

# Australians at War Film Archive

## Maxwell Veale (Bluey) - Transcript of interview

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<http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/956>

### Tape 1

00:34 **Could you give us an introduction to your life story?**

Well I was born in Armidale, New South Wales on the 26th of the 10th, 1928. My father was a

01:00 timber worker, of course Mum never worked, and I went to school. St Mary's Boys School to start with, and then I went to De La Salle College and from there I went to work in a sawmill with my Dad for about 12 months. And then I went to Muswellbrook, down

01:30 in New South Wales, where I worked for the railways, only for about 12 months. Then I went to back to the sawmills and from the sawmills to the navy. And 15 years later -

**Can you give us a brief idea of your time in the navy?**

Yeah, well

02:00 I started off in Flinders in Victoria the naval depot for 6 months with out training. From there I was - we were put on to Latrobe, a corvette it was, to separate the men from the boys

02:30 who'd get seasick and who wouldn't, cause going down that Bass Strait it bounces a bit down there, especially rough seas. I went from there, I was transferred to the cruiser Australia, the heavy cruiser Australia. I spent 12 or 14 months on her, we just done capital city tours and that type of thing, not much because it was an old ship and it couldn't fire a gun, so that it would fall to pieces but

03:00 from there I went to Shoalhaven. It was a river class frigate and we took off to the city reserve in the Far East. It was actually occupation forces at that time. We were based in a place called Kure in Japan and we just patrolled Japan, went to capital cities, went to Hiroshima and Nagasaki and all them places

03:30 and then I came back, I was back three months and I went back up there on the Murchison and that's - we were up there working on the Shoalhaven when I was up there, the war started, we were there when the war started. In fact we were patrolling off Korea the day the war started. And then we came back here and I went back off on the Murchison and

04:00 we really got into the water there at that time, we were hit, but no, thank God no one was hit but when the Murchison - we were supposed to stay up there for 10 months and we ended up staying 14 months and then we returned back to Sydney. And then we come back to Sydney I was in Sydney a month and then we took off round to, took the first lot of national service [conscripts] to go overseas, we took them around to

04:30 Western Australia to the Montebello atomic bomb shell, we done a Tommy bomb back to Sydney and I was transferred down to, back to Flinders naval depot from I think, and from Flinders naval depot I was transferred to a, HMAS Tarangau in Manus Island

05:00 in New Guinea, I went for 366 days, it was a leap year, on an island with nothing to do, it was very boring. I came back from there and joined the aircraft carrier Sydney I was on the Sydney for about 18 months, from the Sydney I was transferred to [UNCLEAR] and we done the

05:30 Queens Mother's royal tour out here with her. And then we went back up to the Far East where we were in India, Trincomalee and a few of those places. And we were in Vietnam, we went to Saigon, the war hadn't - well the war had started with the Americans, but not with us, because they blew up the palace the day we left

06:00 and we came back to Melbourne and then I joined a Melbourne ship, Quickmatch back we went again to the Far East, and I finished off on the Quickmatch, finished me time on there, well actually I come off Quickmatch to Watson's Bay and was finished with them. And that's about all my story.

**Can you tell us what you did after your service?**

06:30 Yeah, I joined the - I left the on the 6th of July 1963 I left the navy and went straight into the post office at, in Sydney and I was a postman for 29 years.

07:00 And then I retired in the post office and come up here. And that was it.

**You got to see a lot of the world didn't you?**

Yeah I did, it was worth it too believe you me, I would have stayed in longer only my first wife, she was very ill. She had leukaemia and she died while I was, when I just come out, I had to come out anyway because there was no one to look after her and I was working and looking after

07:30 her as well, and that's where I met Joan, in the post office, she was a mail contractor.

**Can you tell us about growing up in Armidale in the 1930s?**

It was,

08:00 there wasn't much work going on in Armidale, the - just before the war, the First World War had just actually finished and we never had, my father worked in the sawmill, he was never out of work, he was the only one the family who was never out of work

08:30 but, we were just, we just lived in a property and there wasn't too much to do, only go to school and play football and that sort of thing until, I left De La Salle College when I was 15, and -

**What sort of things would you work on the farm?**

09:00 Well it wasn't a farm, we had WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s and that kind of thing, but it wasn't an actual farm where we had cows and that kind of thing, no, but they were working in the mills, it was only about 3 acres, it was just enough to grow vegetables and things for our own use and maybe a little for the neighbours if they wanted it but that was all.

09:30 Until, my eldest brother Lionel, he was in the war at that time and my other brother, he's dead now, he had just joined the war. He was with the [UNCLEAR] and I was too young then to go, so I started off working in a joinery factory in Armidale with my Dad

10:00 my Dad was, he used to do, he was wood machinist as well. And I worked with him for a while then I left there and went as a telegram boy for about 12 months and then I left there after 12 months and I went to a place called Village Creek, it's about near Dorrigo and Armidale, that's, I was working on a saw mill out there

10:30 and that was real suicidal I thought, it was too dangerous. And I left there and went to a sawmill at Point Lookout, that's out near Dorrigo as well, but it was cutting all timber for furniture timber and bridge timber which was timber called messmate which is like an oily timber, I worked there

11:00 and I chap I was working with he, an old chap and he was working on a docking saw and he pulled the docking saw onto himself and chopped his hand off that way. And after that my Dad said, "No, you're not staying out there, you're coming back." So I went back there and put in for the navy, and got it straight away. I took off down to Sydney.

**If that sort of thing happened at the second sawmill, what was dangerous about the first one?**

11:30 There was no guards on the saws in those days and the climate there, it used to be very frosty, almost a snow and sometimes they started the saws up without, you had to heat them with a blow torch, otherwise they started off cold, freezing, they shatter and you wore the bits and pieces that come from the saw, and it was too dangerous

12:00 and every - the benches themselves used to shake and you were dodging them, and of course when you, I was tailing out on the saw beds and if you didn't get the balance right, you ended up with a log on top of you if you didn't watch it, and it was far too dangerous for that.

