Lenz

04:00 His name was: L.e.n.z. And the night war broke out, he got his truck out and away he went, all loaded up with gear at about two o'clock in the morning. What he had I don't know. But those Germans, they were very cunning before the war you know. Before the war, like '38, '39, the first of the big radios came into town and you could buy these radios, you could pick up Germany,

04:30 you could pick up England, you could pick up all these sort of things. And this Albert bought a set and he said to me one day, he said, "I've picked up Germany." I said, "Oh yeah," big deal like, you know. He said, "They want me to write to them." So he writes to them and they send him back a story of the Germany, as it was today, how things are going well, a photograph of the local police station, a photograph of the local post office and a photograph of

05:00 whatever was around the town. So what did Albert do, he writes back and sends a photo of the post office, a photo of everything and that's the way they got their information. Yeah, they did that pretty heavy and then that Von Luckner, he came out in his yacht and they made a fuss of him, he toured around Australia in his yacht and what he was doing, he was depthing the water and everything on his way around. And then

05:30 when the time come, they were able to lay mines in the Bass Strait and all around Australia. As a matter of fact we couldn't go through Bass Strait during the war, you had to go around the bottom of Tasmania, right down the bottom because it was so heavily mined.

So what did you think when you finally got the word from the navy that you could come on in?

I thought here I go.

06:00 The thing was, they impressed upon me, they'd taken me particularly because I was a qualified baker. So anyway, the next thing the Master at Arms came around, I'd joined on the, signed up on the Wednesday and on the Friday this Master at Arms come around and he said, "I want a cook for the Cowan Cowan," the signal station on Moreton Island. And I said, "I've only just joined." "Doesn't matter," he said, "you can go." So away I went. And when I got down there, there was an army hut, two army, three army huts

06:30 and the one was the galley and anyway, there was a fellow sitting on the seat in front of the stove with his feet in the oven and he had, I said, "What's on for lunch?" This was about eleven o'clock. I said, "What's on for lunch?" He said, "Tripe and onion." I said, "Good." So I said, "Where is it?" He said, "In the pot there." He'd cut the tripe into four inch squares, the potatoes were in their jackets and the onions were whole.

07:00 And that was it, you came in and you got a square of… I said, "What's this?" and the jacket potatoes. I said, "Oh crikes." So anyway I shut the galley door and I cut the whatsit, made some white sauce, peeled the potatoes and mashed them and made a bit of a meal. And when the fellows came for their meal, "We've got a real chef on," they were real happy. I was there for about two or three months I think it was altogether and in the meanwhile the bread used to come

07:30 down from South Brisbane, baked in the afternoon, put in flour bags and put down the wharf at North Quay and then it was put on as upper deck cargo on the Mirimar and taken down the next day. Up in the sea breeze and everything all the way down, and by the time it got down it was stale. So I thought right, have to do something about this, so I went over to the army and the army had the fortress engineers there, had 200 people

08:00 there and they were getting their bread the same way. So I had a talk to the WO [Warrant Officer] there and then said, "How about we build a bakehouse oven?" So we got this square tank, it would've been about twice as big as that table, cut it in half, put a mound of sand, put the one half with the smooth up, put the other half on top, put a bit of a tilt on, made the flame and everything, made the bakehouse oven. So I finished up baking the bread for the army and the navy, and the army were feeding the navy.

08:30 And they used to go and get their feed and I used to bake their bread. So that went on until such time I could see I'd be there forever, so I went up to the bloke and I said, "Been made for bigger things mate," and he said, "What do you mean?" I said, "Well I'm a baker, I could be baking bread on the ships." So anyway I got a shift from there to Flinders Naval Depot and I got put on there as a temporary unpaid leading hand, the instructor.

So from the time you joined the navy

09:00 **did you do any basic training what-so-ever? Or was it straight to work?**

No. That was another thing. When I was down at the Flinders Naval Depot there was a chap called Charlie Pizzey. Charlie Pizzey had been in the army and he wasn't too happy with his prospect of getting

away either, so he joined the navy. So he and I got together up in Moreton, and Moreton was a ragtime place, it was a real family affair it was. There was old Mudguts Carter and there was Minnie the Moocher

09:30 and there was all these various officers, and you could do almost anything with them, so Charlie and I went to this Minnie the Moocher and we said, “What about we go to Flinders?” He said, “The petty officer can get on the ‘Spirit of Progress’,” and we were dressed as petty officers because the cooks had the collar and tie and the square rig. So anyway we got on the ‘Spirit of Progress’ and down we went to Flinders. And when we went to Flinders, reported to the regulating officer and he said, “There’s a class

10:00 just started this week, you’ll have to wait three weeks before you can get in the class.” We said, “What class?” He said, “The elementary.” We’d done that in the army. Anyway we talked our way out of it and we were put in this class and Charlie was the bloody class leader and I was one of the bunch and we finished that course and then started our cooking course.

You were mentioning about the jackets and that, can you tell us more about that?

10:30 In the very early days of the Royal Navy, there was four officers on the ship, the one was the captain, the one was the Mate, and one was the butcher – not the butcher, the carpenter and one was the cook and they all wore collar and tie. And then later on the dib-dabs got their uniform and that sort of thing and the cooks and the miscellaneous branch, there was the cooks,

11:00 the stewards, the writers and various other ones, the stewards had the square rig. There’s a photo there somewhere. And we wore the square rig the whole war. It’s been changed since, but that was the reason why we had the square rig, had black buttons and a red cap badge instead of a gold cap badge and gold buttons, we had black buttons and a red badge.

And how did that make you feel?

A million dollars. I went down to join the navy

11:30 in me kilt, no I had to put the kilt in and come back to join the navy and come home dressed up as a bloody officer they thought. They said, “What do you do?” “I’m a cook.” And a cook used to wear a gold star with a ‘C’ in the middle of it and that was the cook’s badge. But that was the outfit early in the war. And we wore that all the war. And then one part of it there, early in the war, we were issued with sun helmets.

12:00 The sailors got sun helmets and they cancelled that later on. And we had whites early in the war and then they changed that to khaki and that was a circus, they’d decided that they’d dye the whites khaki. Well you’ve never seen such a mess in all your life. Some come out purple, some come out all different colours in the washes, but they rectified it later on.

12:30 And we spent the whole war going to shore in khaki shirt, open necked shirt, khaki trousers, white gaiters and boots and the square rigged cap, and that was the dress during the war.

So on the Canberra for instance, how many staff would be working, how many people would be working in the galley?

We had a total of fourteen cooks, in the fore-noon, that’s eight o’clock til twelve

13:00 o’clock there were eight people employed, that’s not counting the supervisory petty officer and the chief cook, they were just there for the picnic, but there’d be eight cooks. And then one lot would be off, there were three lots of four. And then one lot used to get off at nine o’clock in the morning and then come back the next day.

Can you give me a

13:30 **typical day for you on board the Canberra from when you got up in the morning, that sort of thing?**

Wake up in the morning and there’d be wakey-wakey, that’d be six o’clock. Think it was six. Anyway wakey-wakey, it was six o’clock and everybody’s buzzing around the bathroom and we used to, our mess was up forward and used to get out in a pair of underpants and a towel over your shoulder and a little bag full of your

14:00 toothpaste and that sort of thing, go down and have the shower. Ordinary circumstances it’d be a fresh water shower but as the water got scarce, up top it was a salt water shower and then you could rinse off in the fresh water. Come back and breakfast and being cooks we weren’t subject to the lining up to the mess, we used to go to the galley and get a plate and a typical meal would be three or four fried eggs and five or six strands of bacon and three or four bits of toast like, go and have

14:30 quite a feast. Then if you were duty, you’d go and get dressed and you’d go to work. And if you was second duty, you’d go up and start peeling spuds. Navy cooks always peel their own vegies, and there’s a good reason for that. When sailors used to do it they only used to get half the product, they’d have big lumps of peel and that, but it wasn’t as bad as it seemed because we used to do about two or three bags at a time and put them in a

15:00 spud peeler, take all the skin off and you had to pick the eyes out, that's what it amounted to. Then you'd keep a count on them, you'd know how many you wanted and you'd just keep a count on them. Then, if you was duty watch, you'd start at eight and you'd finish at twelve, twelve o'clock and you'd walk out and the other crowd would come in, then you'd go down and get ready to go ashore one o'clock. Then one o'clock off you'd go and come back half past seven the next morning. If you was on the

15:30 duty watch you'd go into the galley at eight o'clock in the morning, peel the vegies, go off at about half past eleven, come back at twelve o'clock and take over, do the supper that night and do the breakfast the next morning. Cook the meat for the watch coming on. It was a pretty well-worn routine but you said before about who did the ordering and all that, the leading hands were like the sergeant in the army,

16:00 everything come back on you. You'd get the menu and you'd see that there was roast beef on, there's 900 people, there's four ounces a man and you'd work it out, you want so much beef, and then roast potatoes, you'd want 1800 potatoes, you work out all that sort of thing. You'd make out the chit, you'd show it to the petty officer and he'd sign it. And then it'd go down to the supply people and then the supply people, that'd be eight o'clock in the morning, the supply people'd get everything ready, you'd go down after twelve o'clock and

16:30 pick up all your stores, get them all up in the galley and check them off and everything. So it was more or less left to the leading hand to do the actual working out. But the petty officer's job, we had two petty officers, one petty officer all he did was carve meat, and if there was no meat on, if it was a stew on there was nothing for him to do and he'd skull around the galley. We had a chief cook, nice fellow, but navy trained,

17:00 he'd joined as a ordinary person and became a cook, then through time and seniority became a chief cook, and he found himself with a crowd of people. As I said before, there were merchant cooks, there were bakers, pastry cooks and all sorts of people well skilled in the job, as well as people just starting off.

17:30 Anyway this bloke used to interfere quite a bit. We all had our ways of doing things and that. So we called him in one morning and said, "Listen, the best thing for you to do is to get dressed up in your whites, appear about eleven o'clock, stand there with your hands under your shirt like and then disappear again about one o'clock and that's it." And he got the message and that's what he did. He just used to appear and watch what we were doing

18:00 and away he'd go. We had all sorts of tricks we used to get up to. In the morning you might have, say grilled tomatoes on, but we knew if you heated the ovens up about half past eight, nine o'clock at night, and put the tomatoes in, in trays, by the morning they'd be just nicely done. All you had to do was bring them up a bit with the heat and that was it. It was all things like that that the merchant ships -

18:30 merchant cooks and that taught us. We all were quick to learn, but gee it was a good job.

So was the galley was always manned by somebody even through those sort of dog hours?

Yeah. Oh, used to close up about ten o'clock at night, used to close up and then open about two o'clock in the morning and that was another thing. Another bloke and I, Jack Canare and I started off a dhobi firm, that's washing clothes. And this time they were wearing a

19:00 khaki shirt and khaki pants, so we decided we'd start this firm off. And so we used to go up the galley about nine o'clock at night, lock all the doors, clean out the coppers and put in all these bloody clothes and wash them all and then spring lines across the galley and the galley would be about 100 degrees and they'd dry as quick as you like, and there's another little room at the back with a table, we used to do the ironing there. Two and six a time, for the set.

19:30 We used to do 20 or 30 sets a night. Yeah, we had that on. But they would've died had they known we were boiling up the sailors clothes in the cooking coppers.

You were mentioning earlier about some other two and six ventures, there seemed to be quite a few on the ship, what other ones were there?

There was a firm there that used to patch clothes, if you got a tear in the clothes

20:00 or anything, they were the sewing firm and what else was there?

What about when you used to make your frames and things?

Yeah the photo framing, you'd get all the stuff from the gun… all the tins and that, and then with the x-ray films, hospitals keep them for so long. So we got some from the sick bay and we tried this secret formula P2W1,

20:30 that was two of Persil, one of water, we found out that would take it off. So we had this secret recipe. So we went to the hospital, I think it was Sydney and we told them the story and we got a sympathetic ear and this fellow brought out a box, he could hardly carry it, all this stuff. Kept me going for weeks. All I had to do was wash them off as I wanted them. And when they ran out we were able to pick out odds and ends.

21:00 Anyway, kept it going alright. Even the captain got his wife and kids framed up, didn't charge him. But we had a couple of funny incidences on board, there was a chap on board called Dusty Rhodes, of course his name was Rhodes he had to be Dusty. Dusty Rhodes, he had a conspicuous gallantry medal, that next to the VC [Victoria Cross]. He got it, he was on a ship over in France I think it was,

21:30 a destroyer, and it had gone in and was on its way out and it got hit and looked like sinking and he swum back to the ship and manned the gun and shot down a plane or two. So he got this DCM [Distinguished Conduct Medal]. Captain Collins was a terrific skipper, he was a marvellous navigator, he was everything but he was – he liked John, he was very much in love with John. So anyway, so much so of a night, when they had

22:00 their dinner at eight o'clock, nobody could eat until John took his place and they'd find themselves sitting around from quarter to eight, quarter past eight and no John Collins. So this night this major said, "Steward, bring my soup." The Steward said, "Sorry sir, the captain's not here." He said. "I don't care if the captain's here or not, bring my soup now." So the Steward brought his soup and served him and Collins come and he said, "What's this,

22:30 eating." And this major got up, he said, "When you get one of these," he said, "you can do what you like." So he had about twenty weeks in his cabin, confined to cabin, but that's the sort of bloke Collins was. Another thing Collins used to do, he used to be on the bridge during action stations and when it come to second degree, eight o'clock in the morning he'd go down aft to his cabin, have a change and a shower and go back to the bridge. Running in front of him was his runner

23:00 and he says, "Stand up, stand up, here comes the captain. Stand up, attention on the upper deck, here's the captain." Everyone had to stand up as John went past. So one bloke called Snowy Green, and old Snowy Green laying there, we'd been closed up for a week or a fortnight and everyone'd had it, so anyway this bloke comes along, "Stand up, stand up, it's the captain." And Snowy Green says, "So what." Anyway, Collins comes, kicks him in the ribs

23:30 then and there, he has to stand up and he finished up doing cells. And when Captain Collins got hit on the Australia, he'd only have the attention of the doctor or the chief sick bay, he wouldn't have any of the tiffys [?] around him. I'll never forget on the Canberra, we went over to this Barnett, and there was a sick bay on there and different fellows were there,

24:00 there was a paymaster lieutenant called Rose, Lieutenant Rose, he was a real good bloke, footballer, friends with the crew. So anyway, he had a bit of shrapnel with him here, it went in here, stopped there and he – he always swelled up down below and my job was to go of a morning and piggy-back him to the toilet. Had to go and get this bloke and

24:30 piggy-back him to the toilet, I'll never forget that, Lionel Rose, not Lionel Rose bloody, can't thing of his first name. But there was a bloke on the Canberra got hit, a bloke called Gore Jones. He was a Northcote boy and they brought him into the sick bay on the Blue as we were going across to the whatsit, and he had this big lump here and they said, "What's that?" And a piece of shrapnel had gone in his leg, gone right through,

25:00 missed the bone, missed the artery, missed the lot and stopped there. So anyway they had him on the table and the Yanks had this wonderful idea. In the galley was the range, and as soon as anything happened, they were able to put a cover on that and it was an operating theatre. They had all the lights and everything up above, and they had this scalpel and they just laid this fellow on, and they got the scalpel and just run it across and all of a sudden a bit of steel popped out. And I said to the bloke,

25:30 I said, "Can I have that bit of steel?" They said, "What for?" I said, "I know his wife, I'll take it home, she was in my class at school." So I took this bit of shrapnel off home to Jesse, and he'd been taken to New Zealand in the hospital ship and I went to see her when I went on leave. I said, "Old Lou got him, a bit of shrapnel hit him in the leg." "How bad?" she said. "Not too bad," I said, "went in here and come out here." "Oh gee," she said, "was it very big?" I said, "It won't fit in

26:00 this matchbox." It wouldn't fit in an ordinary matchbox. So I give it to her. He got it mounted up and everything. Yeah old Lou Gore Jones, he's still alive but his brother died. They were twins, they were on the ship as twins.

Was there many brothers that served on ships, that you know of?

There were some, but not many, it wasn't the usual thing. I don't think there'd been any more than four or five on the Canberra.

26:30 I don't think – they would've been different branches, like one stoker one seaman.

Can you tell me about when you were on the Canberra, at that time, you actually had your action station as apart from being a cook, can you tell me about that?

Yeah, well I was a cook firstly and I shared me time in the Canberra between the bakery and the galley. There was a lot of jealousy about being the baker though, they all wanted to be bakers, but there – I was the only one qualified.

27:00 I had me papers from the apprenticeship. And I – what was the question?

Just about your action station, your action job.