12:30 My Dad had been out to that, he knew what it was like, no way. He said you get out of these saw mills a lot before you kill yourself. But then I went to the navy.

**What was life at home like with your mum and dad?**

Excellent, it was really good yeah. We were a very close family and we had our, my brother and I had a few fights every now and again but nothing

13:00 which is normal I suppose for kids, but no we were very good family and very happy family. When I left my - I got a brother underneath me and a sister, cause they were only babies then when I left, but they're not now of course, they are all over the place, but, no we had a really good family life.

**What kind of things would you do for entertainment at home?**

13:30 Well we went out rabbiting was our main thing, we'd take the dogs and we'd go for miles and miles, or a ferret, we had ferrets, we'd go out and if we couldn't find a rabbit, we had to dig them up by hand. Get

them with the – that's all we did just muck around in the bush, was the main thing, ride horses and

- 14:00 everything to keep ourselves occupied I suppose, but we never entertained like what they've got today, we never even had a wireless, but we enjoyed it. We were happy.

**So you had to make your own fun?**

Yeah, yeah, singing and, we were all singers or musicians of some type, only small things like mouth organs and things like that but we enjoyed it.

**What instruments did you play?**

- 14:30 I used to play the comb, it's the only thing I could play. My brothers used to play the mouth organ, and we used to have a, really have a sing of a – especially of a Sunday night.

**What sort of tunes would you sing?**

All the oldies, the real oldies,

- 15:00 you're going back a long way. Danny Boys and all those things, which you still play today but, it was very nice, I miss it a lot.

**What did Armidale look like when you were growing up?**

A real old country town, it wasn't a city then, a major city, and at that time, the –

- 15:30 cause the war was on and just up from, oh about 100 yards up from where we lived was the show ground and they'd have, it was an army hospital, started off as an army hospital, they were bringing them down by train from north Queensland and they put them in the show ground, they had not only the provisions but the – they had big tents and for all the wounded cause it got that bad there, cause it the cold as you know, coming from Orange, it gets snowy

- 16:00 and there'd be these poor blokes in a tent on stretchers in the frost and the snow and more of them were dying from freezinisation than they were from their wounds, and they had to stop the hospital and shift it, because all their water tanks were bursting, the pipes were bursting so

- 16:30 they closed it down and they brought down the light horse. And across the road from us was a big paddock and they had all the light horses in there, and they went all right, because they, except for one night, a next door neighbour of ours, he was drunk on his horse and he went along the corrugated iron on the fence around the show ground

- 17:00 with a stick and frightened these horses and they went berserk. And they were going up and down this big property and there was half of them going down and half of them going the other way and then they'd turn around and come back and they'd hit together and there was horses being mangled everywhere. And the broke out of the fence and they went round into the town into the shopping centre and all this.

- 17:30 I remember when my young brother, Kevin, he was working at Ford Motor Company and his boss's wife was driving her car and a horse put it's hoof straight through he windscreen, and but that was Armidale. The light horse finished a while after that, it was never any good after that because there was so much outcry about what

- 18:00 actually happened that night

**What happened to the drunk fellow who started it all off?**

Nothing, he was an alcoholic, he had only one arm, he blew his arm off with a detonator out chopping wood one day. He was a real wind man. They never put him in jail or anything,

- 18:30 why they didn't, I don't know, whether the army ever pressed charges, I don't know. But apart from that Armidale was very quite, except for the teacher's college, but they never had the university like they got today, there was only the teacher's college. But it's like a town of churches and schools. When the schools broke up, the

- 19:00 place got empty, cause everyone, they were all boarding schools, and they come there during the school days and then they'd go back home, and it really died.

**Given all the churches there, was a lot of social activity through the churches?**

No, not much, I mean I'd dance on a Saturday night, but not much, no, not in the war time

- 19:30 because there was hardly anyone there, like the men part of it, except if they were coming home on leave, but there wasn't much except going to the movies, that was the whole lot of them, once a week, there was nothing else I don't think.

**Did you have any favourite movie stars?**

Oh, good God, I wouldn't have a clue, I wouldn't have a clue of movies at that time, no

20:00 maybe old Buck Rogers, with his Flying Rockets, which ended up coming true anyhow didn't it. No, I couldn't remember any, no. It was a bit dead to be exact.

20:30 **Were you a religious family?**

My mother was a very strict Catholic, my father was Church of England. But Mum was very strict Catholic, we had to be Catholics and I had to go to Catholic school. And I worked there when I was not at school,

21:00 after school I used to chop the wood for the Bishops house and I had to sweep the cathedral every Saturday morning, that was my job, I cleaned the windows when I was on holidays at the Presbyterian – but that was my job as far as, I wasn't that over religious, I can assure you. I'm still not.

21:30 **How did that go down with your mum?**

She was quite happy with it, it was her that organised me to do all the church work, and they used to have a – the church used to have a dance, in the church hall on the Saturday, every Saturday night, I had to keep the

22:00 hall clean and put the saw dust and the kerosene down so it would make it slippery for them to dance on, and that was it I suppose.

**Where there any sort of side shows or attractions that would come to town?**

Only at show time, now and then

22:30 there would be a circus come through, or a Tex Morton, I don't know if you remember the Tex Morton show. He was a, he used to sing cowboys, he recorded quite a lot of records as a country and western singer, and he had a show and he used to come there about once a year and he used to have a horse called Mandrake and challenged all the cow cockies to see if they could ride this Mandrake.

23:00 Not one of them ever did, but he'd give them maybe five pounds, in those days, if they could ride him, if they could stay on for three minutes or something or three seconds, I don't know. But none of them ever did, it was a killer and a half that horse, that was about the only one, except when the shows were on, Jimmy Sharman's Boxing Troupe used to come there and the boys would have a go to knock somebody around

23:30 get knocked around themselves, but that was, of course during the war there was no show because the show ground was taken over and apart from any other show coming there, no, not that I can remember. Cause I wasn't around the place that long, I left when I was about 16 and I never went back there much.