Oh yeah, my action station was in the magazine and it meant that when anything, when action station went, you had to go down about four or five decks, and I used to lift up this big hatch like and then 24 of you would go in, and they had all the cordite – there was one

27:30 lot against the wall there, and then two in the centre and then one on that side, there were six men on each one. One was the X-turret and one was Y-turret and they had like a half gallon, a half of a four gallon drum with the side cut out and they used to call for a quarter, half or full charge. When they called for that, you'd know which one to open up, you sent it along and they put it and turn it and then it'd go back to the other side and seal this side

28:00 sort of thing. And then it'd go up into the turret and so that was the job there. And we used to close up there and you'd be in there, locked in, no air conditioning and the trouble was they were frightened of sparks. You couldn't wear shoes, you had to have either sandshoes or rope soled shoes, soles made out of rope and generally you'd be in underpants or perhaps a pair of overalls, you might have overalls for a piller, and one of the first

28:30 mistakes you make is to go to sleep on a roll of cordite. You'd wake up with your head, you've got no idea, you'd get a headache for three or four days. So you soon woke up to that one, but you'd be all sitting around waiting for something to happen. And then when they started a fire, you could hear the, you could feel the tremor of the guns and everything and you'd have a fair idea what was going on. That's like the night I got hit, action stations went,

29:00 we got the cordite out and got it into the hopper, but it didn't go any further and then all of a sudden we could hear these vibrations, loud, and then at the end of that was a great big thing just like having your head in a four gallon drum and someone hits it with a hammer. We finished up we heard all these and we're all making an estimation as to what happened, we said, "Oh that's the guns firing." And then there was a big hit, we thought oh gee,

29:30 that must've been a torpedo or pretty near miss and we didn't have any true idea of what was going on. And then the next thing we knew the thing started to flood. And the sea cock was underneath all the whatsits, there's no way you could stuff a rag in it. It got up to about our knees and then, I gotta pay tribute to a bloke called Joe Fryer, he was a physical instructor, physical culture instructor, PCI [Physical Culture Instructor], and he was in charge of these 24 blokes,

30:00 and he stood there and he said, "Don't panic, don't panic. Passes shall provide." Passes is a name generally for the navy, "Passes shall provide." And we thought, yeah that'll be the day, this water's getting deeper. Anyway everyone stood their post and the next thing, up went this hatch, and you can imagine with the block and tackle how slow it'd be and the score was, the hatch was here, number one to six was there, number one to six,

30:30 and the number ones were first on the ladder and I was a number one, so I was about third on the ladder and a Steward panicked and he went up me back and the only thing I got his toenail scratched me down me back. And we got up top and when we got up top the first thing, I didn't have any shoes on, the first thing happened was the deck was hot where this shell had been spinning around and I got burnt on the feet and after a couple of days the skin

31:00 come off me feet, oh wasn't it tender for a while. It soon healed up like.

Was there any communication when you were locked in that magazine, was there any communication at all?

No. No speaker or anything. They had the emergency lighting on. No phone. It didn't improve much after the war either. I'll never forget one fellow, he was down at Flinders and he said, "What will the cooks do in time of action,"

31:30 And he said, "in the magazine?" This bloke went a real pale colour and he said, "What's wrong?" And he said, "That's what happened on the Hood, I got hit in the magazine." He said, "Only two got off then." But yeah the old magazine, it wasn't a punishment it was just that, even in action stations on a ship, there's so many people that do nothing. Like there's the damage control, all they are is in a compartment, just waiting to move if required.

32:00 If anything gets damaged well they control it sort of thing. And then the engine room staff are fully employed, they're pretty busy, but then you've got the magazine crew, they're all sitting around waiting for something to happen. Yeah, it's just a matter of a job for everybody and if anybody dropped out you'd know.

Apart from action stations, most of the crew on naval ships have two

32:30 **jobs don't they? What about the cooks?**

No, the cooks have got the bakery and the cooking, are their mainstayers, but then in certain times, they might be a spare number on an ammunition – a spare ammunition ship, a spare ammunition on a gun. The Oerlikans for instance, they've got to cart their ammunition from the locker to the whatsit, some have got to fill in there. But the action stations, I was

33:00 action cook and that was when things were normal and as soon as the stuff started to fly I had to go out, and there was a first aid kit outside the bakery and one outside the main galley, and I had to be at either one of those. I'll never forget that. The galley door was here and you used to go out there and over here was a big reel and it was the towing rope. Now a towing rope is about that round

33:30 and it was wound round this steel and covered with canvass. So I thought to myself, I'm pretty safe in here because if anything comes from that side I'll be protected by the whatsits and if anything from this side by the galley. Everything went alright until just toward the end of the war, they were assigned to tow a ship and they took this canvass off and there was a hole in the middle as big as this, and here I was all these years, I'd been hiding behind this bloody hole in the reel. I'll never forget that, I nearly froze

34:00 on the deck. Yeah, with the first aid, you had a ready aid satchel on your back with all sorts of bandages and shell dressings. There was a fellow on the Canberra, we were picking up between the deck, they picked up these, Monty Boyes, he was one of these fellows, he would've been about 18, 19 but he looked about 14 and he'd been hit across the stomach

34:30 and all his intestines had come out, they were all laying out on the open, so he goes along, he gets to the bottom of the gangway where they decided which way and the doctor's looking at him and he said, "Give us a go doctor," he said, "give me a chance." So they sent him up top and when they went up top he was laying there and I'd gone up and the doctor said, "Tear off a piece of that ground sheet about that big." They tore off the

35:00 groundsheet, they smeared it with Vaseline and they pushed this fellows stomach back in, put it on and put a shell dressing on it. So that was that, this was Monty-boys, so anyway, we went across to the Barnett and I get a message, Monty Boyes wants to see you down the sick bay. So I go down the sick bay and I says, "How you going Monty?" "Oh not bad." And I said, "What do you want?" And he said, "Give us something to eat. I haven't had anything to eat since I've been here." And I says,

35:30 "That's a bloody bad wound you got there." So anyway, I finished up, I mixed up a bottle of milk, powdered milk, and bread, shook it all up and I'm standing at the end of his bed with this behind me back and he's drinking it. So anyway that was alright and away he went, he was a Tasmanian. And after the war, on the Westralia and we went into Hobart and a woman come aboard and she said, "You're invited to a party tonight and he won't take no for an answer. A car will pick you up and you'll

36:00 go to the party." I said, "Whose party is it?" She said, "I'm not going to tell you." So I go down, get into the car and go down to this house, pull up, go in and get to the door and they blindfold me and take me in and I hear all these people talking and that. And someone says, "Take the blindfold off." And there at the top of the table is this Monty Boyes, he's sitting there and I said, "Oh gees, how you going Monty?" And he said, "Look at this," he said. And he pulled up his shirt and he's all blue and red and all scars and everything

36:30 and I said, "What have they done to you?" And he said, "Good as gold." He said, "They took me into the hospital" and the first thing they put his legs up on his stomach, he was stooped over and they took the skin grafts and that and they got his arms and put them across, took skin grafts and fixed him up. And he's good as gold. Yeah, Monty Boyes. And another fellow, he was mad this Switch and I knew the fellow, knew the girl

37:00 he married and he was married on the Saturday and we sailed shortly after, and I saw him on the ship, he was killed. What was his name, bloody, forget his name now. Yeah, I saw him. But there was 84 killed on there and mostly on the upper deck. There was 22 shells coming right in they made a mess of it. One exploded

37:30 in the galley and blew the galley to pieces and the sick bay underneath it. And we were fresh out of doctors for a while, only a few doctors around the place.

So when the galley got hit, did you know the guys that were there?

No, there wasn't a cook killed and Trevor Senate, one of my mates, he was in the galley, he was an action cook on the Canberra and he was in the galley, he came out of the galley and he put a dog on the door,

38:00 if he hadn't put that dog on the door it would've blown open and the explosion took place and he was on the other side. Wasn't even hurt. But there weren't any cooks killed on the Canberra. Just lucky. One of the big advantages of being down below the water line see. It was scary going down there, you had to go down all these decks and then go in and you'd hear this thing flop into position and putting the dogs

38:30 on it. It was frightening. But the fellow that turned the – flooded the magazine, he's still alive and we know where he is. And I was in the Dockyard Police down at the Boom Depot at Pinkenba and this fellow got drafted in. And they said, "This is so and so," they said, "he was on the Canberra." I said, "I know bloody well he was." He's still alive this bloke, 101, 102 he is.

39:00 Just goes to show you never know what's around the corner do you?

So when you're in action stations in that magazine room, what's the feeling amongst the men?

It’s a scary feeling, you get a feeling in your stomach, you wonder what’s going to happen next. You just sort of wait for something to happen and then when it doesn’t happen there’s a big relief. But see when you went in the magazine, it was enough of a fright

39:30 to get in there and get locked in, that was bad enough, you’d be thinking to yourself like, you know. And then when they sounded action stations, you knew something was going to happen and it was a different story again. And then you could hear all these bangs going on. Yeah, it gives you a funny feeling. I certainly wasn’t brave those days. Used to panic and of course there’s nowhere to run see, on a ship. There’s no safe places.

40:00 One poor bloke on board, a cook, he’d come back from the Middle East, he’d been on the destroyers over there and he was really bomb happy and they sent him to the Canberra. The Canberra had a lift well that used to come down, no that was the Shropshire, he was sent to the Shropshire, the lift well used to come down, a dumb-waiter, the food would come down and below that was a compartment about that big, it used to stop there.

40:30 And this bloke used to jump in there and hide in there. I thought Christ if anything happens you’d never get out. Yeah, old Speed.

Tape 5

00:31 **If we could go back to when you learned your trade as a baker and tell me about the craft of baking in those days, what it was like?**

It was rather primitive, each suburb had either one or two bakeries and they were either Protestant or Catholic, it was for strangers to work out - and the people used to patronise them. They made the bread and they used to deliver it with horse and cart

01:00 and perhaps a truck on some occasions, but mostly horse and cart. The lowest I can remember bread being was threepence ha’penny, that’s about seven cents isn’t it. And it was one of those trades that suddenly everybody had to have and the bakeries sort of worked it out and they were all making a living and all quite happy. The ovens were wood fired, they’d hold about three hundred loaves

01:30 and wood fired and the bakery I worked at had a rather new idea called a draw plate. It was two plates of steel on wheels, they used to pull out from the wall, load them up with the tins of bread and push them back in again. And it was fired from the rear through steam pipes, used to use coke and that and that was another way of baking bread. Every baker made his own yeast,

02:00 that was up until about 1936, ’37 because the compressed yeast started to come in. Everyone used to make their own yeast, and of a Thursday I used to have to stay back and help peel a bag of potatoes, we used to burn the flour off in the oven, brown the flour off so as it wouldn’t have any germs in it and boil the hops. The potatoes were boiled up and mashed,

02:30 they were added to the hop water and then the flour, the baked flour went in and then some old stock was put in and it was put away in the barrel and it used to take a week before it matured. And in the meanwhile – you used to have two barrels, one you were working on and the other one was making the yeast. And that was the method of making yeast in those days and everyone had a slight variation of that but it was more or less all the same. Small doughs, you used to make by hand like

03:00 the bun loaves, you’d only make about 20 or 30 bun loaves and you’d make them by hand. And that meant putting the water into a trough and then adding the flour and then you had to get down and turn it over. You had to get it all mixed up, spread it out and cut it backwards and forwards about three or four times and used to be quite a job I guess, finished up with white hair and flour all down your shirt and everything. Used to be a real messy affair.

03:30 And then a new invention came out it was starch reduced bread. And now it’s all done, the starch is taken out of the flour, but those days we used to have a trough, put water in it and add the flour and make a stiff dough out of it. And then in water, we used to wash the dough out and wash the starch out of the dough that way and throw it into a bin, and

04:00 that was the way that they made the first starch reduced bread. And it was a hell of a job, time consuming and everything, but then they learnt afterwards how to take it out of the flour. But that was one of the things that pioneered in those days.

What were the different types of breads that you made, because there are so many on the market these days?

So many on the market now but those days there was just the white bread; very few bread rolls the place I was at, they would’ve made any more

04:30 than three or four dozen bread rolls a day, just for a couple of cafes and that. But the loaves come, there was a roll loaf, that was a round one about that long, and then there were half rolls, you could break them in half, and then there was the tin loaf, that was like the – what do they call them, the Dolly Parton

[singer] loaves now days. They used to make them, they were a two pound loaf and quite a big loaf. That's about all the variation there was. Wheatmeal bread, you could get

05:00 wheatmeal brown and it was actually wheatmeal flour it wasn't just like it is nowadays which is mostly just browned off, they just put a bit of black seed in and make it that way, but those days it was proper wheatmeal flour. And what else about it?

What was the quality of bread in those days? Was it light, was it heavy, did it last?

Yeah, it was quite good. It lasted two or three days and it was just a matter of flour and water and yeast. There were very few additives. Some used to put milk powder in,

05:30 others used to put a little bit of shortening or some sort of a fat, but generally speaking it was just flour and water and yeast, and salt. And they used to make it, used to make a dough and the dough would have to stand about four or five hours before it rose up to the time when it was ready to take, and the dough'd be made, it'd rise up in the tray, you'd hit it with your hand and it would release all the gases and then it'd fall down again,

06:00 and then you'd wait another half hour, throw it out, you'd cut it into pieces, fold it up and put them in round pieces and then you'd come back again and put them in the tins. It was quite a process and each part of the process was regulated. You couldn't take it too soon, it had to just be on the right time. But mostly quite a good loaf of bread and that's about all on the…

06:30 You'd have the horse and carts and everyone had their horses and their carts and the carters used to come in of a morning, feed their horses, load up their cart with bread, put the horse in and away they'd go. And we used to start at five o'clock in the morning and the first heap of bread would be out by eight or nine o'clock and then away they'd go and do their afternoon – their daily run. Each cart would sell about 120 loaves of bread. And as I say, you'd

07:00 start off at threepence ha'penny, then four pence and five pence and away it went. But wages those days, I started on twelve and six a week, what's that $1.25 today? And two and six rise every six months and when I finished my time, I would've been due for five pound two I think it was, that was for a tradesman. And you got an extra couple of shillings for

07:30 running an oven if you were in charge of an oven. They used to use wattle in the ovens, used to buy it by the cord, pack it up outside and then the last job I had, I used to bring in all the wood and the kindling ready to start the ovens the next – the doughmaker used to start the ovens about one o'clock, two o'clock in the morning so they were able to be used about six o'clock. And coke, the coke had to be wheeled in. They used some coke

08:00 and then when the ovens got to the required heat, they had to be squeegeed out, that was a chaff bag on the end of a stick, used to put it in a kerosene tin of water, pick it up, push it down the oven, swish it around, that used to swish away any ashes that was in there and that, and they'd have a clean bottom for the bread to go on.

Did you say you used wattle?

Wattle was the best result, the best heat,

08:30 cleanest burning and the best heat. They used to get a tree about that thick and split it down the middle and dry them out. They used to have to buy the wood in, and they graduated then to oil burners. They're like a big blow lamp, used to blow down the oven and heat them up that way. It was quite an experience to get the oven because you had to have it just right, there was no second chance. If it wasn't

09:00 hot enough it'd show up, you'd be a quite a long time the oven. About 25 minutes used to be sort of enough to bake a loaf of bread. Used to have to work of a Sunday. Had to work Sunday from midday to about four o'clock to get enough bread for the early morning run on Monday and come in five o'clock Monday morning, and by eight, nine, ten o'clock you'd have all the bread out to serve the carts for the day.

09:30 I had to drive a horse and cart one time. I used to go around with a fellow of a Saturday morning on his run and he fell off the cart and broke his leg and I was the only one who knew the run. I was a boy of about 16 to 17 and used to sit up real high on those things and drive the horses and I'd never handled a horse in me life and into the bargain, this fellow used to be the fellow who broke in all the horses for the bakery and this one was a wild one.

10:00 Used to pull up at the customers place, jump out, lock the wheel and then run in and sing out "baker" and then take the bread, come back and had to take the lock off the wheel and jump up into the cart really quick. In the meanwhile the horse used to lash out and kick the snoop. And that happened every single time in the day. Every time you got out. Talk about – I had to do that for six weeks, it was one of the worst time of me life.

10:30 But with the distance, they used to travel, they used to travel in Brisbane from Nundah up through Clayfield across to Eagle Junction, back out through what is now Wavell Heights, to Zillmere Rd and back in again and anybody who knows the distance, that's a long way. And the customers wouldn't be too close together but there was quite a bit of opposition. And that was one of the runs I used to do.

11:00 **So in those days people didn't much come to the bakery.**

All delivered, yeah.

All delivered.

There was very few shops that sold bread, there was a couple that sold bread but very few. Most of the bakers called. Yeah it was, the milkman used to come twice a day those days, he'd come around in the morning, early morning before breakfast and put off milk and then in the afternoon he'd have what they called a warm milk run,

11:30 and then he'd come around in the afternoon. And he used to have a quart measure, you'd leave your jug out and they'd pour it in. And the cats used to get into it, the dogs used to get into it. Used to have a ton of fun. There was a rather amusing incident happened regarding a milkman, our milkman was a bloke called Mutt Riley. Mutt was a real larrikin like, one of those fellows about 30, full of beer every weekend, betting on

12:00 the horses, owned a couple of dogs, all that sort of thing. And every Christmas he used to turn up with two big fat Rhode Island red roosters. They'd still have their feathers on but their necks would be done. And he used to drop in every Christmas morning with two of these roosters and a bottle of wine. A bottle of wine for the mother and the roosters for the family. Anyway, come wartime and I was going through Anzac Square one day

12:30 and there's a bloke selling plonk out of a sugar bag, Mutt Riley. And I said to him, "Mutt, what are you doing?" "I just got back from the Middle East," he said, "I want to make a quid." So I said, "Tell me one thing, Mutt," I said, "where did those roosters come from?" So he said, "You know that house up the corner of Riley Rd, the Grimse's place. I said, "Yeah." And he said, "They used to have that fowl house down the back yard." And he said he used to get in there and do a bit of toe tapping. And I said, "What's toe tapping?" And he said,

13:00 "Well you get two sticks about that long and round and," he said, "you get in through the fence into the fowl house with all the roosters and hens along the perches and," he said, "you go to one, you put the stick beside its foot and then you tap it on the foot." And he said, "As you tap it, it moves away and moves onto the stick." He said, "You pick up the stick and you walk out, they're asleep." And he said, "They don't even wake up." And it's a fact, I've tried it. And he used to walk out, get down the road and screw their necks

13:30 and bring them around. But, yeah old Mutt, he was a real larrikin that one.

So after you finished your baking apprenticeship and you get into the navy and they say "right, you're going to be a cook," can you tell me what your thoughts were?

Well I tried to get away, like in respect I went down and joined the navy in '39 and they said come back, and they didn't call me until the August, and I was a bit toey. In the meanwhile, all the fellows are going away,

14:00 and they're right back from the Middle East and telling me what a time they were having in Cairo, and all this sort of thing. And I was a bit anxious to get away. So when the call finally come I was really pleased. I'll never forget it. I went down on the Monday and they said, "Alright sit the exam." The exam was a rough old thing. In the dictation the fellow said, "The farmer was in the field. (spells it out) f.a.r.m.e.r." this was the dictation.

14:30 And then they'd mathematics, a couple of ratios, that sort of thing. And I passed that and on the Tuesday I went and handed me kilts in, and then on the Wednesday I joined the navy, signed up, got me kit. On Friday got sent down to Cowan Cowan. So it was quite a relief to finally get in, and to be sent away so quickly was a bit of a shock.

The three weeks that you had training to be a chef, what did that entail?

15:00 There'd be about 30 cooks under training at Flinders Naval Depot and they'd take you on a special meal, it might be, say it was ordinary stew for lunch. And they'd show you how to cut the meat up, the approximate sizes and how you browned it off and just whatever method you'd use and they'd take you through the whole lot. And that was the method of instruction. And they'd take you all through pastry

15:30 making, each one would be given fat and flour and everything and had to make the pastry and then if it was a, say a steak and kidney pie, you might get enough to cover two of the dishes and you'd have to make it up and roll it out and then bake it off. It was a bit on the rough side you know, if you didn't want to try hard you didn't learn too much. And then,

16:00 as I said, with the bakery, it was a bit rough in the bakery they used to try and teach them how to mould bread. Well it took me about two years to be able to meld it properly. I could always make a job of it but to meld it nice and round and everything, and so I invented an idea, mix up the flour and water and get a stiff paste and then sort of spread it out and cut it and put it back in, spread it out, keep doing that a long time which had the same effect as the moulding, without trying to do it fancy,

16:30 and then, as I said, work on a ten pound of flour, and then when they went to a ship all they had to do was multiply and they could make the bread. And it turned out quite well. And I was down there nearly

six months by then and the real reason why I got tipped out of there was, there was a chief cook and he used to work through the day and then he'd go to the canteen of a night time and have

17:00 quite a few beers and then at about ten o'clock he'd drive the supply truck, a sort of a panel van, he'd drive that home and then he'd come back early in the morning. So anyway, he goes to drive out one night, gets to the police station and they pull him over and say, "Right oh Chief." And when he kicked off he let the clutch out a bit quick and it give a few jumps and the back door flew open and out flew all these parcels. All parcels of bread with people who lived in Crib Point and everything outside

17:30 the depot, had their names on it. And there was meat and there was vegies and all these, what they call rabbits in the navy, all these rabbits. So the Officer of the Watch came out took the Chief Cook into custody, they called out the guard, they went out to Crib Point and all of these people that had the things addressed to them they put a guard at the front and the back door, and then at daylight they knocked on the door and raided the place.

18:00 And the next day there were 33 hooks on the table, hooks indicated your ranks, like the leading cook was one, petty officer was two, there were 30 odd hooks on the table and they decreed that anybody who'd been there anywhere near six months had been there too long and tipped them out. And I was one of those and I went to the Birchgrove Park, but that was the real reason why I got on the way, and then of course on the Birchgrove Park I got seasick and got a bigger ship and away I went.

18:30 **You mentioned before that some of the merchant navy cooks were quite good in terms of tricks of the trade and stuff, can you share some of the knowledge that they passed on to you?**

I say, when you make stews there are various ways you can thicken them. You can make up a mixture of what they call a roux, flour and water, equal parts of flour and water and sort of add that in. Or you can do them with flour water or just flour water, pour it in and cook it up that way.

19:00 And there's all tricks like that that help you at various times. And as I said, about heating the ovens up and putting the stuff in over night and the next morning it'd be cooked and things like that. They had a different way of doing everything, because they'd had the experience. Merchant seamen are pretty fussy, they like their food. And we had about four merchant cooks and they

19:30 sort of kept an eye on us. What else?

Did you ever have much dealings with say cooks from different cultural backgrounds? I know some of the merchant ships had Chinese cooks.

No, strictly Australian the ones we had. One of our tricks in the merchant

20:00 navy, to do a roast potato you boil them and you get them right up to the stage that just before they fall to pieces then deep fry them. Saves all that mucking around in the oven and all you do is boil them, then get them out, away you go. That's another one of their tricks. And then they used to do pumpkin with the skin on them, leave the skin on and you get it out of the coppers without breaking it. But one of the hardest things I've found was when we went to England, they put us

20:30 on the Shropshire on the Monday morning, and went up the galley at eight o'clock and these sailors were coming in with a little net bag, like a net with vegies and meat in them. And in the mess tray. And the idea was there was canteen and messing. They used to have a mess cook for about 20 or 30 fellows and it was his job to go to the bakery and buy the bread, go to the butcher and buy the meat, and then go down to the

21:00 tankie, that's the fellow that runs the vegies and everything and buy the vegies. Bring it back up to prepare it, cut the meat up if it was a stew and that sort of thing. And then take it up to the galley and the galley'd cook it. And there was about 20 messes on the ship. 20 of these bags and you used to have the copper full of boiling water, you had to put these things on a stick and dip them in and then when they were cooked, take them out. Now, if the mess cooks were smart enough,

21:30 the pumpkin would be bigger than the potatoes, they'd all cook together. But with the Australian messes on there for the first time, and they brought this stuff up and we cooked them. As you lifted the bags out there was pumpkin running out the bottom and potatoes were still hard – what a mess. Anyway we got together with the Chief Cook and said, "You've got to do something about this." So we couldn't change the method, they had the method all tied up, so what we did, we told them

22:00 what to buy. And we said, "Right, tomorrow's going to be a stew," with so much meat, "it'll be potatoes," and so forth, and tell them what to buy. And they'd bring it up and we'd cook it in the hole and then serve it out accordingly. And that solved the problem, but that first couple of days, trying to cook it in these nets, that was a real circus. There were a lot of hungry people that week. But that was canteen messing. And then when I was down on

22:30 Cowan Cowan, they had repayment. And I got two and six per day per man to feed them. And then I used to have to buy the stuff in and feed them under that two and six per day. We used to catch a lot of fish down there and eventually I went over to baking the bread for them, but in the meanwhile we used to buy the stuff and what money was left over at the end of the month was yours, it was spread amongst the fellows. And some months

23:00 they'd get a pound.

How did you cook fish?

Deep fry them, I'd batter and deep fry them. There was no way to grill them. That was about the only way fish and chips was battered fish, but it used to be all cut the same size. We had these big boats that would be about this wide and that long and had that much fat in them and they used to have a thing on the side

23:30 so as the fat wouldn't splash on the stove, and just used to dip it in. One fellow'd be this side dipping it in and the other fellow the other side taking it out. And then we'd arrange it on the trays and serve it out that way. Chips were always a problem, cutting chips and getting all them done for 900 people, a lot of chips. But we used to manage all right.

What did you do with all the kitchen waste and so forth on the ship?

It all depended where you were, if you were in harbour,

24:00 We used to put it in rubbish tins and they'd take it to the dockyard bins and tip it in there. At sea, they used to keep it for so long and then they didn't want to ditch it each night because an enemy ship could follow you along on the rubbish. They used to keep it and save it up then ditch it all at one time. It was quite a spin that. They used to have a chute down the side of the ship, that in safe

24:30 waters you could tip the stuff down. But unfortunately it went down to the bottom and at the bottom, if the sea was a bit rough, a wave would hit it and it'd come up and you'd open the lid at the top to tip the stuff in and the next thing you'd be wearing it. We used to like watching the new fellows coming aboard the ship. They'd be seasick and they'd go over and lift up the lid and the next thing they'd be soaking wet. That was one of the past-times, watching the fellows do that.

25:00 Yeah those merchant ships, they taught us quite a bit. And then the café fellows they taught us finer things, fillet mignon and that sort of thing. And then the bakery was just near the officer's galley. The officers used to have their's separate, they used to cook them for about 200. We did 900 and they did the rest.

25:30 And very often I used to finish the work in the bakery and go and work in the other to improve my knowledge. And they used to have much the same fare as we had, but they'd put more care into presenting it. It used to be cooked up top, go down the lift well and into the pantry. The officers had the wardroom, a big wardroom nearly as big as this and they used to be first served,

26:00 and behind was the mid-shipmen area, and they were lucky if they got a feed. The officers were served first and what was left was served to the midshipmen. And they had many hungry a day and they used to make a habit of after dawn action they used to come up to the bake house to try and get a bread roll or something like that.

Why did the midshipmen get such a rough…

That's the lowest form of life in the navy. The captain tells the commander who tells the

26:30 UNCLEAR, who tells the Chief petty officer, who tells the petty officer, who tells the Leading Hand, who tells the Sailors and the Sailors tell the Midshipmen. It's the lowest rank. And they're only boys, 15 to 16, and they used to treat them pretty rough. But they all made it. All the ones on the Shropshire finished up, just about all of them finished up Admirals.

So was the galley where the officer's mess was, was that any different in terms of what it had compared to the other galleys?

27:00 Yeah. What the galley or the wardroom? The wardroom had serviettes and serviette rings. Used to set up with knives and forks. It was quite a social event the eating in the wardroom. And the wardroom galley was much the same as the forward galley, the same equipment, but they just had the time to make a better job of things. They used to – instead of peeling the potatoes and serving them, they used to cut them off like

27:30 little barrels and put them on the plate that way. And then the stewards used to get up to all sorts of tricks when they had their girlfriends on board. They used to do all sorts of things before they served them on the plate. But it was a pretty good arrangement, particularly when you think of how many people there were concerned. It was a big thing to get them fed.

28:00 **You spoke before about not really knowing what to do with broccoli, was there any other food that you came into contact with that you hadn't seen before?**

No, that was about the only one, but – yeah, I'll never forget that. Brought it on board, roots and all just tied in a bundle and, bet the dog had a day out when we served the leaves and not the flowers. But the dockyard workers used to pull old potatoes out of the rubbish

28:30 and take them home. It was shocking some of the things they used to get. But they really had to. They weren't getting too much money and they were only getting one egg a month, so much beef a week. They wouldn't get too much at all. Another thing was the galley on the shore was a rough old turn. Only about as big as this and they had a room on the side that was the butcher's shop. Now the butcher used

to drive a panel van,

29:00 a woman, and she used to come in and back into the window in this room. Previously the cooks had cleaned the window out and shovelled a foot of snow in on the floor, and then she had the meat and there'd be Monday's meat would go there, and Tuesday's meat would go there on the floor, and then when she went we'd cover it all up with snow and then when you wanted it you just dug it out of the snow and used it. And that was the refrigeration part of it.

29:30 **Did you use herbs and spices much in the cooking?**

We were pretty limited, even pepper was short those days. We used to get a fair amount but there wasn't much else, curry of course, we used quite a bit of curry. But that would be about all, there wasn't too much in the fancy line.

30:00 Most of the meat dishes were roasted, like roast lamb and roast beef and that sort of – roast pork. Every Sunday was roast pork. Now the Shropshire went the whole war and I think there was only three Sundays when there wasn't pork. Now if you tell the sailors that they'd refute that. But what happened was we had all this pork on board and they kept it and only served it for Sunday. And Sunday lunch

30:30 used to be a roast pork and roast potatoes, big eats on Sunday. But only three weeks we were out of it, but of course we spent other weeks without any meat at all, except bully beef. Used to get that spam, that English sausage and then when we left England there was a supply officer that was a bit on the shaky side, he'd gone ashore and the English people had a whole warehouse full of

31:00 these soya lengths. It was a sausage, done up like a sausage but it was made out of soya flour. And they were a shocker they were. They were all tinned and everything, and he bought the whole warehouse full. And it all come down to the ship and when we used to put it on, there used to be about 30 cases to 35 cases to feed the crowd. We used to order the 35 cases and put 15 or 20 straight over the

31:30 side and serve the rest because the sailors, they just wouldn't eat them. They were shocking they were. And anyway, the supply bloke, he came back and he bought a whole street full of houses in Sydney. I'll never forget him.

Do you have any funny stories about fellows, you said before when they get a bit cranky or what ever, they blame the cook, coming down and having a word to you about the cooking at all?

Yeah, they used to kick up a lot of noise and

32:00 there wasn't much you could do about it really. They used to come through a door and the bain marie was here and, "What's that rubbish on again today. What are we having on today?" I was the leading hand, and the leading hands used to have to serve the meat because the meat portion was important. They could have as many pieces as they liked but the meat had to be served out. So I'm serving the meat out and they're coming through and "what's this rubbish again." So

32:30 a mate of mine, he was about my size, I said to Jack, I said, "Let's do something about this now." I said, "When this Lofty Green comes through, we'll shut him up see." So this Lofty Green comes through, "What's this rubbish on again today." So Jack tapped him on the shoulder and when he turned around to see what it was I barrelled him. He went down and he got up again and we downed him again. And anyway, he raced away and reported it. The next thing,

33:00 I was required on the quarter deck. So I got up on the quarter deck and they said, "You're charged with assaulting this fellow." And I said, "Sir, I've been on this ship so many months." "How many?" As long as it was, "And I've served so many thousands of meals and," I said, "every time they come through with remarks." And I said, "This time the provocation was just too much and I let myself go." And got away with it. And Old Snowy, he didn't cause any more trouble.

33:30 But they used to take it pretty right. But then there was always the canteen, they could buy chocolate in the canteen and things like that. Some of them resorted to that sort of thing. But most of them, they managed to get the bully beef out or they'd fill up on bread and jam or bread and butter. But in the old days, in the Canberra, there was the mess and the mess was a table that'd hold about 20 people, ten each side. And then

34:00 when the mess cook was detailed off, he had to go up and get the meals and they'd come down in a fanny and he'd put it on the table. The Leading Hand used to sit at the top of the table and then the next senior would sit there and the next senior'd sit there and so it down the table, until right down the bottom there were the HOs, the Hostility's Only, the Reserve. This was early in war of course. And the leading hand would get his plate out and if there was two sausages to a man, he'd have three or four and

34:30 so it'd go down the line until down the end of the line there was a bloke there with a piece of bread all ready to mop up the gravy. That's all he got. But they were rough old days those days. And when I first joined one of the rook used to join the Canberra and if you opened your mouth they'd tell you to shut up, say, "Shut up, you're only a rookie," just a reservist. And as the war went on I'd say, "We outnumber them." And we'd give them the same treatment.

35:00 “Just a perm.” Generally the spirit among the fellows was quite good. The cooks and the stokies would get on well together and the seamen were on their own, they reckoned they were the executive branch. They were the tops they reckoned.

Why did the cooks and the stockies get on so well?

We were both shift workers and we both used to have to ply our trade all day every day.

35:30 If the seamen had a day off the stokers would still be down below stoking the ship along. We used to use the stokers bathroom. And we used to use their bathroom instead of going to the seamen’s bathroom. That used to be a circus, the bathroom. They had a series of little wash basins and you had to go down and you’d strip off. You’d go down in just a pair of underpants and you’d

36:00 hang them somewhere and you’d go and you had to wash everything in a little basin. Wash and shave and everything in just a little basin like that and if you splashed a bloke beside you he’d go crook. Then when we went to Britain we found out that the bathrooms were the best place to write letters because there was no one using them. One of the stokers, he was an

36:30 English sailor, his mother wrote a letter and in it’s she’s complaining about the black from this bloke, getting on the sheets, so what would happen was he was doing a boiler clean and all the soot, and they used to come aboard of a morning and they used to turn up the cuff of their uniform and put their trousers in their socks, put their overalls on and when they finished, they’d have a wash, go around the high tide mark and they’d go ashore. And there’d be soot and everything on them and

37:00 this woman was complaining about this kid putting the soot on the sheets. The thing was on the board for ages.