**You mentioned before that you really enjoyed that time.**

24:00 **What was it that stands out for you?**

I don't know, it was just that I had all me friends there, and I never been to the city or outside Armidale, I'd never, maybe to one of the country towns around it, but that was as far as I ever went, but I read about these places.

24:30 And I loved it, Armidale and living there.

**Very beautiful place?**

Yes it is but it's changed a lot now, but for the better I hope.

**Can you tell us about the mates you had in Armidale?**

25:00 Oh, well, only mate I knew, I really good mate I had was, Ken McGraw [?], he fell into, he had epileptic fits and I used to look after him at school and that, and he fell in an open fire and burnt one side of him, and he died, he was only

25:30 about 10, the same that I was at that time. He was a great bloke, but and I had a lot of Aboriginal friends, I had to go to school with so, but they were wild.

**In what way?**

Oh, pinch anything. You had to tie everything down otherwise they'd lift it, and

26:00 but apart from that never had many. Like at the school, at De La Salle College I had a few mates, only blokes I used to play football with cause they were all borders and they just disappeared, not like they lived around you. And there was me next door neighbour, the one armed bloke's son, he was a good mate of mine, we got

26:30 into some terrible trouble.

**What did you get up to?**

Trying to break horses on bare back with no – and getting thrown over, getting thrown off them and

thrown into the clothes line, and then pinching the old fellow's wine, and giving it to the dogs and that. Listening to them going around half drunk, yelling, screaming their heads off

27:00 we used to pour his wine out till it was that far off the bottom and then fill it full of water, so he wouldn't get drunk. We done all that and got a few beltings for it too, I might add, but with a stock whip, but that didn't deter us too much. And we'd, we just played with it out in the bush, as normal kids do out there.

27:30 **What about the beltings, was that from your mum or your dad?**

Mum, Dad was a very - he was very quiet, very quiet, Mum was - Mum and my grandfather. My grandfather was, he worked in the slaughter yards and he could handle a whip

28:00 and brother could he, I remember only too well. You stepped out of line you copped it from him or from Mum. Mum was the main - if we done everything wrong no matter is you deserved it or not, you copped it but it made no difference.

**What sort of things did you have to do to deserve a belting?**

Not much, late home from school would be one you would cop a hiding or

28:30 smacking me little brother, they were proper, or not doing as I was told, not doing me chores of an afternoon, chopping the wood, and feeding the fowls and all that, if I didn't do that. Cause I used to say over at the college, and I wouldn't come home until it was dark and I'd get a belting for that. But it was alright, it didn't kill me

29:00 **What about De La Salle College, you sometimes stayed there?**

No, no I was a day boy, I was one of the few that were day boys, we used to go to the - cause we only lived about only 200 yards from the college itself, but no I used to go

29:30 every morning, but it was quite good though.

**How did they teach you at the college?**

The normal, you know, English, arithmetic, maths and all the you know, and of course the religion part of it come into it, as it did at all those Catholic schools, but my brothers were quite good, and they were

30:00 very into sport which was, they had their own swimming pools and that there, and football which I played, I'm not a cricketer, I enjoyed it while I was there but I wasn't there that long, I was only there two years and I left there to go to work. Dad had injured himself and had to have a knee operation down

30:30 in Newcastle, so I went to work get some money in to keep the place going. But, no De La Salle was alright.

**Was there a time going from school to work that your mum would ease up on you a little bit?**

Yeah, oh yeah, she,

31:00 well I was getting older then, and I wouldn't take too much of it for a while after that but, no cause I was at the sawmill while they were, 50 odd miles, Dorrigo is 50 miles from Armidale, so I used to sleep in the cabins down there, we had our own little cabins, we only used to come home on weekends, some weekends I didn't come home at all, cause we'd stay down there, if we were going out shooting, we had

31:30 our own rifles and also used to go out on the bush shooting the weekends, get a couple of rabbits or something like that. Play up.

**What would you do to play up?**

Go to Dorrigo, to the pub, that time there was no beer on, cause beer was shortage. They were drinking spirits and, used to come back into some horrible messes but

32:00 and then they brought in the immigrants from Lithuania, they brought in four of them, working at the mills, and they were wild, they made their own whisky and it was a potent brew, they made it from potatoes, and brewed it, and it was like a paint remover, I tell you, it was

32:30 deadly, we used to get stuck into that for a while, but that was, they ended up closing the mill down one day, the manager cause it was too dangerous, cause they were all hangovers, and one bloke was trying to shave himself on a circular saw, that's how bad it was. The manager, Tom Johnson, closed the mill down

33:00 and we used to do some wild things out in that place, but I left there to go to the navy, it was wild.

**What it just Lithuanian immigrants that came?**

They were all from the Baltic States, there was, I remember one bloke he was an ex-boxer, Segidas Broke Vicious [?]