Did the chefs ever make special things for themselves at all? Ever go to the kitchen and you’d feel like something and you’d just make what you wanted to?

No. They wouldn’t have that, they’d keep right out of there. It was a busy place the galley, there was always something going on. Through the night

37:30 there was a chai watch you could go and get chocolate, two o’clock in the morning till four o’clock. And then during the night they’d change watches. The guns used to change through the night at four o’clock, that’d be a bugle, they’d wake everybody up and then they’d settle down again. And then there was always dawn and dusk action stations. They used to, an hour before the dawn you had to go to action station. And then perhaps an hour or so after. Used to make a whole in the day.

38:00 And in that time the action cooks had to take over and carry on when the other official watch had gone off. They used to keep you busy.

You spoke before about how the doctor would come down and just do a little bit of a health inspection, did he ever come to you and say “look I think we should give the men this type of food for health reasons or whatever,” or “a few blokes are a bit sick.”

Yeah, that used to be done at a higher level. That used to be done in the paymaster’s cabin. The paymaster and the doctor and the

38:30 supply people and the chief cook would have a meeting together and they’d decide what to put on the mention. Have a balanced sort of menu as much as possible, what was in the ship to have. They did keep a control that way, and of course that carried on down the chain. The old cooks, they used to keep you on the ball. And the strangest thing of all, the cooks

39:00 had a mess, it’d be about this wide, and nearly as long as this place here, but we had to share with the bandsmen. Now the bandsmen, they were all intelligent gents, or thought they were, and as a matter of fact the band on the Shropshire was the band from the Palais du Dance at St Kilda. They all got drunk one night and went and joined the navy and all ended up on the Shropshire. There was some really clever musicians there,

39:30 there was George Dudley used to play 24 instruments or some ridiculous thing and Chan Ready finished up a ventriloquist, he toured for a number of years after the war, and so it went on and on. There was a fellow there called Abe Rule, he was a great big fellow, great big head on him and you’d take him to be a country oaf and he was a clarinettist. And the cooks were throwing off at the bandsmen one time and

40:00 one of the blokes said to this Abe Rule, they said, “I bet you can’t play that ‘Flight of the Bumblebee’,” he said, “You’ve got to play that in one breath.” And he did, and when he finished he went (sigh). He was good. He finished up, after the war he was judging dogs, he had beagle hounds and I struck him in Brisbane. He was judging beagle hounds.

So what did the bandsmen and the cooks talk about? Did you get on all right?

40:30 Yeah, the usual sailors talk - what they did ashore and all this sort of thing. But the bandsmen had a pretty important job on the ship, they were in what they called the TS [Transmitting Station]. Now in the big ships they have the TS down the bottom of the ship and that’s the transmitting station. Now all the reports come in and all the ranges and all that sort of thing, it all goes through the TS and then they more or less alter the fire and everything.

41:00 And that was the bandsmen's job, and it was quite an important job and they used to close up down there. But there were some pretty good bandsmen among them. One fellow comes to our meetings every now and then, he was a trumpeter, a bugler.

Tape 6

00:30 **Michelle [interviewer] was just asking about who had to do the washing up for 1200 men?**

No, actually 900, take another 100 off that it'd be about 800 because of that there was so many Chiefs and petty officers in their own mess, but we used to cook for them, and they had their own mess men. So actually 800, but the system was quite good. They came through and they got this steel tray and then the food was put on accordingly.

01:00 And the Lead Hands job was to take the sailors and tell them put and how much and that sort of thing. Then they'd have their meal and go around. There was a trash tin to scrape the leftovers if any and then they had this big vat, it was about this big and they had a steam pipe in it, which meant that it was at boiling temperature, or near enough, all the time. They were put in there and then they were pulled out with tongs, put in a place to dry and then they were stacked and put away,

01:30 so it was pretty hygienic that way. But the washing up crew would be about four or five fellows, and that was a punishment draft, if any of the sailors played up they used to put them in the cafeteria party. Either that or the dumb ones, the ones they couldn't do anything with, they put them in the cafeteria party.

You were talking about the HOs before, what was the relationship between the HOs and the other men on the ship?

Early in the war, the HOs weren't

02:00 allowed to open their mouth. If you passed an opinion they'd say "quieten down." You were just a HO. But then as the HOs increased in numbers and percentages, it was different. We used to tell them where to get off. It was just quite friendly generally. Generally quite friendly because they knew that when the war broke out they had 4000 and during the war it grew to 40,000 so it was a large amount of reservists came in.

02:30 And then a lot of those reserve people were quite expert in their particular game.

Were there any initiations or superstitions?

No. Fortunately that never happened in the navy. I was in the army and I saw different things happen there, the old black nugget and that sort of thing, but not in the navy.

What about superstitions in the navy?

That was pretty strong. As a matter of fact

03:00 the first thing that I noticed of that, was that the Canberra was in Brisbane and we had a Protestant Chaplain which was the usual thing those days, and they brought on the Roman Catholic fellow. And the old fellows they were appalled, two padres for a start, and a Roman Catholic one into the bargain, that was way out. Anyway they predicted that the ship would get sunk and it did. So they were quite sure of themselves

03:30 along those lines. Then they wanted to change the Shropshire's name to Canberra II, and they didn't want that, you can't change a ship's name if it's initiated as Shropshire, it's Shropshire. That was another one of their superstitions and there was a terrible lot of things that they would do, wouldn't do. Just can't think of any offhand now, but they were the two main ones. Then, when you came aboard you had to salute the

04:00 quarter deck, and there was a lot of confusion as to what they were saluting. And the thing that they were actually saluting was an imaginary crucifix which, on the sailing ships, hung to remind the sailors when they come aboard drunk and disorderly, of all the promises that they'd made aboard during the heavy weather. When things were bad they called on God to help them and then they'd go ashore and get drunk and do all sorts of things

04:30 and then come back aboard. So they had this crucifix that used to hang, and that's where it come from. They'd salute the quarter deck. And in America they salute the Office of the Watch, they'd turn around and salute the Office of the Watch. Can't think of any other superstitions, but it was rife with them. Every turn of the clock there was something that you couldn't do, you'd be caught. And then another thing was sailors nicknames, if your name was Rhodes, you were

05:00 Dusty Rhodes, and if your name was Williams you were Buggy Williams and so it went on and on, there was all these particular names.

What was the feeling amongst the fellows when they're serving on an Australian ship but they're actually part of the British Navy?

Yeah, they don't seem to mind too much. The British people had a pretty good opinion of themselves.

05:30 Of course they deserved it too because they were pretty highly trained. But generally speaking our fellows were up with them. It happened quite a bit in the Atlantic. A lot of our radar fellows served on British ships and that. But we didn't have any trouble with them, we served with them early, when we first went over there we were with them, a couple of months. And we seemed to work it out all right. But they're not a very clean

06:00 crowd. They don't believe in bathing every day. I laughed one time, we used to live on the ship, had a locker on the ship, you finished work, you'd go across to your locker, strip off to a pair of underpants – this is winter time mind you, strip off to a pair of underpants, towel around your neck, your bag full of – dilly bag full of stuff, used to run up the side of the ship, down the gangway and across to the bathroom and many a time we ran across,

06:30 "Look at him, he ran down there yesterday." Couldn't make out running, two days running. And they didn't change their underclothes too often, they used to wear them to a stand still. Socks, used to wear socks. I went to a communal bath up in Dundee and had to go into a room, strip off, put your clothes in a locker, put your togs on and then you had to

07:00 go to the pool. You could either go in ladies, neutral or gents. Used to go straight in the middle one, but before you got in there, there was a great big pool about six inches deep and about six foot across and you had to go through that, Condy's crystals. And that was to kill all the toe jam. They used to – they nearly all had tinea. Yeah, they weren't the cleanest people in the world but by the same

07:30 token the guns were always number one. They was always shiny and oiled up and they were all ready to go. They were right up top then. But if you wanted to write a letter, down the RMs [Radioman] bathroom was the best place to go to write it.

Did you do much writing of letters and that, back home and that sort of thing?

Well the wife reckoned I only wrote twice, but I used to write quite a few letters, must've been to someone else. Used to write home pretty regular because they were most upset

08:00 when the Canberra went down of course. The father was working at the General, at the Brisbane Hospital at the time and somebody had an inkling towards MacArthur's headquarters in Queen St. The whole battle had been planned from that building next to the Post Office, you know where MacArthur was? The whole battle was planned from there, and someone got away from there and they closed the building up and wouldn't let them

08:30 go ashore. There was a couple of girlfriends in the WAAAFs [Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force] and that, they were trapped in there, but the father got the message that the ship had gone down, and he's running around for three or four days knowing that the ship had gone down and didn't know whether I was safe or not. They were more upset than I was I think, so I did do the right thing and used to write every week to them. Keep them informed.

What about receiving mail?

In England it wasn't too bad, it was more or less regular.

09:00 But up in the Pacific it was shocking. Sometimes you'd go a couple of months without, oh no, at least a month without mail. But the Japanese used to use mail to their advantage. They had this Tokyo Rose, and old Tokyo Rose used to broadcast every so often, and much of the information was got through, an aeroplane that'd been shot down with a bit of mail on it and they'd get the letters and go through them. And

09:30 Tokyo Rose would come on and say Peter's wife's fooling around with so and so up the road, and they'd piece things together. They had the crew most upset. And it was all things that they'd found. Another thing Tokyo Rose come up with she said, "Oh I see they've finished the barbed wire entanglement around Manly Beach in Sydney, we'll have to come in another way now." And the best of all that happened along those lines was Milne Bay.

10:00 The Japanese came in and they landed and then they beat them. At the mouth of the entrance to Milne Bay was Good Enough Island, and they decided that it really needed a big naval gun there, to stop any further people coming in. So they didn't have any naval guns available so they built a big wooden gun and they established all the dummies around it, and they used to change them around every day and the day it was finished the Japanese sent a plane over

10:30 and dropped a wooden bomb on it. That was quite a joke for ages, a wooden bomb on the wooden gun.

Earlier also, you were talking about the dock workers in England. What was your comparison between the British dock workers and the Australian dock workers?

The British dock workers did what they were told. They were a work force

11:00 that were keen on their work and I didn't hear of any strikes over there when I was there. The Australian people, they used to strike just for the fun of it. As a matter of fact Menzies had to put the army in at one time to man the docks and they were loading stuff to go to Japan. And then other time we came in and they declared us black and all the tugs were on strike and the Skipper, this is

11:30 a 10,000 ton ship or bigger, bigger in wartime, probably thirteen, he brought us alongside, like a destroyer, just pointed the bough in towards the whatsit, brought us full astern and just floated alongside and that was that one. We had to go up the Cockatoo dock and they declared us black, they wouldn't shift us. We shifted ourselves. And then they wanted danger money because they were working on the ships and then when a ship went into harbour, we had to

12:00 take all the ammunition off before the dockies would work on it. And that used to be a hell of a job, all the eight inch shells, they all weighed 256 pound each. Had to shift all them onto a barge and take them up to Newington and stow them there and then go and get them and bring them and reload again. And they weren't very bright crowd at all. Good workmen, like the job they did was quite good, but – yeah the dockyard workers strike.

12:30 The crane strike, did I tell you about the crane strike? When they wouldn't lift the barrels in. I laughed one time there, a dockyard worker come in and he said, "You got any cigarettes?" And I said, "Yeah," and I said, "You have any trouble getting them ashore?" And he said, "No you'll be right." He said, "How many you got?" And I told him. And he's a painter this fellow, he was walking around with a paint tin full of white paint and a paint brush in it. Anyway I said, "Alright, come up to the bakehouse and I'll give you the cigarettes."

13:00 We used to buy them for one and six and sell them for two and six. And he put his paint tin down, grabbed the edges off about an inch of paint in the container and all the rest was clear, packs the cigarettes in and puts the lid back on with the paint showing upwards and the brush was nailed up from underneath. And he's walking around, this was his method of getting cigarettes. I used to do it all the time.

13:30 **You were saying with your seasickness, and in order to get rid of that they put you on a bigger boat, how did that work?**

Good. I went to the Canberra and I was on it for about a week or a fortnight before we put to sea and when we first went out through the heads, got a bit of a roll up, but after a day I was right again. And then towards the end of the war, no trouble at all.

14:00 **Can you recall seeing blokes on the bigger ship still get sea sick?**

Oh yes. Every time it come up rough, there'd be fellows lining up at the sick bay or at the chute on the side of the ship. There'd be quite a few get seasick then. It's a terrible thing that seasickness.

Can you tell us the story about when you saw the Australia get hit?

14:30 I think the Australia was the flag ship, and anyway it was ahead of us and a plane made a dive, well a kamikaze made move towards hitting us and we fired at his barrage and that threw it up in the air, didn't knock it down and then it went and crashed into the side of the Aussie. There was a great big flame and

15:00 then the smoke just simply covered the Aussie, hell of a bloody mess that one. And of course we all wondered what happened. Quite a few killed there. And they got two or three on the same day. One hit the side of it. We were lucky, that one there, see the splash on the side, that was a kamikaze came the other side and it went it between the bridge and the

15:30 turret and crashed into the water and blew up and then another one crashed through the wireless aerial and took the aerial away and crashed on the side.

So the first time you saw one of those aircraft hit a ship, what was going through your mind? Did you know what they were up to?

Yeah. They first started at Leyte and they hit the Aussie and then after that, one morning before breakfast we saw four

16:00 American destroyers knocked down and the planes used to come in at that angle like that, and they'd fly around and then all of a sudden they'd make a dive towards us, and one of the things the Yanks used to do, if they looked like getting hit, they used to fire their torpedoes and they'd send a signal, "There are friendly torpedoes loose in the bay." Then the planes would hit them and – one broke in half and the others just sunk in a short time.

16:30 There was four before breakfast one morning. What else happened? I think we shot down 16 altogether of those. There must've been dozens and dozens that attacked us, but that eight inch barrage used to send them off. As a matter of fact, we fired at a couple that hit the Aussie, the Skipper of the Aussie sent a message, "If you knock them we'll catch them." And they caught them all right.

17:00 But the Aussie was only at Leyte two days and it got hit and got taken away. They brought her back in time for Lingayen and the same thing happened again. And they took it away that time and it never ever come back. And then the Hobart got torpedoed, a torpedo hit the Hobart, quite a few killed on that one.

But with the Australian heavy cruisers, I'd say we lost most of them. But the Shropshire never got a hit, never got a hit.

17:30 Two torpedoes, they just missed us. One ten foot astern of it, another went across the bows. And on the night going into Leyte picked up a mine in the paravanes, they had the paravanes spread out and one picked up a mine and dragged it in the – they come to jaws and dragged it in the jaws, and we were just about to land in Leyte

18:00 and they called the skipper and the English bloke, a real good bloke he was, he come out and he said, "Oh leave it there till the morning." Because had they fired it then, they used to fire their rifles at them, had they done that, they would have made enough noise for the people ashore to be there waiting for us. So we just towed it in the morning, he did a 360 turn and it unhooked itself and then one of the destroyers finished up sinking it. That was a thrill that one.

18:30 As a matter of fact the action cooks used to sleep underneath the sea boat and the sea boat was about 50 or 60 feet out the side, throwing up a big spray. We moved the other side of course, just in case.

What else can you remember of the action, when the Aussie did get hit that first time?

It was a really busy day, there were a lot of kamikazes that day and with the kamikazes, they…

19:00 One of the Japanese Admirals had advocated this early in the war, but they wouldn't have it. Strange to say, the Japanese thought it wasn't cricket to sink a ship. And this Admiral, manned a plane himself and flew out and sunk a ship and then they woke up then, the one plane one ship was good going. So then they made a mass attack at Leyte and hit the Aussie

19:30 and several other ships as well. It was a very busy day that day and we had to support these troops ashore. As they wanted to bombard, used to go along and bombard to where they wanted it. We were in Leyte Gulf for a month and just air raids all the time. But we sort of had the answer with that eight inch barrage and Tokyo Rose [Japanese propaganda broadcaster] come on and she said

20:00 that the Australians weren't fair because they used some flame throwers to knock the planes down. And then she come on one day and she says, "Just want to say goodbye to the Shropshire crew, tomorrow afternoon at four o'clock, Lieutenant Sailfa is going to come out and sink you." So anyway this Lieutenant, Japanese pilot like, he had his ceremony, the blessing and all that sort of thing, and the saki and all that sort of thing,

20:30 and into the geisha house that night and all the giggling going on there and then in the morning they had the broadcast when he was taking off. And at four o'clock in the afternoon he came right around, and he come up to about there and he took a dive and he dived in pretty fast and the ship's just sitting there and everything's loaded ready to go. And he got to two thousand feet, when he got to two thousand feet that was it, away he went. And the

21:00 old Tokyo Rose reckoned it wasn't fair. She was always broadcasting something or other.

Whereabouts were you on the ship during those air raid actions?

I had the medical aid outside the bakery. There was two positions outside the bakery and the watches and we'd be in the galley getting stuff ready

21:30 and serving food out and that and the minute it got to the actual action stations we had to go out and man this, had a haversack and so forth, and I was on the upper deck. Used to get a pretty good front seat. But when those eight inch guns fire, they sort of take your breath away, you've got to have your mouth shut but your teeth apart.

22:00 And if you've got your teeth clenched it gives you a headache. And before they fire the eight inch there's a ding ding, a bell rings. And the ding ding and then bang. And it's not a bang so much as a thump. And all the air goes away and big smoke rings come out and they use the cordite and some smoke, not a terrible lot but some smoke. Especially when they're bombarding the shore, and they're letting it go pretty heavy.

22:30 **How did the kamikaze attacks affect your morale, knowing that…?**

We were glad it was the end of the war, because they got a terrific result. As I said there was four before breakfast one morning and they got the Aussie and they got several other ships as well. They were a force to be worried about and fortunately between the ships shooting them down

23:00 and the army advancing ashore, it cut them down a fair bit. But they were quite active. And then we went from there, from Leyte up to Lingayen and the Aussie got hit again there and then we came back down to Corregidor and we bombarded Corregidor. And we saw the paratroops land there, there were thousands of them. The planes were going over and you

23:30 could see them with the open doors, the biscuit bombers, and you could see them at the open doors ready to jump. And the top of Corregidor is just like Sydney Heads, and the area they had to jump on was about the size of two football fields, that's all they had to drop them on. And they couldn't take a chance of being too high because they could've drifted right off and finished off in the water. They had

to have them at about, I think it's about 1500 feet, some ridiculously low when you think of it, you could see the people as they went past. And they

24:00 used to jump out of the plane, one two three, pull the whatsits, hit the ground. It was as quick as that. There was dozens killed, I don't know, I've never seen any figures, but a lot of them hit the cliff on the way in. And they've got a memorial up in Corregidor and we went to see it after the war and there's all these parachutes hanging on the cliff and I said to the fellow, "What's in those parachutes?" And he said, "They're just discarded parachutes."

24:30 And I said, "If you take a good look mate there's a bloke underneath all of them." They'd lost hundreds of people by hitting the cliff. Hanging there. But they had a lot of people there, I went in that Matilda, not Matilda, anyway the tunnel up on Corregidor, I went there and I saw all the catacombs of where they had all the different whatsits, and guards

25:00 office had another tunnel added down to the water's edge and that's where he escaped from, went down through the bottom of the tunnel. There was a fully equipped hospital there. I've got a tap up in the shed that I knocked off one of the barracks there. But the barracks were all in a valley and they bombarded all of them to pieces. And then there's another

25:30 part there, I think there were 5000 Japs or something on the island and I think they only captured 23 or something? Some ridiculous thing. And they were driving over this cliff and dropping down hundreds of feet, committing suicide.

During the air raids when you've got every ship in the vicinity all guns going, what does that look like? What are the chances of friendly

26:00 **fire hitting your ships?**

One of the biggest worries is the stuff that comes down. See every shell that goes up breaks up into pieces and then it all comes down. And you'll be quite a long way from the actual ships that are firing, and all of a sudden it'll be a big rain of metal come down. And a couple come down on the ship but they didn't do any damage fortunately. But the noise, the noise is horrific, you've got a headache for a bloody week after.

26:30 But the Yanks, they're very indiscriminate with their fire. The chap up in Lingayen, the Japanese pilot used to come up over the mountains and come down and come out over the sea and sail up, fly up between the American ships and they couldn't fire because they would've hit each other, so what they did, he did it once too often, he come up and they'd cleared a couple of avenues of fire,

27:00 and when he went through the avenues they got him. He used to wave to everybody, he had a ball for two or three days there. And they finally got him. And then the Australian got hit in Lingayen and they wanted a bombardment on the San Fernando which was I think up to 14 mile inland. And we put out three anchors, the forward, after and ketch anchor. And the Aussie lined up to, all the anti-aircraft

27:30 four inch stuff was done on the Aussie, that was all ruined, and they carried out a bombardment and the Japanese had mustered I think it was 6,000 in a valley and they were just about to kick off to Henderson Field and our people were trying to get Henderson Field and we opened up this bombardment, and they reckoned we bowled the whole 6,000 of them. Just dropped the shells in the valley. That was 14 mile away. They were fantastic.

After a big action,

28:00 **what's the mood of the fellows?**

First of all you're glad it's over. And then there's all the yak about what happened. This guy said to someone just recently, they said, "What did you know about the Canberra, you was in the magazine." And I said, "Yeah but shortly after I was up top and I heard all the fellows talking and pointing out what happened and where and everything, and saw the evidence for myself." Talked about the different things that happened

28:30 and just pointed out the different things that they saw. Quite interesting. Glad it's all over of course. Then they wondered when the next lot was coming.

And when would be the next meal time after an action like that, would it just go back to a regular routine?

Yeah, straight back into the ordinary. Perhaps if action stopped at about ten o'clock in the morning, it might be hairy legged lunch, but the rest would be back on the ball.

29:00 The butcher would have to go and open up the freezer and get things on the move again. And the tankie, if any vegies are brought out, to get the vegies. But they keep the potatoes and pumpkin on the upper deck. They had a wire mesh cage on the upper deck and they used to have all the potatoes there. We used to carry about two or three hundred bags of potatoes. And pumpkin galore.

Did you ever see a link between the stress levels of sailors and the appetite of the sailors?

29:30 Not particularly, but I can tell you this, in the Canberra and the Shropshire, I only saw one fellow bomb

happy, only one suffering from stress. There was no such thing as it those days, as stress. Jesus now I'd say there'd be only one that wasn't suffering. But they all seemed to take it in their stride. The one fellow he was off his rocker. Another incident in the Canberra, a fellow got his arm shot off and it didn't bleed.

30:00 He's running around with a stump and there's no blood. And I just forget the theory of that. I think they think the piece shrapnel must've sheared, must've cauterised it. Yeah, the stoker. Another big fellow he was lying down below and he was terribly wounded and he's singing out, "God damn the Japanese." And he's going crook, but the poor bugger died, old Guts Smith.

30:30 But that scene with the 84 people that died, they had them in the, there was a black curtain that divided the sailors off from the ward room sort of thing. And they put them behind this black curtain, they had them all lined up and the Priest went in there and give them last rites and all that sort of thing and they decided to leave them there. They could've taken them off perhaps for burial, but they decided to make that a war grave. And when the ship went down

31:00 they went down with it. And then later on, just after the war, there was a move they might've wanted to raise the Canberra, and we all said "No, leave it there." And the wounded were taken off and they went to a hospital ship and they went to New Zealand. There were quite a few wounded. The Skipper was taken off to the Barnett and he died on board and about five others died on board so we had to bury them at sea. That was

31:30 an interesting thing, when we went on the Barnett, they had Japanese prisoners there, they had about, oh about 15 of them and the only mark of rank with the Japanese was the hair on their face. A fellow with a moustache might be a lieutenant and a fellow with a goatee would be something else. And so the only sign of any recognition there was. And the sailors, the soldiers were telling us different stories about the things they found. They had those boots with the separate big toe

32:00 for climbing trees and they had a little box that they used to creep up on the Yanks and put the box somewhere near the fox hole, and a voice used to sing out, "Help me Joe, help me Joe, I'm wounded." And the Yanks would go out to see what it was and head over heels they'd go. They had tons of tricks. But these fellows were on board and the Yanks used to bring them up for exercise and they'd be sitting there with their Tommy gun and they'd say, "Go on, jump over the side

32:30 have a go." But they brought them back and brought them into Brisbane and took them off. We saw them when we came home on leave and we saw them moving them from MacArthur's headquarters to somewhere. They must've had them in gaol somewhere and the very fellows, one fellow in particular had a big long red jacket on. I recognised him.

Can you remember actually coming off the Canberra? Can you remember when you actually came off the Canberra?

Yeah, I came off the Canberra, it was

33:00 heavily listing towards the port side and the Blue come alongside aft and they had ropes over the side and using the rope you could walk down the side of the ship and on to the Blue. And then you had to keep moving to get the 300 on.

Can you remember the order given? Was there an order given to abandon ship?

Yeah, what happened, I wrote an article on that as a matter of fact.

33:30 The ship was hit, caught fire, they put the fire out, we got the order that if they couldn't get steam up by a certain time it had to be sunk. When the time came there was a bugler and a side boy and they went around the ship. The bugler sounded a 'G' and the side boy sounded, "Abandon ship, hands to dance a skylark on the quarter deck."

34:00 And that was the cry for that particular time. And that 'hands to dance a skylark on the quarter deck' meant that every man for himself, and the one Steward run down and he grabbed, he went into the wardrobe, all the officers used to hang all their summer gear behind this whatsits and he come up dressed as a commander with a commander's hat on. And that was one incident I remember. Another fellow, a stoker bloke, real typical Stoker,

34:30 he peed on the quarter deck, he said he'd wanted to do that all his life. And he did that. And then they piped that several times in different parts of the ship. "Abandon ship, hands to dance the skylark on the quarter deck." And the bugler was a bloke called Cyril Fox, he was the bugler. And then, there wasn't a lot of panic, there was a few panic incidents for incidence when the Chicago come charging across, they thought they were taking prisoners off up forward

35:00 and they fired the star shells, and everyone got their head down. I remember there was a bollard about that big, and I was straight down behind that bollard and thought I'll be safe, and when it was all over and I stood up, I was about five or six yards away from the bollard. I'd been pushed sideways. Then things had settled down 'cause the Japs had gone, there was no reason to be worried and then they took us to the Blue and

35:30 I had to report to the galley and they had the operating theatre there. And there was fellows with bits of shrapnel in their skin and they had this magnet, they put the magnet down, switch it on and it'd come

up like that, in the skin, and they'd just click it and the piece of metal would fly out. They were taking them out. And then there was another fellow, Chief Stoker Dufty, and old Dufty, he was hit, he was standing against a wall and

36:00 the shell landed down the side, and the impact sent slithers off the wall all went into his back. And he was in a pretty bad way, anyway they declared him dead and they took him across to the, he died on the way across to the Barnett. They put him in the morgue and in the morning, a fellow went in there to check on the morgue and he's sitting up on the thing and he said, "Any chance of a blanket?" He said,

36:30 "A sheet's not enough." And I struck that fellow again after the war. I sat in a lodge in Leichhardt with the old father-in-law and in walks this John Dufty. I said, "How you going John?" He said, "Oh Jesus." I said, "You're dead." He said, "I was." But they thought he was dead.

It's just as well he wasn't left on the ship.

Yeah, that's right, he could've been. But they were pretty sure of themselves, the ones that they left behind.

What was the saddest thing for you? Was it

37:00 **abandoning ship or was it standing there watching the ship sunk?**

No, we didn't see the ship sunk, we were taken across to Guadalcanal and that was all done behind our back fortunately. And I reckon the worst part there was a fellow who was married in Ipswich and I'd been invited to the wedding but didn't go, and he was in the torpedoes and he got cut in half. And I saw him there.

37:30 I think that was the saddest part. Yeah, all the fellows in the torpedoes, both the shells hit and cut them all in half, like the blast. But yeah, there was some blood around that day. It was really a bad day that day. But they washed the decks down and all that sort of thing. We made it as neat as we could. The plane caught fire and the two bombs, the middle of the plane bought it and the two bombs just went down like that.

38:00 And they got them off and flew them over the side. And they were throwing ammunition over the side. We put one of the sea boats over and we put wounded in it and it was full of holes and had to get the wounded back on top again. One of my mates, a cook this fellow, Bruce Harper, he could walk on water this bloke. So when he come up top he had a look around and he thought there's no fun here, and he dived over the side.

38:30 And the ship was in a bit of a run and he's side stroking the side of the ship and they sang out and said, "Harper, come in board." And Harper said, "Go to buggery." And they said, "You'll be a deserter." He said, "I'll be a live one." Anyway they finally got him back in and old Bruce he come to the Shropshire and when he used to make out the chits he used to put 'Cook Harper, DSO.' And I said "what's the DSO Bruce?" He said "Dived Straight Over."

39:00 And he'd done that. He finished up, he stayed in the navy, become a Chief Cook and he had rheumatic fever when he was a kid, he should never have been in the navy, he had a weak heart. And he got a pain in the chest and went down to sick bay and they said, "No, it's lunch time, it's 12 o'clock, come back at one o'clock." And they come back at one o'clock and he'd died. Died in the sick bay. Yeah, old Bruce.

39:30 He was my best man.

So what are your memories of all the bugling and piping on the ships?

Fortunately, we didn't have to follow it. It wasn't for the cooks, it was all for the seamen and that, like mainly closing up for the gunnery. And it was impressive, to think that the bugles could call them all together. We knew all the calls and then there was action station.

40:00 'Liberty of Men' was another good one. 'Hands to Dinner' was another good call. 'Up Rum' was an important one, of course they didn't have 'Up Rum' in those days, we used to get a bottle of beer now and again. Over in England they used to pipe 'Up Rum'. That was a funny thing, they used to have a pannikin on a handle and they used to dip it in and serve it out into your cup, but when the new fellows come aboard, they used to put their thumb inside the

40:30 cup and pour it out, and every time they poured a tot of rum it was a thumb-full short. One of the fellows sang out, "Look Sir, he's got his thumb in it." Yeah we used to get the rum and the cooks were able to draw theirs in bulk. Used to go and draw it and we used to put it in the beer bottle and when the beer bottle pull up, used to take it in turns of having the rum. And you could work magic with it. I don't think I had to work one night on the ship because

41:00 you'd say to a bloke, "You want a tot of rum?" "Oh yeah." "Want to work for me tonight?" "Yeah, no trouble." And they were, anything for a tot of rum. Some of the fellows went mad on it, they, some of the stokers, one fellow was out for three days. Laid on the table for three days and they couldn't get him to come around. But he finally made it.

Tape 7

00:30 **What can you tell me about monkeys on board the ship?**

We had these monkeys aboard the ship, we used to catch them, I think in the Philippines we used to get them, either their or Borneo. But we used to get a coconut and you put a hole in the coconut and then put a stone inside. Then we used to hang the coconut up in the tree and had it on a leash and the monkey used to see it, pick it up,

01:00 rattle it and then decide to grab the stone. Now when they grabbed they stone they clenched their fist so they couldn't pull it out through the hole and all we had to do was pull the monkey back and you had a monkey. And we used to get the young ones and we used to sell them to the Yanks or we had six on board and we used to keep them. And the only trouble with the method of catching them, every now and then you'd finish up with a monkey's arm. They'd sort of resist and get caught up in the tree.

01:30 And they lived on board and we had a little tree for them to skylark in and then when they issued the beer they used to give the monkeys a bottle between them, between the six of them. And they had their little glasses and they used to drink it and they used to get up to all sorts of activities. They used to be turning somersaults and I don't know what all. On cold days they'd come and sit in the galley and warm their hands up in front of the fire. They had, they'd made tin helmets for them.

02:00 They had tin helmets, and when they'd sound off action stations, they used to scamper up in the timber that was used for the damage control and hide up there until it was all over. One day one of the monkeys went up to the forward mast, hit the radar gear and floated down in little pieces, black pieces. Yeah, killed himself. Another bloke had fowls on board. He had half a dozen chickens and they used to get an occasional egg.

02:30 But they were about the only live pets we had. And everybody had some sort of a hobby, there was all sorts of hobbies going on board. And one time there they had an art display and everyone was invited to have a go and I put in a bread, and I made it in the shape of a ship's crescent and made that and fancy rolls. And up until that time we'd convinced the ward

03:00 room that it wasn't practical to make bread rolls but I'd made all these fancy bread rolls so they put in an order for six or eight dozen every day. Which was alright. They had fellows that put boats in bottles, they used to make them and put them in bottles. And the silk pompoms, you've seen the silk pompoms, you get a frame and nails in it and get the silk across, tie it and cut them and fluff

03:30 them up. We used to make them. And what else did we used to do. There always seemed to be something to do. And they used to sunbake up on B-deck. B-deck was the recreational deck, you could go there any time of the day and sort of rest there. Of a night time, everybody had their walking area. A bit of clear deck and you'd walk 50 or 60 feet that way and turn around

04:00 and come back. You'd walk for about an hour just to keep yourself in pretty fair nick. And they had hockey teams, football teams, and we often went aboard, often went ashore and fought with the Yanks. Used to play them their grid iron. They used to come out with all their gear on and we used to go in a pair of shorts.

You said something before about a swimming pool that was built on deck.

04:30 Yeah, they got a big canvas swimming pool, it would've been about 30 feet. It was 70 feet across the ship and there was a space in the middle, a torpedo space, an open space and it filled the whole torpedo space. So much so that you could get up on the focus and you'd run down one side, dive in the pool and swim across, it was about four feet deep, and swim across the other side, get out the other side, run back and around again. Other times they'd

05:00 put guards on and you'd swim over the side. Sometimes they put a net over the side and you could swim over the side of the ship. Yeah it was quite good that. And then they put the water pipes around the side of the ship and run water down the side of the ship to cool it off. There was no air conditioner. Can you imagine up in the tropics with no air conditioner? The Shropshire was built for the Atlantic, not for the Pacific.