- 33:30 was his name and he was a, oh big muscly bloke, he could handle it, he could fight, and there was, I think there was four of them, but he took over the bench from me, and boy it was dangerous. I tried to teach him but he couldn't speak English
- 34:00 and you'd tell him to do one thing, and he would just do the opposite, cause I had to go onto another bench, a Canadian saw bench, it's a two circular saw, one 6 inch and another 3 foot one and the teeth run into each other. And you get the – it's like a bacon, cutter, you know when they cut bacon, back and forth, well that's how they used to, we used to roll the big trees
- 34:30 onto this cradle and you pull a lever and it's goes through that way and it just cuts the tree in half so you can work on it at the benches, cause they couldn't work on it if it was round, but I left there soon after that, it was, we'd end up suicidal I think, I don't know where they ever ended up those blokes, whether they ever went back to their own country, I don't know. Cause I
- 35:00 went into the navy after that and never caught up with them again.
- And was it because of their arrival that things changed in the mill?**
- No, they done a lot, they were good workers, cause when they weren't on the whisky, they were good workers, they learned, it took a while but, they learned and they ended up quite good workers I thought. I'd
- 35:30 say to the boss, cause he was quite happy with them, but no I don't know what ever happened to them, I believe one of them went to Melbourne, but I don't know.
- Can you tell us why you thought about the navy rather than the army or the air force?**
- Well my grandfather on my father's side was an ex-sailor, a merchant sailor,
- 36:00 he was on old windjammers, come out here, come out to Australia and he left the ship out there, and I believe he deserted, I'm not sure. But he used to always, he taught me how to tie knots and he always used to talk about the sea, and I thought, oh, my Dad and my eldest brother were in the army, and my other brother, and I thought not for me, I'd rather go to sea instead of sitting
- 36:30 in one camp all the time, I'd rather go and see the world. And I did, a lot of it anyhow. But I had no, I didn't feel anything of the army, I'd seen so much of it, my uncles were ex-army men, and army didn't appeal to me, especially with the hospital up there with them all
- 37:00 coming in, in bits and pieces, I thought no that's not for me. I'll go to sea instead. Although I had never even seen the sea before I put in for it, I hadn't even seen the sea, but I had never left Armidale, I'd only seen it on the movies. I got a big shock when I did see it, I'll tell you.
- I'm curious why you even thought to join the navy**
- 37:30 **given that you had seen the casualties of war?**
- No, I was all interested in going in and doing the war, I suppose because of my brothers being in there, it was just a natural thing I guess. All me mates were going, all the people from Armidale were going into the different services, well my turn
- 38:00 I had to do some begging to get Mum and Dad to sign the papers to let me go to the navy, they didn't want me to go anywhere, they wanted me to stay in Armidale, I'd prefer to go for a holiday instead, but it didn't end up being a holiday, but I preferred to go to sea, and I never regretted it either.

## Tape 2

- 00:31 **You mentioned that you got into trouble breaking in horses, did anyone ever teach you to ride horse?**
- Yeah, no, not really how to ride a horse, it just came natural to us, but when we were kids we were always on horses of some sort with our next door neighbour he had three or four horses. As kids we used to jump onto them and jump off them, nothing about putting a
- 01:00 saddle on them. Just bare back we used to ride them everywhere bare back, but more times fell off them, but then you get a wild one, they'd bring a wild one in and then we'd have trouble trying to break it, and most of the time we were the ones that got broken not the horse. It was alright but we, was just casual, just for something to do. No one ever taught us
- 01:30 to ride a horse I suppose, maybe they told us to get on the left side and nothing else but, might be different.
- I remember being taught to hold the reigns like a tea cup? I suppose on the country you just got on and went for it?**

Yeah, normally you get on it with a bridle and the remainder was up to you. Now and then you'd put a saddle on but we never had

02:00 many saddles, it was bear back or none at all, or just a blanket over it.

**Did you break any bones?**

No, badly bent many a time, but never broke. We must have learnt how to fall when we come off them, I took a lot of skin off and no I never broke, I think my mate did, he broke his arm and but no I didn't -

02:30 **Just got winded?**

Yeah, caught on the clothes line and the clothes line around me neck and the horse kept going and I went backwards kind of thing.

**Did you ruin the clothesline?**

No it was only one of those, you know the wire right across, just as well.

**Your mother would have got you?**

Oh well, she got us anyhow.

**Did she try and get you to be an altar boy?**

03:00 No, no way, no way.

**Why do you say it like that?**

I wouldn't have been an altar boy, not walking around in one of those dresses, no way, no!

**Because I've heard a lot of religious mothers think that is the most fantastic thing?**

A lot of my school mates were altar boys. I've been an altar boy, but never

03:30 dressed up, the only time I was an altar boy was at my mother's funeral. I became the altar boy while they had a requiem mass for my - in Brisbane, and I was altar boy that day. But that's the only time I've ever been there, not as I didn't go in for all that lot.

**How old was she when your mum died?**

Oh heck,

04:00 it was only about 10 years ago, I suppose when she died, it wouldn't be much longer, but she was living with my sister and, but I don't know for sure, 20 years, well I'm close.

**Was she a thrifty cook during the Depression?**

04:30 Yeah, oh yes, you had to be, yes most of the vegetables we grew or our neighbours grew, we never bought vegetables or fruit. We usually got it from the neighbourhood. And the meat, well my on my mother's side all her family were butchers and we used to get all free meat, because my father used to do all their saws,

05:00 he used to sharpen them and set them, for the butchers shops and the - they used to do all those, and we used to get free meat from them. And also my grandfather was a slaughterman and he used to do the slaughtering for his sons so he used to bring home beautiful corned beef and that type of thing. So we never had any problem with meat, plus the

05:30 WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s we had of our own, was quite good in that respect.

**You were lucky?**

I know because a lot of people were a lot worse off than us.

**We heard a story about a woman cooking offal every night for a stew because they couldn't afford meat. You didn't have to rely on rabbits?**

We used to get quite a few around, because people around us, properties around us used to shoot rabbits

06:00 all the time, cause they'd get into their fields, so we ate a few of them. I haven't eaten them since but, we used to eat a few rabbits.

**Why haven't you eaten one since?**

No, I tell you what

06:30 turned me off, I was working on the railways at Muswellbrook and they used to bring these trains from up north here, they used to come through with all the fresh fruit and vegetables on it, and we opened one of the trucks one day and there's all these rabbits still hanging up with the skins on and they were

crawling with maggots. And they were going to go to Sydney and be sold as – never again was I going to

07:00 go near a rabbit and I haven't ever since. It was terrible they used to just hose them down and, but it was terrible, I've never eaten a rabbit since.

**What about your clothes, did you mother sew?**

Not much, but it was hand-me-downs kind of thing

07:30 come from her brothers as well as my brothers and that, but nearly all hand-me-downs. I wore knickerbockers for many years, old knicker, used to have for riding.

**Knickerbockers?**

Yeah, I used to go to school in them, nothing else.

**No shoes?**

Sometimes no shoes, yeah. And in the winter it was a bit cool on the

08:00 foot, but it didn't seem to do any damage to us. I had to wear shoes, they were actually boots, old hand-me-down boots, things like that

**There was a big gap between you and your older brother?**

About 10 years.

**Where there any children in between?**

One, there was Noel, he was, I don't know,

08:30 he was very, about 6 months old when he died, he was in between, I don't know whether he died, I think he died of pneumonia. He was the only one in between, that I know of yeah. No Lionel's 85 now, I'm 75.

09:00 **That would have been sad for your parents losing a little baby?**

Yeah, and then Kevin, in came Kevin, he's four years older than me so –

**Younger?**

No, he was older than me, he came next

**And then you?**

And then me.

**And then your sister?**

No,

09:30 and then my brother Mervin, and then the sister.

**Was she spoiled?**

No, definitely not.

**Why do you say that?**

My mother would give her hell. Discipline was murderous

**What was her name?**

Shirley, she lives in Brisbane,

10:00 but no, my mother was very strict

**What were some of the things she'd make Shirley do?**

Well she wasn't allowed out of a night, and even when she was working, Shirley went up one day after work

10:30 and bought a bra, and my mother threw it in the fire.

**Maybe it was time for her to wear a bra though?**

It was.

**So your mother thought she was a bit fast?**

My mother didn't believe in them, that was the reason.

**What about the Aborigines that you grew up with,**



11:00 **where they very welcoming to you?**

Oh, yeah, they were good mates of mine, oh yeah, they lived just between our place and school. And they were good but they were Wideses -

**Pardon?**

Their name was Wides, yeah I know Ernie was one of them, he could run like a hare,

11:30 he played football for Armidale. And they could never catch him once he got the ball, no one could catch him, he was like a greyhound. Poor old Ernie, if they caught him he would have a bit of a sprint but they had to catch him first.

**What about you did you play sport?**

I played football, I played football for De La Salle, and I played union for Armidale

12:00 I even played when I was in the navy for Armidale, I come home on leave and played it too.

**Where you any good?**

No, although my brother Kevin I used to play, just for, just for weekend fun, they had a team, and we used to go around to different teams around Armidale and we'd challenge them. We ended up having a few drinks afterwards with them. Whether we win or lose, we didn't care.

12:30 **You didn't have a drink at the Dorrigo pub, did you?**

Oh yes, quite a few.

**Can you tell us how rough that pub was?**

It was, it was a blood bath that place of a weekend, it was cause you'd have all the timber men come in and they'd be thirsty, and of course there was no beer in those days

13:00 cause they were aware the war was on, could maybe get a couple of kegs o beer which would last about 20 minutes, the way those blokes drink and then they'd be on the wine and spirits. And then the war would be on, they'd punch each other and smash everything, even our manager got broken jaw from one of his own

13:30 workers, you'd get clear once they started throwing punches, if you could of course.

**Where you ever involved in any of those scuffles?**

A couple of them, yeah

**What would it be over because women wouldn't be in the bar?**

Oh no women, all men. I never seen a woman hardly at that time in Dorrigo, at that time, no.

14:00 I suppose there was women, but they kept in the houses because it was too rough. You'd see the Aborigines outside, cause they weren't allowed to drink in the pubs in those days, but no, they'd argue about anything, the football or the war or something, it would only take a little bit, or something that went on the mill where they were working

14:30 it didn't take much. You might bump a bloke when you come away form the bar and that would be it, wham.

**Maybe they were looking for a fight?**

They wanted a fight, yeah get themselves a bit of, ease up on the tension I suppose.

**How id you get involved in the scuffles?**

Through argument as usual.

**What were you arguing about, can you remember?**

No

15:00 It could have been about anything, something about the mill I suppose, or somebody wasn't pulling their weight was enough to start it all, we'd throw a few punches

**You must have been very young because you left for the navy at 16?**

No I was, I was in the navy at 19.

**So how old were you at the mill?**

About 16, 17.

**Could you drink though,**

15:30 **it wasn't legal, was it?**

Didn't make any difference. Not out there, no police would come around looking for you out there, not especially of a Saturday. Maybe late Saturday night they would come and pick up the blokes that were drunk and take them and lock them up and maybe they'd earn a few bob [shillings] that way. But no, you wouldn't get any police around

16:00 at that time. Because in the mills, the workers, see there was a shortage of workers because they were in the army, that's why they were taking young blokes in, but, I never had to worry about the police in that place, no.

**What would the men do without any women around?**

16:30 **Was there a place where prostitutes were?**

No, no, I don't think they went into Grafton or to any, I don't know where they went, to Armidale? It was only about 50 mile away, doesn't take long to get to, I don't know where they went to, but I don't know. I suppose they

17:00 went somewhere, cause the mills used to close, mainly at Christmas time they used to close them then, and they'd go home to ah - maybe a lot of them were married with families, and they used to come in have a drink and punch on, it didn't make much difference

17:30 most of them, a lot of them I suppose they had their wives at the mill. At the mill I was at, there was wives, with some of the workers, the -

**Doing the clerical work?**

No, no just in the houses, they build little houses there the mill had built. The manager and the foreman they were married men with their families there, that's all, but I think the men were in huts

18:00 **How did your boss react when you told him you were going to sign up?**

He tried to talk me out of it, because he was an ex-army major, and he tried to talk me out of it, he wanted me to stay there. No way. I'd already signed the papers before I told him.

**Did he offer you more money or leave to - ?**

No,

18:30 money wasn't that good. 8 pounds a week, I think it was.

**Did you get danger money?**

No, no such thing as danger money, no such thing as unions or anything like that, no, just straight 8 dollars, 8 pounds in the hand, that's it. You had to buy your own food, that's why we used to go into Dorriggo

19:00 a lot, to get our food, Dorriggo and to Ebor, that was another blood house too, Ebor, that was between Dorriggo and the mills

**Can you tell us about Ebor?**

Ebor, God. It was worse than Dorriggo by a long way.