How often did

05:30 **you fish to get enough fish to serve the men for the mess?**

We used to carry a lot when we set sail, and then it was only when supplies got low that we used to go fishing. It would've happened about four or five times in the couple of years that we were up there. And then another thing we used to do was to go ashore shooting buffalo. They used to take a machine gun with them and that was in the

06:00 Philippines and get in the country and pick out the young ones and shoot them and the butcher used to go with them and used to cut off all the loins and all the good parts and bring them back. We used to serve them up. It was quite good it was, provided you got them young. Of course we had a pick, you could get whatever one, which sort you wanted. But that was another source of food. The Americans used to always be offering food and changing.

06:30 One time the Yankee ship come along side the destroyer and he said, “Would you like some chicken?” And we thought yeah what a thing, because chicken was a delicacy in those days, you never ever got chicken. Anyway he had these, must’ve been a couple hundred of these chickens and he changed them for beef, we had a bit of beef on board, so we give him the beef, we got the chickens and they were frozen of course, and when they thawed them out they were rotten. And strange

07:00 to say they still had their heads on, and it was an American rule, I think it still applies, that when they sell a chicken they must leave their head on so they can tell whether it’s a cock or a hen. And they’ve got to leave their head on and there was all these chickens with their heads on, and we’d been caught on that one. And of course, the ship had gone, miles away. They used to come aboard and ask for bread and they used to buy it a penny a pound. And it was compulsory

07:30 to give a small ship bread. We used to have to dig into our supply and give the ship sometimes a couple of, you’d lose a couple of hundred pound of bread in one hit. We didn’t mind doing it. Used to have to straight away start making to catch up. Bread was served a day old, baked today and served tomorrow, otherwise they’d eat their heads off.

What about fruit in the tropics, did you ever get any extra fruit supplies?

No, we never

08:00 seemed to get any tropical, like paw-paw should’ve been available and perhaps bananas, but none of them ever appeared. I don’t know why, perhaps the Yanks had a hold on it. But we used to often go over to Yankee ships and get a meal on them.

Can you compare that experience of eating on board an American ship?

Oh yeah, their bread used to be like cake. And they used to fill it up with fat and sugar and all sorts of things, milk powder, don’t know what else.

08:30 And, but the meals were quite good. They used to have chicken and all that sort of thing. Stuff that we never ever saw. We went across to Frisco [San Francisco] in a ship called the Mount Vernon. It had been on the Atlantic run and it still had the murals in the dining room and everything, and they had the tables, there were no chairs, the tables come down to eating height. You had to stand and eat.

09:00 And when you finished they used to push the tables up and have a peg in and have them out of sight. They’d use the dining room as a rec room. And the cooks had to work on that ship, and I was up in the bakery and I said, “Why don’t you make some Australian bread? I make bread with just flour and water and yeast.” And they couldn’t make it out. They were wrapped on it, “Oh a good bit of body in this.” Yeah we got to Frisco and got in a train

09:30 at Frisco and went right across America by train. And that was a real experience.

Can you talk in more detail about that journey?

Yeah, we left Frisco, went up over the Rockies and the first town we went was Reno and there was a big sign over the road, a hell of a sized thing, a big arch ‘the biggest little city in the world.’ And we only stopped there for a whistle stop. And then on the way over through America,

10:00 the train used to stop because we were the first troops to get back to America after the war, after Guadalcanal. And they had on the train, all white carriages, we had 200 air force recruits and then we had 200 ex-Canberra ratings, and they put on the side of the train ‘heroes from Guadalcanal’. And we used to pull up at a station and these people would be forewarned and they’d all be at the station with their

10:30 handouts of paper – little towels and wallets and that sort of thing. I finished up with a whole heap of gear on that trip. And then we had gone across from Frisco to New York and one of the places that impressed me most was Grand Junction. People were still riding horses there and getting around wearing six guns and that. And we went to Chicago and then down to

11:00 oh, the other thing was they had a couple of extra carriages on the train, and at the end of each talk we gave, was anybody that wishes to volunteer come in the back of the train. And we filled the carriage up two or three times and sent them off to Brooklyn Navy Yard and then when we arrived at Brooklyn Navy Yard, here’s all these blokes waiting for us. “Why there man, you talked us into joining.”

What was Brooklyn Navy Yard like?

It was a hell of a sized place. Really big. I was used to handling a thousand

11:30 but there were thousands of people there, a lot of ships. So we booked into navy, to Brooklyn at about two o’clock in the morning and immediately got leave and went up to Times Square and had a good look around there. And the people who made a fuss of us were the darkies, because the darkies had just been accepted in Australia. The people in Australia sort of treated them like human beings instead of like they were in America and we spent most of our time down Harlem. They’d take you down there, buy you all the grog

12:00 you could, that you wanted to drink and that, they were really good. And then we went, I went up to, first of all I went to the Anzac Club, that was a club formed by the air force in New York and I met a girl there and she said, “Don’t go home with anybody else, come home with me.” And I thought this’ll do me. Anyway she finished at eleven o’clock and other chap and I, that Alan Gore Jones,

12:30 she had a friend and we went up to Stanford, that was about so many miles north of New York, went to Stanford and they worked in an aircraft factory. And the first day, the lunchtime they used to have a big concert. They used to have a show, show and what, you know, you present different things, and these two girls took us, Alan Gore Jones and I. “These boys are

13:00 just back from Guadalcanal.” It was a hell of a time there. And we stayed there for about five or six days but we had to go back to New York every morning and report in, and no ships come back again. And we finished up, we used to leave there in the morning, and Alan Gore Jones, he was with this Stacey, she was at another house, but the one I was at, I used to have a shirt cleaned.

13:30 I wouldn’t get home til midnight and the shirt’d be cleaned and ironed and everything, and it’d be waiting for me with a ten dollar bill. And away I’d go down to New York, down to Brooklyn Navy Yard, report, then back again. We had a ball there. And then to keep ourselves in money, we got six pound when we left Australia, and to keep ourselves viable, we used to go to the stage door canteen and they used to give us a ticket to the various shows on

14:00 Broadway. And we used to go and sell the tickets and get money that way. Some people were waiting two years to see the shows. And we used to sell the tickets and then we’d have money to spend.

So the group of men you were with, this was on your way to England wasn’t it, for the rebuilding of the Canberra. How many of you were there?

220 Australians, mostly Canberra.

14:30 Some off to Perth, the Perth had been sunk, some off to Perth, and then there were other chosen people. The idea, the first draft of 200 people was to get into the ship, the various parts of the ship and sort of look, have a look at what was going on, make suggestions then and then over the next couple of months, the build arrived, till such time we had about, I think we had about 1200 when we left England.

15:00 Yeah it was quite a good time though.

So on your journey there, we you expected to do any kind of work at all?

Yeah, I took work in the bakery on the ship going across. And then there was no duties on the Mataroa, there was on the Shaw Savill, slow starvation, I often tell the story we went aboard at four o’clock and they give us a tin of peaches and half a loaf of bread for every six men, and then at six o’clock we went up to get supper and

15:30 they said, “You’ve had it.” And it was like that all the trip, it was murder. And one experience I had there, there was a crowd of Hondurans. They were from Central America and they were Forest Unit. One fellow was a barber and he come in and he said, “Anybody want a haircut?” I said, “Yeah, I want a haircut.” So I go in the next compartment, he’s got a butter box and I sit on the butter box and he gets behind me and he puts his knee in me back and he gets a brass comb and a razor and just

16:00 pulled it straight over. Talk about a scare, I jumped up and I said, “What are you doing?” And he finished up, he give me a fantastic haircut, just with the razor and the comb. Jesus I’ll never forget him. And then you could buy stuff from the canteen. Tons of stuff for sale in the canteen, but you couldn’t get a feed. That’s where I saw the Aurora Borealis going across there.

16:30 A report of gunfire on the horizon. Went down to Ireland. We went to Iceland first and picked up a destroyer in Iceland, took it down to Ireland and then across to Avonmouth in Wales and then across to England, across to Chatham. We arrived in Kent on the 28th of November and for six weeks the sun didn’t shine.

17:00 Not a sign of the sun anywhere and the second night I was in England I went skating and went to Rochester and I’m skating around and they said, “If the planes are within 20 mile, they’ll play the air raid siren. If they’re overhead, they’ll be ten pips on the factory whistle.” So I’m skating around and the sirens went and nobody moved right, and I’m looking around and they’re all skating around as though nothing had happened.

17:30 And all of a sudden the ten pips went on the factory whistle, and they all made for the door including me, and I forget I had the skates on. And I went straight out the door and about four or five steps, I missed them, and I landed in that position and got a full dislocation of that arm. And it’s been the same ever since. So they took me up to the hospital, it was, the arm was like this, they took me up to the hospital, to Chatham and that was run by the navy and that was a rough old turn that was. And the biggest part of the patients

18:00 were the ones who’d been in the motor torpedo boats raiding the French coast and some had legs off and some had arms off, and they were in a hell of a mess. And here’s me with just a dislocation. So anyway, I was up there for about four or five days and a specialist came from England, he was a, from Harvey Street, he was a bone specialist and they said, “This fellow’s got a full dislocation.” So he said, “Hold your hands out like that.” And I held them like that. He felt this,

18:30 and he said, “Hold him around the waist.” And a couple of blokes held me and he just twisted it and I could feel it go back into position again. But it’s never been 100% since.

So what was the hospital like? You said it was a bit rough, can you describe it in a bit more detail?

It was a typical hospital, a ward with the beds, in the middle was a big fire, they had a coal fire going there and the nurses were sick bay tiffys.

19:00 They were fellows like, you know. And the doctors attended through the day and the attention in the day wasn’t too bad, but as soon as night time come, they used to all go to sleep. And there was one time there a fellow sang out, “Oxygen, oxygen, me tank’s run out.” And they just ignored him and he died. And then they used to just ignore people wanting things. Other fellows wanted to go to the toilet and couldn’t walk

19:30 and they had to finish up doing it in bed. It was a rough old turn that was. And then there were fellows dying there all the time because they were so badly wounded. But I got out of that and got back to the ship and put on light duties. And just carried on as before. Oh no, I got a fortnight’s leave to go to Dundee, there were people out here give me an address of people over there, relations.

20:00 And I went up to Dundee in the Flying Scotsman and the father worked in the jute factory and the mother run the house and there was a daughter and a son and they worked at the various jobs. And the first day I was there, the mother said, “What would you like to do today?” And I said, “I’ve got a couple of white shirts I’d like to wash out.” And she said, “I’m going to the laundry today or tomorrow, you can come with me.”

20:30 So anyway, in the morning she gets this sheet and lays it out on the table, puts all the washing in, ties it up, puts it on the back and away we go. So I took it off her as best I could, we go to this communal wash house and you go in and there’s all these wooden troughs along the wall with a steam pipe in them and you put the water in, put your clothes in, soap them up and then you turn the steam on and they come to the boil,

21:00 and you rinse them and then the drying room had a big wheel, used to put your clothes on and put them in and they used to go right down to the other end of the whatsits, the real hot area and in about two or three hours they’d be dry. And then they’d come out and then you’d hump them home again. And in the meanwhile you sat with all the old ladies, stooping and yarns. That’s a fun thing, used to enjoy that. And then I said to her, I said, “I’d like to have a shower.” And there’s

21:30 no shower in the house and I said, “Where’s the shower?” They said, “Out through the clothes and down the street and across the road, there’s a big building and it’s in there.” So anyhow I go down to this place and, “Take off your clothes, put your bathers on.” You got a little bit of soap and you go through this pool of Condy’s crystals, that’s for the toe jam on your feet because they used to wear their socks for weeks on end.

22:00 And through the Condy’s crystals and straight in the mix. And you used to have a couple of hours there in the daytime. Yeah, it was a rough old bloody set up there.

Could you talk a little bit more about when you went to Scotland to the Cameron Highlanders place?

I served in the Cameron Highlanders here and their headquarters was Edinburgh Castle. That was the headquarters of the battalion, so

22:30 I went up and went up to Lion Gate, I knew that much to go up to Lion Gate, the Officer of the Watch came out and I told him who I was. He said, “Come inside.” So I went in and they had this big book about as big as that table, and they got those bamboo sticks through it and they turned the pages over, two fellows, one each end, turned the pages over and they said, “Who are you?” And I told them, and in the book it started off with Archers and all sorts of people, Yeomen and so they turned up all the pages

23:00 and there in black and white was my name, Edward Trappett, and they said, “What was your official number?” And I told them, “420218.” And I established myself as a Cameron Highlander and they had three days with the Officers and three with the sergeants, and three with the men.

Can you tell me about the three days that you spent with each and what you saw?

Yeah they, the Officers took me to the sort of a museum it was, all the different implements that have been

23:30 used over the years. The sergeants wanted to fill me up with grog and I was very careful about that. And then we did a tour of the castle, up on the top was a little chapel. Queen Catherine I think it was, anyway her chapel, and it’s bare stone, the floor was bare stone where she used to, you know, and that was the only castle that the Romans couldn’t conquer. It remained free.

24:00 The Romans took every other castle in the country except that one. And the siege was over four years, and they had enough stuff in the castle to last four years. And then when I went with the men, it was

just the usual banter went on, you know, telling yarns and all that sort of thing. And I got tipped out and then I went to Binney's Hotel and met a fellow called Collins, he was an Airforce officer.

24:30 And his brother was coming over to join the Shropshire later on. So I got talking to him and I said, "What do you do?" And he said, "I'm flying the Hamptons." He said, "They go and raid the Norwegian coast of a night-time, they come back, they take out the instruments, they test them, put them back in again." Then he does a four hour flight to test them to make sure they're ready for the next night. And we used to fly across to Oban, then from Oban across through Arbroath and then down to

25:00 Lucas, that was near Dundee. And I had several days with, three days I had flying with him. But he used to frighten me, we were up one day and he says – and I was sitting in the glass nose, right up in the front and I had me parachute on, my finger in the ring ready to pull it in case I needed it. But they used to just throw their parachutes in the back. And he said, "That's the Forth Bridge down there." I said, "Yeah."

25:30 He said, "Would you like to fly under it?" This Hampton bomber, the wings would've been as wide as this yard, big wide wings on them, and he dives straight down and just swoops up at the last minute. And then he said, "We'll go and have a look at St Andrew's golf course." So we go over to St Andrews. He said, "Now the people have been told that no plane can fly across here except friendly planes – except enemy planes." He said, "Any plane that comes over is an enemy. So, he said,

26:00 "We'll see how the players react." So there was four fellows around a hole and he dived in towards them and they were hiding behind tufts of grass. And we went off and flew away and then we flew over the Isle of May, that was like where they trained the aircraft carriers, it was a big island and it had this runway on it. That was all that was on it just this runway and they used to land on that. And then I finished me leave, oh I was there for the New Year.

26:30 No, Christmas and New Year. Christmas time was just another day. There wasn't any indication of Christmas Day or plum puddings or anything, but the Hogmanay New Year, was the big day, they looked forward to that. And the first thing was' 'first footing'. This 'first footing' means that they get a tall handsome fellow and at this stage, because of being Australian I got the job, and they take them around all the different houses

27:00 and you've all got a bottle of something with you and the host brings out an urn and you all pour something into the urn and you all have a drink. And they pull out this cake, it's a real thick mass of fruit it is, and they cut a piece off and you have a piece. And then the tall dark handsome puts his foot over, he's the first foot over the threshold for the New Year. So we went off then and I finished up, I lost me cap

27:30 and wound up with a bowler hat. And I thought god what am I going to do going back to the ship with a bowler hat, so it was just a matter of there was an NAAFI [Navy, Army, Air Force Institute] canteen in town, so all I had to do was go in the NAAFI canteen and grab the first cap I see and off with it. And went back to Chatham then. That was a real enjoyable stay that.

Can you talk about the end of that journey, the Canberra, which is now the Shropshire being

28:00 **built, like when you went on to do the job that you'd come there for, to check everything out, what were some of the faults that you saw, what were some of the ideas that came up?**

In the bread trade you've got to worry about temperatures and so forth. They're your main worries, the temperature regulates the speed they rise and all that sort of thing. The ship had been built for the Atlantic which meant that everything was built around the oven, but when you made the dough you put it in

28:30 a bin beside the oven to keep it warm, to keep it rising. But when you came out to Australia it was so hot that you needed it away from the oven and against the ships side. So that was the main thing, you had to get all that shifted. Then they'd gone up to the Admiralty to ask to have a cafeteria messing instead of the ordinary messing, they wanted this cafeteria and

29:00 there was a lot of objection to it. Some reckoned there was too many people in the one area at the one time and everything. The next thing was, they were making loaves of bread and they was quite small and I suggested they make a bigger loaf strange to say the sailor don't like crusts. They used to avoid the crusts and so it meant then there were less crusts to have and they were much easier to handle. And then from my point of view

29:30 they were much better to bake in the oven because you didn't have to put so many in the oven. And that was always an art, in the oven, when the bread rises in the tin, it gets to a point where it's just below where it finishes, and then you had to put them in the oven, but if they got bumped in any way, the dough would fall down. All the air would come out of it. So we had to put them in the oven with the peel and as the ship rolled that way, you had to put the second

30:00 one in, then when the ship rolled back you had to hold that lot back. And then you had to fill the whole of the oven up like that. It was quite an art to get everything in together. We used to make three doughs a day, with the compressed yeast you can regulate it, we made the three of them, one after the other. The one used to go in the bin, the other one used to go on the top ready to work on and the other one

used to stay in the mixer.