**How could it be worse?**

It was, it was

19:30 just a pub for the mills, that was all it was, you'd steer clear of that place, especially on a Saturday, no, Ebor was deadly.

**Did you ever go in there?**

Oh yeah, quite a few times, but I never got into any trouble in that place.

**Did they, what did it look like?**

It was a real western -

20:00 **Like a saloon?**

Yeah, yeah, of course the old spirits on the bar, no beer no nothing. It was a difficult timber pub.

**I've got this image of American western bars with the**

20:30 **stairs going up the long bar, and women in tight dresses and -**

Oh no, there was no women in the bar, I think there was upstairs in the bosses, but he blokes behind the bar they were big bars, but I never seen a woman in there to tell you truth, but I believe there must

have been, but –

**You seem tall and fit,**

21:00 **were you strong when you were younger?**

No, not a great deal, not more than I am now, but no. About the same I haven't put on any, much weight since then.

**You have to tell me your secret later. Did your parents live in Armidale their entire lives?**

21:30 Yeah, yes, yeah Mum and Dad, yes. They were born in Armidale and I think their parents were born in Armidale, except Dad's father was born in England, his mother was born in Armidale, but oh yeah they were all Armidalians, that's for sure.

22:00 **When you were hunting rabbits, what did you use to kill them?**

A .22 rifle

**Who gave you that?**

We had one each, I had my own one for quite a few years, until I went, even in the navy I had a rifle, but in fact, our young son, I think

22:30 I gave it to him, and I think he traded it in on something bigger. Cause he was on a property out Roma way. We always had rifles, double barrel shot gun or .22s

**How old were you when you were given a gun?**

About 15, I think, 14 or 15, oh we knew how to handle them, we were taught how to handle guns, very much, because

23:00 our next door neighbour, who was my mate's father, he was gun mad. He was real hunter and he taught us the right and wrong of how to handle rifles, which my father did too, because you had to in those days, you had to know the dangers of them.

23:30 You didn't muck around with them, every precaution was taken, nobody got shot I don't think.

**What other kinds of animals could you hunt besides rabbits?**

Kangaroos, and of course the boars, wild pigs, and foxes, they get to the fowls, so you go looking for them, but that's about all,

24:00 no that much. Not until you get out of Armidale, you get into the kangaroos and the boars and that kind of thing. Armidale was mainly rabbits around the place for about 20, I suppose, round there rabbits the main thing.

**Were kangaroos a pest?**

No, no, the foxes were that's all because they used to get the fowls

24:30 kangaroos never worried us at all, in fact you rarely ever seen one, out on a property but not in close.

**What were some of the ill effects that you saw in the hospital that made you join the navy rather than the army?**

Mainly, the blokes on crutches and they were limbs missing and that

25:00 kind of thing, it never appealed to me after that, you used to see some of them up in town and that on leave from the hospital, but after that, not for me. Cause there was a lot of photographs and that at that time in the papers. But I thought, no, I'll go to sea instead.

25:30 **What did you know about the unrest in Europe and Hitler?**

Only what we got from the newspapers, Armidale newspaper we got once a week. No wireless in those days, we never had any, we never had a wireless it was just what we read in the paper, and what they told us at school bits and pieces about it. What our parents talked about

26:00 and different people, we never knew much about Europe until I went in the service really.

**What about the First World War, did you have relatives?**

I had my father's three brothers were in the First World War, my father was too young to go, he was only by a couple of years he was too young. There was three of them went to the First World War and

26:30 our next door neighbour's husband, he went to the war too he was my sister's husband, he went to the war too, so we knew a bit about the war when they come home, but that's about it.

**Did they all survive?**

Yes, they were very gassed,

27:00 the one next door, my uncle next door, he died of a gas not long after he came home. But the others lived quite until they were in their 60s maybe 70s. On my Dad's side they were alright.

**So you didn't want to be a fighter pilot like most young men in those days?**

27:30 No, no, no, the only planes we'd ever seen were the old, two, four winged ones that used to land on the racecourse, that was the closest we ever got to aeroplane, we didn't know much about aeroplanes up there, but no I didn't want to be a fighter pilot.

**You are a rare one, many we have interviewed said they wanted to pilots?**

28:00 No just wanted to be a sailor. I could have been a pilot in the navy too if I wanted to. After I'd seen the - worked on the carrier, no

**Why do you say that?**

I've seen too many crashes

28:30 on the carrier, there's not much difference when they land. There is not much to land on, especially when she's, I've seen them go in and off, try to get on that so many times, they've ended up crashing into the crash barrier. No I prefer to spend just being a sailor,

29:00 if she sinks, well then I'll have a swim, but -

**Did you have any model airplanes or ships?**

No, not many toys, no, toys were, well there wasn't many around, might be a little motor car, my Dad used to make most of ours.

**Did he, was he good with his hands?**

29:30 Yeah, working in a joinery factory, he used to get the pieces of timber and he used to make it himself. Hobby horses and that type of thing, yeah they were all made by him.

**They'd cost a fortune now, those old wooden toys?**

Yeah, he used to cut them out and then bring them home and paint them and that was it with us,

30:00 we never had much money for buying toys in those days.

**What about books?**

I read quite a lot, mostly cowboys books, you know, I was into them.

**Can you remember any titles?**

Oh God no, they were only paperbacks, little old paperbacks, but I used to read quite a lot of them. I still love books, but not cowboys these days.

30:30 **What kind of books do you like?**

I like fiction and I like true stories too, war books I like a lot especially the navy ones, read quite a lot of those.

**What about thrillers?**

Yeah, in fact I'm reading one right now.

**The Spy Catcher or something like that?**

No, I'll read any darn book, go to a book store

31:00 at Carrara markets and this woman's got a photographic memory and she knows what books I like and she keeps them for me.

**That's handy?**

Ooh yes, and she really gets me some beautiful books, we do a lot of reading.

**Do you think if the war wasn't on you might have gone on to university?**

No, I didn't like school for a start. No, I

31:30 didn't like school, but I wouldn't have gone back to school when the war was finished, or if I'd have been, I was in the navy before the Korean War so I didn't know that was going to happen. No I wanted to get away and see a bit of the world.

**Why didn't you like school?**

32:00 Oh, I couldn't father it out, maybe I didn't have the brains for it, but I passed all my exams but I didn't like that damn discipline they had, because the old strap and the cane was in, in those days.

**Are you saying you got it a bit?**

Oh, quite a few times, quite a few times.

**Now I see why you don't like school?**

I got quite a few canes and the strap.

32:30 **What did you do?**

No paying attention for one, I'd be mucking around with a bloke next door to me or something like that, or couldn't answer what he was trying to teach us. Some of those brothers, those De La Salle brothers, they're cruel, very cruel some of them.

**A lot of news has come out now about abuse in Catholic schools,**

33:00 **had you seen anything like that?**

I'd never seen them touching anybody, but as cruelty, yes. They could be cruel, believe you me when they hit, they hit us hard and some of them were big boys, no I've never seen any sexual part of it, no, not where I was

33:30 but as far as cruelty is concerned, yeah, they were. But then again there was a lot of really nice people amongst them, but I've seen them do their blocks with boys, in fact on me too.

**Can you tell me about an incident?**

Well one of them backhanded me, which was not on because I wouldn't pay attention to him.

**Across you face?**

Yeah

34:00 oh yeah, I never forgot him either. That was only once but of course the cane was quite frequent, but I don't know how they got on today where they don't have the cane, how they get discipline

**No they don't have it.**

34:30 **Would there be anything you could do to stop the pain?**

We used to rub resin into our hands, that was supposed to stop it, it didn't stop it, you'd end up with a great rack of blood blisters across your hand where they, cause they used to have those bamboo canes.

**That's terrible they'd make a noise?**

Yeah, and then they had that long strap and they

35:00 use to use that.

**On your hand?**

On your hands or your backside, touch the floor and whack, and that hurt.

**Which was worse, the hand or the bum?**

The hand, the hand was.

**Where did you get the resin from?**

We used to rub it in, I forget where we used to get it, but we'd get it when we knew it was coming.

**It's like wax isn't it?**

35:30 Yeah, we used to rub it on our hands, it supposed to stop the - it never did, at least I didn't think it did.

**So what would happen when you got home?**

Oh she'd give me another one, but she was very friendly with a lot of the brothers cause she used to go to church over at the college and they used to come

36:00 and have a cup of tea at our place so, if you told on them, you were always at fault not the brother.

**You may have done well to invest in some gloves?**

You weren't allowed to be, hand out with a glove on. We used to put books down our trousers, but that didn't stop it either

**Now I see why you didn't like school**

36:30 School and me didn't mix.

**You mentioned you are not religious now, is that because of how you were brought up?**

Yeah, as soon as I went to the navy I never went to church after that, it seemed too much at church too much religion, fear and superstition I reckon it is.

37:00 In the navy we were ordered to go to church, I didn't believe in that either, they never had priests on board, only a padre, which usually a Church of England, usually they are not priests or whatever, we were ordered to do go to church, I didn't believe in that. If I could get out of it I used to get out of it, but if you didn't want to go to church you had to work,

37:30 might be over the sides scrubbing the sides or, it was worth it to get out of it.

**You would have rather scrubbed the side than go to church?**

Yes, cause you had to get dressed up in full uniform to go to church, the whole works and just for half an hour and then you got to get back out of it and you still got to work anyhow

38:00 No, religion didn't appeal to me after I left Armidale.

**What happened when you enlisted? Did you say to your family, 'I am going now, I'll write to you'?**

Yeah, yeah but well they didn't know much about where I was going, and I didn't

38:30 I didn't when I left Armidale. See I had to go to Sydney to Rushcutters Bay and that's where we done the medical and took the oath and all this business.

**So how did you enlist? Did you write to the navy?**

There was a thing in the paper,

39:00 a form in the paper about how to enlist in the navy, so I filled in the form and sent that down, and they sent back big forms that Mum and Dad had to fill in and all this business and I had to do an exam, like a school exam, arithmetic and that sort of thing, and the priest was the one that examined me. He stood there while I done this,

39:30 old Father McGraw, and then we sent that away and then they sent me a railway ticket to report to Rushcutters Bay in Sydney. I got the train down there

**Was that exciting for you?**

Yes, because I had never been to the city before, I didn't know what was going on.

## Tape 3

00:31 **You mentioned that had trouble getting your parents to sign the papers?**

Well my Mum didn't want me to go from the start, because she reckoned she had two sons at war was enough in case they got killed or something like that and she didn't want to, and there was so much in the news at the time

01:00 how many blokes dying and that, but I had to talk quite a lot to get for her to let me go, because by that time the war was over and that was the only thing that got me in there I think because the war was over, but little did she know there was another one right on its way. She eventually weakened one night and

01:30 they both signed the papers

**What did you say to them that you think got them over the line?**

I don't know, maybe she wanted to get me out of her hair because I was driving them up the wall, maybe that was it cause I was jumping from one job to another, couldn't settle down anywhere and I talked Dad into it first, because he was

02:00 quite [UNCLEAR] and he could talk her into it, so between the two of us we got the signature on the paper and I got rid of it quickly in case it was torn up.

**Did either you mother or father have any words to say before you left?**

No, just to behave myself that was all, that was all I think, that I

02:30 can remember of course, but hat would be about it. Behave yourself and let them know when you get there

### **So what were your first impressions of Sydney and Rushcutters Bay?**

Oh, it was big, it was big, but I got lost first, because arriving in Central Station, I'd never,

03:00 I didn't know where the hell which was Rushcutters Bay, but cause the RTO, railway transport officer, was there for the navy, so we were told to go there they brought a bus in and took us to, cause there was quite a few of us, maybe thirty of us, I think, that went to, they took us down to Rushcutters Bay, we went through all the rigmarole

03:30 medicals and so on, and signing on the dotted line and taking the oath and all this business.