30:30 And then we used to have a continuous baking then. Prior to that they used to have to take them one at a time and it used to take all day to make the bread. And the way we was doing it, four hours you was out of it. Just finished. But that was the main difference, just to get the galley working along those lines. All the stuff was in the right place.

So was it a more efficient galley than the original Canberra?

Oh yeah.

31:00 We'd asked for things to be made to our measure, according to the size of the dough, the size of the tray and that sort of thing, we worked all that out. And yeah, it worked out quite good, and it had a good mixer, big round bowl and an arm went that way and was pulling the dough around that way while it was still circulating, and that made a real good mix. 20 minutes and the dough was ready to put away. It was interesting.

31:30 And then the other thing I did, I had a cupboard made, it was a proving cupboard, and it was a cupboard that you could put water, and boiled water underneath if required to heat it up through. But then the cupboard's against the wall, I had them put on wheels and it meant that you could pull them out and clean behind the thing and then put it back again.

32:00 It made it easy cleaning. A few things like that we invented. And it was quite a big oven, it'd be from about here to the – about that wide, six tray.

Can you describe to me what it'd be like cooking when there's big seas or very bad weather? What are some of the hazards in the kitchen that you come across?

First thing is, the roll of the ship, according to how far they roll,

32:30 you've got to keep it below that level in the copper. Like if you've got a copper full and it rolls, you spill half of it. You had to cook with a low level, that was the one thing. And then on the range, when you had stuff to deep fry and stuff like that, you had these bars you put in, there was a bar along the front with nicks in it and a bar along the back with nicks in it and then you used to put a bar, divide it and that had nicks in it, you could subdivide it, keep all your pots

33:00 firm. You had to do that, that was always a big thing. And then the ovens, you had to be careful not to have too much fat in the whatsits, otherwise it'd spill and catch fire, all that sort of thing. Oh no, it was a thing that you was aware of. And then of course when it got really rough, you had to regulate the meal to suit the weather. For instance, breakfast can be boiled eggs, you can put them in a net

33:30 and drop them in the copper and get them out again, and that's it. But the bakery, I could handle the bakehouse alright, as I say, you had to hold the stuff so it didn't bump and that. It was quite an experience, different to shore.

Did you have any problems with a fire breaking out in the galley and how did you handle that?

We came into Brisbane and we tied up at the abattoirs,

34:00 beside a tanker, and it was four o'clock in the afternoon, there was fish and chips on for tea and two cooks were duty, most of them were shore, and they were both race horse men, both keen on the horses. So they lit up the range and put the fat on and went outside listening to the radio outside and the fire, the fat's getting hotter and hotter on it, to such a time as it burst into flames,

34:30 and we're tied up beside a tanker. And it's a favourite joke in the navy, when they have fire exercises, they say, "Fire in the…" such and such a compartment. And the first report the fireman was running around singing out, "Fire in the galley." And the answer was, "Course there bloody well is, there's got to be a fire in the galley." Anyway they finally got it out, but unfortunately we all had our gasmasks in a locker there.

35:00 You're supposed to keep them with you all the time in your own locker, but we'd put them all up in there. And we all had to buy another gas mask, had to pay for that. And then there was a lot of aprons and odds and ends, personal stuff burned. And then of course there was all the charred walls and everything, we had to repaint it and do it up. But that was the only fire we ever had. That's quite good as far as I know.

Do you remember what sort of punishment those guys would've got for something like that?

35:30 They got out of it somehow, I think they claimed there was a leak in one of the vats. They got out of it, one was me brother-in-law, old Doug. But that was the cause of it, they were outside listening to the races instead of inside watching the fat.

Was there much maintenance that you had to do on the kitchen equipment?

We had to more or less do our own maintenance.

36:00 That was cleaning and all that sort of thing. But the bakehouse, the floor of the oven was bricks, so the bricklayer used to – we had a bricklayer on board, he used to look after that. And then there was a

stoker used to look after the oil burners on the range. We had two oil burners, like blow lamps and that, and he used to come up every day and clean those, just to make sure they worked alright.

36:30 That was about the only maintenance required. And the rest was just clean and polish. We used to go through the mess deck early morning before the sailors got up and wipe off their towels because they were handy for doing the decks. Another trick they used to have was when you was in port, they used to race through and the blokes used to get in their hammock and of course their boots would be underneath. We used to sell their boots. They – you'd see the natives ashore with a big pair of boots on, getting around.

37:00 Talking about boots, in South Africa, we were going ashore and the Skipper said, "Right," he said, "it's the first time you've been to South Africa, don't go up District Six, don't drink Cape Brandy and don't associate with the black girls. With the black girls it's four years without the option of a fine. And according

37:30 to what caste they are, half caste is two years and so forth." So what we do, we get ashore and hire a rickshaw and "District Six." So away we go to District Six and it was a shaky old joint that one. So anyway we got out of there, and then we went to a hotel and this Cape Brandy, it's potent stuff like, real strong spirit. And this Harper, this mate of mine walks in and he says, "give us a bottle of Cape Brandy

38:00 and two flasks will you? And two glasses." And the barman looked – "You drink this about that much at a time." So Harper gets the bottle, takes the top off it, pours a full one for me and a full one for him and he gets his and drinks his and falls over in a heap on the floor. And I'd taken a few sips of mine and I'd run outside and fell over and stayed there and when

38:30 I woke up me boots were gone. The boots and we had paper collars those days, and they'd torn me paper collar off and they'd taken me wallet and I was in a hell of a mess. And then we had to get back on the ship. And had to go back barefooted. But the rickshaw boys used to be a circus there. They'd pull you a mile for a threepence. And we used to offer them two bob if they'd take us down District Six – down to

39:00 the main drag. And there used to be a black copper on the intersection and he had this big long rubber truncheon, and this fellow's trotting down with his rickshaw, he's got his legs painted white for the traffic and he's got all these clothes on him so he gets a big sweat up, and he's running down and old Harper and I are sitting in the back of the rickshaw laughing and carrying on and we said, "Keep going, keep going."

39:30 So as he went past this copper, he just swiped him with this truncheon and hit him behind the ear and he just went down in a heap and the rickshaw ran over the top of him and then it fell backwards and we fell out on our heads.

Before you said you kept the potatoes and the pumpkin up on deck in baskets, did the sea air ever affect them?

No. It was cooling. It was a wire cage.

40:00 A big wire cage, a big room. It would've been about as big as that. It had a couple of hundred bags of spuds in it, you can imagine how big it would be. No, that was in the fresh air. The potatoes would last there up to six weeks and it was pretty – well it was well aired because it was all mesh. And the other side was the butcher's shop. They were both on the upper deck.

Tape 8

00:30 **So how was it that you ended up in the Dock Police?**

I was paid off in 1946, I was the leading cook and I joined – had to sign on to the naval reserve I think they called it, for another series of years, in the meanwhile they wrote to me from Canberra and offered me a job as an instructor in the newly formed naval reserve. An instructor in the cooking branch.

01:00 So anyway I went in to see them and had a satisfactory interview and I'm walking out and the Dockyard Police Sergeant said to me, he said, "You're big enough and ugly enough to be a dockyard policeman." So I said, "Oh yeah, what's the conditions?" And in the bakery making the doughs I was getting ten pound a week which was a pretty good wage those days and he said, "The wages are about seven pound a week." And I said, "I'm getting ten." And he said, "Oh what do you do?" And I told him.

01:30 And he said, "You can have every Friday off if you like and you work in the bakery." You used to get five pound a day in the bakery. So I decided to join. So I joined them, joined in Brisbane and in Brisbane there was 14 of us and they were a real decent crowd, real good blokes. We used to protect each other and we worked at the naval depots at Alice St and down at Pinkenba and at Bulimba and everything went really well until such time

02:00 as they decided to cut down on the activities in the port. And they closed the depot down at Pinkenba

and they closed the depot at Bulimba so we suspected that some people had to go to Sydney. And of all things, the navy's policy was instead of the last in first out, it was first in first out, and the senior fellows got sent to Sydney. So I got sent to Sydney. So we went down, I sold the house that I built and

02:30 we got a good price, I think we got $3,500 for the house and went to Sydney and bought a house at Saint Mary's and I was at Garden Island for a start. And Garden Island was – it was a place where you couldn't put a foot wrong. Couldn't trust your friends, they were all trying for promotion, that sort of thing, so then I eventually got sent up to Kingswood, that was outside Penrith. So I went

03:00 up to Kingswood and I was there for I think about six years I was there. But the worst thing that ever happened to the dockyard police was firstly in 1949 it was a guard section and it was people who were medically un – not unfit but medically wrong and then they formed this new dockyard police for part of the RAN [Royal Australian Navy], as permanent

03:30 navy and the wages went up to fourteen pound a week. So I found myself with seven or eight kids and I sat down and worked it out that it was about twice the basic wage and it'd be good to go to Sydney and stay there see. So anyway I'm up at Kingswood and everything was going quite well there until they brought out all sorts of rules and regulations like

04:00 you couldn't wear a uniform ashore because you might interfere with the local police. And here we are a member of the permanent navy force and couldn't wear a uniform, that was one thing I was upset about. And then the other thing was if you made any mistakes they sent you as far away from your home as they could. And it finished up, one of the main causes, the elementary causes was the fellows who got to be officers

04:30 were ex-able seamen, and they'd been in seniority and of course when the promotions come up they got the seniority. And there's one thing you can't do is to make a sailor an officer. It's one of the hardest jobs and you either go one of two ways, you're either too soft or too hard, one way or the other and that was the first thing and then the people were starting to strive to get made sergeants and then the worst thing of all was when they

05:00 bought the aircraft carriers they brought a lot of English people out. And when they were paid off they became dockyard policemen and you couldn't trust them. It didn't matter what you did, you couldn't get on the right side of them. They were struggling for promotion and topping each other off. In the first place the dockyard police used to search all the dockyard workers in Sydney and you used to hold them up for twenty minutes to get the bus,

05:30 so the dockyard police – the dockyard workers complained and they got it made that they'd only search one in ten. And then they got it that they only made the random searches. So they lost that power there. The next thing the sailors were getting pulled in, one fellow was charged with smuggling and he was guilty of taking too many cigarettes ashore. You could take twenty.

06:00 He had a packet of twenty in his pocket and he was smoking one, and that made 21, so he was guilty of whatsit. Anyway things like this popped up. A fellow come back of a night time with a bottle beer down his sock and instead of taking the beer off him and putting it in the office they were taking him back to the ship and charging him and pulling the Officer of the Watch out of bed and everything. So they didn't have too good a name. So anyway, I'm up at Kingswood and all these things are happening,

06:30 so when the time came, I'd done 17 years as a dockyard policeman and the option was to sign on for another three years and get a pension, but the pension only started in '49 and it wasn't due to be paid until '69, when I – I'd have to wait that three years to get it. And the pension offered was $15 a fortnight, which wasn't worth

07:00 worrying about. So anyway I decided to go out. I went out side and I started, I worked in a bakery for 12 months and then I started a catering business. But the dockyard police, it got that way they were running each other around and it got unbearable. But they were the two causes, the ordinary seamen being made officers and the British people coming in.

07:30 **What were your general duties as a dockyard policeman?**

The actual duties that you were supposed to be doing was protecting the stores. Checking people in and out, like as people were coming in you'd look at their pass, and issuing passes and checking goods in and out and that's about all that mattered to you. But these people wanted to be arresting people and all sorts of things. Anyway a lot of them went down to Sydney and they could go

08:00 back to Brisbane and more come down. But I finished up getting out, I give it away altogether. I got $6,000 pay out, that was the pay out $6,000 and started the catering business. But the dockyard police were a very disappointing part of me life. Good in Brisbane, fantastic in Brisbane, I think I did about 12 years in Brisbane and you could trust each other and if you was late

08:30 the fellow would wait for you. In Sydney if you was late you got fined. No way in the world. And the final act was they had a rule that you couldn't work a second job. So I was working at a pig farm, a fellow had started a pig farm and didn't know too much about it and I was doing the building and I was doing all sorts of work for him in me spare time, and one day the sergeant in charge and the inspector come up and grabbed me and took me down to the

09:00 Garden Island and charged me for working two jobs. So anyway I went up before the captain and incidentally the officers weren't too popular with the navy people, so I had to go before the captain of the Port and he said, "How do you plead?" I said, "Guilty sir, I'm guilty, I was working, I've got eight children." And I said, "I'm getting fourteen pound a week." And I said, "It's just not enough." And I said, "I'm taking work on the side." I said, "it's not affecting my duties in any way." And he said,

09:30 "Well," he said, "you've pleaded guilty so I have to fine you. Fined five pound." So I said, "I've got word that there's a policeman retiring in Brisbane on Monday." I said, "Can I take his place?" And he said to his people, "Is there any reason why not?" And they said, "No." So I asked to be redirected to Brisbane. I come to Brisbane, did six months up here on my own and then went back to Sydney and got out of it.

10:00 They were a rum mob.

The time you were spending there when you weren't really happy, did you think back to your days as a cook?

Oh yeah, crikes yeah. Often wished I'd have stayed on but I was in the position with all the kids like that I had to stay home and give the wife a bit of a hand. It was quite a handful. Seven boys and a girl, the girl was third I think. And it was quite an effort to keep them all going.

10:30 **So how much did you draw on your naval experience when you started up your own business?**

A terrible lot because I was used to bulk cooking and handling staff, that was another big thing. We had 20 girls on call, they were all casuals but 20 girls on call, and it was handy having handled staff before. And in the navy you get that sort of feeling that everyone's trying to trick you.

11:00 And you're fully aware of what's going on around you. But strange to say, the golf club that I took on was only about half a mile away from the navy depot where I used to work, and I got the contract of feeding the navy people up there. There was about 40 people that worked in an area up there and I was feeding them. Feeding them at lunch time. Yeah the dockyard period was a very disappointing period of my life. But the brother-in-law, he went down and did his time down there

11:30 and he just plodded along. He came back to Brisbane. He finished up doing 34 years in the dockyard police. He retired when he was – I think it was 60 or 65 or something. And he's on a pension now, $260 a week. The way things change you know. I was offered fifteen bucks a fortnight. But I'm glad I went like because I had a go on my own in the catering business and did quite well.

12:00 We used to do about 20 balls every year and I'd all the view clubs and lodges and the Lions and all those would be all tied up, they all used to come to the golf club. And they used to have a golf day every month, the professional used to lay out all his gear and we used to have a putting competition inside the hall and we used to invite one of the famous golfers up to lecture, and I used to put the meal on and

12:30 he used to sell the gear. It was good.

What about in domestic life, you've got eight kids, did you ever run the kitchen at home as well?

No, the, most of the stuff used to be carted from the golf club home. Like the wife used to work with me. And we'd have breakfast at home, feed the kids, get them off to school and then later on we had a woman that used to get the kids to school and that. But then it'd be lunch up at the golf club of course and then the wife would come home about four

13:00 o'clock and bring the tea home with her. And then I'd stay up there and get home later on in the night. But the golf club was really run down, it was. And I started off a free cup of tea and biscuit at the 19th hole, they used to go past the galley and I used to feed them free of charge. And used to put on snacks and all this sort of thing. Used to invite other golf clubs to come and play and everything. Yeah, finished up they did really well. It's one of the top clubs in the town now.

13:30 They paid off all their debts. They borrowed money to build it of course, and they'd only paid the interest, they hadn't paid a penny off the principal and they were getting on and they wanted some money, and that's when they appealed for a caterer. I said, "Well you've got nothing to offer me and I've got tons to offer you." Which turned out to be right. Sold out, we did the trip around the world then.

Going back, when you were talking about going to the United States, you'd seen Australia

14:00 **as a country at war and sort of the conditions in Australia, and after you went to the US you saw what England was like, dealing with an egg a month and that sort of thing, did you get a feeling that America was at war? What was the take on that?**

It was after Pearl Harbor when we went to America and the people were just getting to the stage where they were getting behind things, they were just starting to move and the main hail

14:30 there was, "Hi Cousin." They reckoned we were cousins. But America was shaping up pretty well at that time and we had a lot of rallies in Times Square, they used to rally there of a night time and pledge their allegiance all this sort of thing. Yeah we saw the war in Australia as you say, and people were,

15:00 they weren't exactly handicapped there, but they were a bit short on some of the things. You had to have coupons for that, and the black market was pretty strong, you could get anything at a price. But in England, they were really bad off there, they were shocking there. Old clothes, people raggy and all that sort of thing.

Can you recall where you were when you heard about Pearl Harbor?

I was in Sydney and in the

15:30 HMAS Canberra tied up beside the Bungaree at Garden Island. And they come on and they said, "The Japanese have bombed Pearl Harbor." And it was about midday I think when we heard that and they straight away got up steam and the next day we were at sea. And it was – ships always get out to sea when anything happened. And we got out to sea and we come to Brisbane and we were in Brisbane for about

16:00 a week and then we sailed off to go across the Pacific to the North of New Guinea – North of New Zealand to pick up an American convoy. This convoy was headed for Pearl Harbor and when Pearl Harbor got bombed they redirected it to come to Australia and we picked it up off the north of New Zealand and brought them across to Brisbane. Brought them up Moreton Bay. They all sailed up the Brisbane River,

16:30 We stayed at Moreton Bay. And we were there for three or four days. A ship called the Pensacola, one of the Yankees was there, and this crowd had the equipment for building an airport. All the heavy equipment and that, they came up, they tied up at Hamilton, they commandeered the racecourse and when they went to get their gear out the gates at Hamilton, the gates were too small so they bulldozed them down.

17:00 And they moved into the racecourse and then we went from there – where am I? Christmas. We went from there to – it wasn't New Zealand, anyway we were handy at the time, you know around the coast. And we did that trip to Moresby to get the seasoned troops and took them to Singapore.

17:30 And then we came back and then we were in Harbour when the Japanese subs come in, they fired at us and missed us and then we come to Brisbane and then we sailed out of Brisbane for Wellington and joined the fleet and then up the Guadalcanal. And that was the finished.

What about at the start of the war, when war was first declared. Can you remember where you were when you heard that?

Yeah, I was at the gate of a friend of mine.

18:00 Kissing her goodnight, nine o'clock at night, and they came on, they said, "A state of war exists between Britain and Germany." And I'm standing there in a Queensland Cameron Highlanders uniform, a machine gunner. I thought 'oh dear, where am I going to be from here?' So anyway, we had to report straight to the nearest camp like, which at that time was up at Redbank and

18:30 then they had all the usual panic and all that went on there. And then they called for the second AIF. And they had to be six foot or taller and a certain size. They were a fine body of men those fellows. And here I am in a kilt instructing them. And they used to go ashore of a night time and get drunk and come back and sleep all day. You'd have them sitting there and you'd say to one bloke, "Wake up there, wake up, get your pack on and run around the block." "Go to buggery."

19:00 Used to have to call the Warrant Officer and the Warrant Officer come over, he'd shift them, the permanent Warrant Officer. But they was a hard time, only from that point of view. We used to get off every night, I think it was four o'clock we used to finish and then start eight o'clock again the next morning. And it went right through from then until the middle of '40.

So with Pearl Harbor happening, what were your thoughts on the United States being dragged into the war?

19:30 We were glad because we were hoping they would've come in miles before. And when they got dragged in that way, we thought that's it like, we're on the way. And then when the score come out of what they actually got, we were panicking like because they had nothing left. If those three aircraft carriers hadn't have been at sea they would've had nothing. And we met up with them later on.

20:00 Where'd we first strike them? We formed a 74th task force, it was formed in Brisbane, the Nashville, I forget, Boise, it was quite a few American cruisers plus the Australia and the Hobart and the Canberra and then we hunted in a pack with them. But it was interesting.

And with yourself serving

20:30 **in the navy, during the war, what were your feelings like, were you fighting for King and country or for Australia or for yourself? What was the feeling?**

We were instilled to think that it was for the good of the country. Like if Hitler had have taken over we would've all been slaves and it would've been right too. And we were a bit keen on what we were doing, we were hoping it would work out that way. And then of course after Pearl Harbor, we thought

21:00 we had more chance than what we did before. And then that crowd we boarded at Brisbane, it was only a fortnight, three weeks after the war broke out. After the 7th, it was the 19th I think before they got over here and that was a pretty big move. But there was a camp there where the Chermside shopping centre is now, it started there and it finished up at the bridge at Petrie and there was almost a million Americans

21:30 in that area and they used to give them two man tents and turn them out and report to a certain parade ground. It was a funny thing happened, a chap lived with us, he was one of a big family, and he come around to the mother one day and he said, "I'm sick of that pigsty around the corner." He said, "Can I come and live here?" And the mother said, "Yeah, right oh." So Jack stayed with us, must've been four or five years before the war and when the war broke out, he wasn't too keen to join up.

22:00 And he got called up. He got his notice to report to Water Street Depot at nine o'clock in the morning with a cut lunch. So away he goes with a cut lunch. Nine o'clock at night he's not home. So the father said, "I'll go and find out where he is." So he rides his bike over, gets the tram in to Water Street, fronts up and they said, "He's gone to New Guinea." And they were taking blokes off the street, sending them up to New Guinea

22:30 and they were training with broomsticks and so forth instead of rifles and bayonets, and then the next thing they had them on the Kokoda Trail. And this fellow went up the Kokoda Trail and he got about 30 mile up I think, and they're in some long grass one time and they went, put their heads down and the Japs were firing at them, and a bullet hit his haversack, he still had his haversack on, and hit a plate in the haversack,

23:00 and went down and put a furrow across his buttocks, and it wanted 40 stitches. So they stitched him up and they sent him back to Brisbane and he was only away less than three months at the time, and they wanted to put him out of the service and he said, "No." He said, "You ruined me," he said, "you can keep me." And he wound up a guard down at Cowra. Remember where all the Japanese escaped. He finished up down there. Yeah, old Jack Smith. He's still around, he's in the home just

23:30 around the corner here.

What about Darwin, did you ever hear of that being bombed?

Yeah, we knew all about that. We got the message that there was more planes bombed Darwin than what there were bombed Pearl Harbor. The same crowd but they had more of them. After the war I joined the Westralia, I went up to Darwin to pick up troops to bring back to Brisbane and I saw the damage there and that place was completely wrecked. The railway line, every sleeper had at least two or three

24:00 bullets in it where they'd strafed the railway line. And all the buildings were knocked down, there was hardly a building standing there. And the ships were still sunk in the harbour. They got a doing there. And there was something like 250 air raids there. They'd just shoot, some were only one or two planes but never the less they were raids. But there were some disgraceful things happened there, the air force they bombed

24:30 the airport and damaged all the planes, so the air force give it away and it was shot down, down to – down south somewhere. Then the navy stuck to their guns though, they stayed at the depot. And the army, the heavy gunnery blokes, they all stayed. Most of them shot through and all the wharfies shot through. There was a bloke up the road from our place at Nundah, he was up in Darwin, he was home within the week.

25:00 Hitch-hiked all the way. He said, "No good staying there, too dangerous staying there."

So did you feel like the flow of information about what was happening in the war was adequate?

Yeah, it was quite good from the point of view of the usual run of things like bombardment of New Guinea and all that sort of thing, we were right up top on that. But the thing we didn't know about was the prisoners of war. We didn't have any idea what was going on there. And the only inkling we ever had was

25:30 we were up in Borneo and they signalled up to go north to that Sandakan march was just about to start, and they wanted us to bombard over the top of the camp and the Battalion of the Black Watch was going to go in and save all those fellows, and they'd left two or three days before. And of course they were gone like, you know. And out of 600, six survived. One of my cousins did there.

26:00 He was a great big bloke. And when he went to school he was in long pants and they called him Tunny, he was that big a bloke and he died of malnutrition. Impossible.

What was the camaraderie like within the navy in regards to other ships being damaged or sunk?

We were very sympathetic towards them, the thing was we were glad it wasn't us sort of them. That was the first impression. But we were terribly sympathetic

26:30 towards them because you knew just exactly, especially once I was on the Canberra, I say we knew

exactly what they'd be experiencing. See the Sydney went, they lost 645. The Perth went and lost 370. A lot of people. When you think of the Sydney, you see that march through Sydney, that big long waving cobble of men and every one of them disappeared. But that should never have happened, they went

27:00 a bit too close.

What were your feelings about going aboard the new Canberra next week?

Looking forward to it as a matter of fact. Looking forward to the point of view of the present day navy have not got much idea of what went on during the war. I've spoken to sailors, we often get invited to cocktail parties on ships and that, I've spoken to young sailors, some of them officers too, they'd never heard of the Shropshire, never heard of it. And I said, "Oh you're joking."

27:30 They said, "What was it?" And I said, "A cruiser." They, "Oh gees. Didn't know that." And the traditions that we'd formed have not been carried on. They don't tell the people about that. I'm looking forward to going to the Canberra, and a lot of this gear will go with me, and I'll show it to the lads. They can copy it if they want to, give them some ideas of what went on. They, yeah that's one of the sad things about the present day. And of course,

28:00 with the way of living these days and the women on board, it's not the same navy.

You said that the bakery job on the ship was pretty highly sought after. What was the thing that set the bakery aside from the regular cooking duties?

The main thing was that you was your own boss. Now the Paymaster had told me that all I had to do was supply

28:30 the bread and keep the bread supplies up, work my own hours. And consequently there's no falling in every time, there's no Chief Cook or anything to worry about. And Doug and I just made the thing. We used to have a routine, we used to go up there at three o'clock in the morning, we used to make the dough and then they had dawn action. We'd fall in for dawn action, take about an hour, while we were in dawn action the dough would rise. Then we'd go back after dawn action, take

29:00 the first dough and then have breakfast and then by about nine o'clock we'd finish work for the day and the day was our own. Used to get into framing photos.

So what did you reckon about your job on the ship, do you reckon it was one of the better ones?

Oh yeah it was quite good. But every now and again, there was one time the Chief Cook got confined to his cabin, he was – he had a crew in the bakery and one

29:30 of the biggest scares in the baking trade is a disease called rope. And this rope is a germ in the wheat and it's always there, but can only be generated by dirty conditions. And those things that I was telling you that I had placed against the wall, pulled out and cleaned behind, that was because the flour could drop down. Bit of moisture and you had stuff growing straight away. So anyway they got this rope

30:00 on the ship and what happened right, instead of the bread rising, it just stays small and turns like a syrup and shocking it is. And the germ is so strong it can withstand boiling for 20 minutes. And anyway, they got this and we were way up top, so the Paymaster seen me, he says, "What's wrong?" I said, "They've got rope in the brew." He said, "How can it get that?" And I said, "Dirty conditions." And he said,

30:30 "How can that happen?" And I threw it to him, "Not pulling out cupboards, and leaving the flour, and the moisture get to work and it develops there and then gets into the woodwork." It can live in woodwork, you've got to burn the woodwork. So he said, "What's the answer?" So I said, "The answer is all the woodwork will have to be burnt, the place thoroughly steamed out like, with steam. The oven. And then get the bakehouse sort of airproof.

31:00 Put formalin in the oven, heat the oven up and put formalin in there. Formalin gives off a formaldehyde gas and the formaldehyde gas will kill the germ in the oven and that. Throw out all the woodworks and make up new dough containers and everything." Took about three days to do all that. And then one day we went to action stations and the brother-in-law of mine

31:30 made a dough. We made all the fancy stuff and laid it out because we knew in the morning they'd be there to look at it. And there it was, we were back to where we were. So then they declared we'd stay in the bakehouse and we stayed in the bakehouse for another two years. So anyway Chief Cook got confined to his cabin for the rest of the trip which was several months. Old Jock.

Had you heard about the American ice-cream ships?

Oh yeah they had ice-cream.

32:00 They had ice-cream on the ship all the time. As a matter of fact we had an ice-cream machine once. But it didn't last very long because it was donated by the Queensland Temperance Society and they give us this machine and all the powder and another fellow and I decided that we'd be the ice-cream makers. So the machine, it just didn't work because it was so hot in the ship there was no air conditioning and it just didn't work.

32:30 The ice-cream didn't work. So we found it'd make a good beer fridge. So when we got our bottle of beer we used to sneak a few bottles of beer in there and one time we were in a port, either Brisbane or Sydney and some of the Temperance people come on board and found the bloody beer in the thing, and away went the machine. But it wasn't practical on the ship we were on. Yeah, ice-cream.

Can you tell us about language in the navy on the ships?

33:00 Yeah, the language, it was quite good until a period where we'd been away for quite a while and they'd got a bit raw. And the Padre was a bloke called Cyril Elkhorn, he was a Methodist and he was a real Methodist, a real – wouldn't say one-eyed, but inclined to be that way. So anyway, he formed them all up in the divisions one Sunday morning,

33:30 and he said – how will I put it? I know what he said, but how will I put it? He said, "when I work around the deck," he said, "I hear people saying bugger this and bugger that and all this sort of thing." And he was giving a demonstration of what they were saying, and he said, "It's no bloody good and it's got to stop." Anyway after that lecture things did ease up, but he also had these vigilantes, other Methodist people and they used to go around and report anybody swearing.

34:00 And you used to have to line up at four o'clock and get a spray of bloody antiseptic down your neck. And they did that for quite a while and that eased up. And there was another thing prevalent in the navy in those days, if someone said to me, "Do you know Peter?" And I'd say, "That bastard." That'd be the first thing you'd think of, and then you'd relate some thing that he'd done – he did this or something. Anyway they decided

34:30 that it was time for mutual admiration. And someone would say, "Do you know Peter?" "Yeah, good fellow, nice bloke." And that changed the whole attitude in the navy. It was all done in a very short period too. But that was my experience with language. But generally speaking the sailors don't swear a terrible lot. Occasionally they do, you get a couple of foul mouthed blokes that just can't help themselves, but generally speaking

35:00 because we were all more or less ordinary people in the war time.

Can you remember Anzac Days when you were a kid?

That used to be a big day. I used to be keen on memorabilia, war time stories, saw that 'All Quiet on the Western Front' about ten times. And always inclined towards the services. Had me water bottle and all that sort of thing. Had a haversack,

35:30 used to go for runs in the morning with the haversack and the water bottle and everything. I was definitely inclined that way. Used to think it was great.

And what are your thoughts on Anzac Day since serving?

Anzac Day, it's a funny sort of a day. We, Canberra Shropshire hire the hotel, the Chifley in George St and we invite everybody to come and the idea there is

36:00 you can muster before the march, have a cup of tea, bring the women and friends and that and all muster. We get about anything up to 100 people there. And then we go and march and we think of all the people that we knew. And when we first started off we had people, the only people who could join were the ex-crew members of the two ships. But now it's got that way that we're taking in friends, anybody that want's to

36:30 be a member can be a member. So much so that last Anzac Day there were three of us survivors. Only three of us left. Tons of Canberra, Shropshire people. And then at the Christmas party, when it got down to people who actually served on the ship, there was only 14 blokes in the – there was about 80 people at the Christmas do, and all the rest were women and people that made up sort of thing, and only 14 of all that crowd that were actually on the ships.

37:00 But we have a ceremony on, when do we have it? August the 9th, that was the day the ship went down. And we have a ceremony at Kedron Wavell. And it's pretty well run, we run it ourselves. Our patron, he does the lesson, and we get different ones to read the various prayers and we sing the Naval Hymn and the National Anthem and it's quite a nice little service.

37:30 And we print a document with all those that passed away. So we still carry it out. It's a thing that's got to go on forever I should imagine. But I'm pleased these days with the number of kids that are interested. I did a lecture up at the school one day at Dakabin and I took for a theme, war time in Kalinga. And it was surprising what turned up. Out the

38:00 back here, Clare Mountain there was the American Tank Corps, they trained out there. The Spitfire over near Bald Hills, was a Spitfire tarmac, the planes used to land there and take off over the bay. The trains used to go through here on their way to Townsville. The troop trains with the soldiers singing all the hymns, all the songs and that. The trains with all the guns and everything on it all passed through here. The aeroplanes used to take off

38:30 from Eagle Farm and they used to bomb New Guinea and then fly back to Townsville, refuel and come

back here. But when they took off from here, they were so heavily laden with bombs and petrol and that sort of thing that they'd zoom over here at about a couple of hundred feet, they were still trying to get above it. And they'd be up as far as Caboolture before they even got to a thousand feet. And all the cups and saucers used to rattle and all that sort of thing. Windows used to break. All that happened

39:00 here in Kalinga. And they used to fly to New Guinea, bomb New Guinea and then come back to Townsville and fuel there and come back there. But yeah, it was quite a lovely place. And then the Americans were camped as far up as the bridge at Petrie and they were everywhere. The kids enjoyed it, to think there was so much happening locally.

What's your one strongest memory when you think back on your war service?

39:30 I think that the Canberra would have to be just that. And then, yeah I reckon that'd be the main thing. And that was a sort of change of life, like we were a bit free and easy before then but that brought it back into whatsits and then came back off the Canberra, got a fortnight's survivors leave, a couple of weeks in the depot and then a fortnight's pre-embarkation leave and away we went again. So I didn't get much time to get used to settling down.

40:00 But I think that'd be the biggest change there. And then getting married of course, that was another brave step.

So how often do you think you think about things like that?

I'm pretty fortunate, it doesn't prey on me mind but before the 9th of August every year, I don't have nightmares, but I do dream about the ship. Just prior,

40:30 without any prompting at all. I often think about it. And then every now and again you'll hear a name and a name will bring it back to you, about things that happened. And then of course you think of all the different people you worked with and some of the people were nice, some weren't.

INTERVIEW ENDS