#### **What was the oath?**

Just 'dedicated to King and Country' and all that business in those days, but I can't remember much about it, to tell you the truth.

04:00 **Did you feel you were going in to protect King and Country?**

No, not really, no. When I met up with sailors, old sailors that were there they told me, get out before you trying to talk us out of getting out of the navy, not getting into it, when we finished

04:30 at Rushcutters Bay they transported us to Balmoral naval place, Balmoral, that's where we stayed overnight there and there was a lot of sailors there, old ex sailors and, "Get out while you can," they were telling us, "Don't stay in here, you'll be sorry."

#### **Do you think they meant it?**

05:00 They meant it, believe you me, they meant it, I was telling the same to a few of them years later myself.

#### **Did they tell you anything?**

No, because we were only there for the one night and at that place that was only a tranship depot and most of them were going ashore that night. We never seen much of them

#### **What was the base at Rushcutters Bay like?**

Rushcutters Bay was -

05:30 it was a diving school at that time, for diving training and it was just huts, that's all there were there. It wasn't much of a place, we only do, only in the hall were we did the medical and that, and then they trans us to Balmoral,

06:00 Balmoral was where the living quarters and, there were a few at Rushcutters Bay as I came back to Rushcutters Bay later and was there for about 6 months with the diving crowd but Balmoral was the place where all the dormitories were and I never knew much about the what was

06:30 going on in Rushcutters Bay when I first went there.

#### **Did you meet any mates early on?**

Yeah, I met a good mate of mine, this bloke called Scotty, from Newcastle we become very good buddies, but, and he

07:00 was lost like I was, but he'd seen the sea because he lived in Newcastle. He didn't know Sydney at all, we chummed up and we were mates for quite awhile. We never sailed together on the same ship, in the depots we were, but he was the only one out of Rushcutters, I knew a lot of blokes only you know

07:30 to muck about with, to talk to because we weren't allowed in the mess canteen too, which was bad but.

#### **What did you think of seeing the sea all around you for the first time?**

God, I couldn't realise how big it was, I'd only seen it in pictures, and I never actually seen much of it, I'd seen it at Balmoral out over the heads

08:00 Balmoral naval, the base there but I never, not the waves and that, I'd never seen those until I got down to Victoria. We were only there overnight and they took us by bus back to do more lecturing on what we, about the navy and that night we were

08:30 put on a train into Melbourne.

#### **Do you recall what they told of the first things to expect being in the navy?**

Discipline was the one thing they did harp on, discipline you can't do this and you can't do that, and I thought here we go again. Which it was

09:00 too by the way.

#### **Were you having any second thoughts at this stage?**

No, no, I thought I'll go and see what it was like for a while because I never had a uniform or anything. I was still in civvies [civilian clothes]. I may as well go all the way until we get a uniform and see what that's like.

### **Can you step us through the process of arriving at Rushcutters and**

#### **09:30 enlistment before you got to Flinders in Victoria?**

Well we were lined up and you were given a lecture by one of the – he was in civilians', I don't who this bloke was, he wasn't, there was no navy, actual navy blokes there. Everything was done, it was civilians were taken oaths by civilians and all this

10:00 we had to do a bit of education, sums and that kind of thing, but no navy, even though it was a navy base, the only navy blokes we'd seen at Rushcutters was the bus driver. Until we'd taken that oath and then we become navy, before that we were civilians. But as soon as we took that oath

10:30 it was a different set up I think, we become under a different, and they told us you are under the rules of the navy now, you are no longer civilians.

#### **So how did it suddenly change?**

Very quickly, not till we got to Melbourne, at Balmoral it was a bit but not much. Cause we weren't under any of the rules over there. It was just accommodation more than anything

11:00 until we got to Victoria and then it –

#### **And how did you travel down to Flinders? By bus?**

No, from Melbourne?

#### **Down to Flinders?**

We went by train, Spirit of Progress, to be exact to Melbourne, and then we, they had to, had special train runs from Melbourne to Flinders

11:30 and we went down on that and then once you get inside that place, wow!

#### **So tell us your first impression of Flinders?**

A lot of screaming, petty officers and leading seamen and all that were going on, and you knew damn well you were in there. I knew a lot of blokes wanted to get back out again in a hurry because they

12:00 really put the discipline in.

#### **So what happened to you when you first arrived?**

Well you, they line you up and teach you to take you to different places where you dormitories, which dormitories belonged to who, and which was your locker and then we stayed, and that was the – a night our biggest trouble was, they give us a hammock and no one knew how to hang one.

12:30 Was special knots and that and blokes were jumping into hammocks and they were collapsing on the decks and all this, and the old sailor boys come in and show us how to tie them properly. Cause if you hit a concrete floor from that high up it really hurts. And then the next morning at 6 o'clock the bugle goes, cause they got a

13:00 loud speaker 'wakey-wakey' and we didn't know what the hell was going on, and the petty officers going yelling, belting you under the hammock, "Get up!" and "You gotta do this, you gotta do!" but you get up get showered, still in our civvies and then went for breakfast and then we fall into the parade ground

13:30 with the whole 800 there were at that time. We were the only civilians, we fall in and they marched us up to get our uniforms was the first thing, and then you're given your uniform and then your marking hut, we got a marking hut every single article with your name and your official number,

14:00 so nobody –

#### **How would you mark everything?**

With a, they had a marking pen, so you had to mark every single darn thing, that went on all day, the mucked with us so much, including your civvies had to be marked in parcels, and they done the posting back home. And everything that was civilian life had to go into this parcel

14:30 because they give you everything, the full kit, and they say enjoy it because it's the last full kit you'll get. You've got to replace it yourself after the – and that's how it went right up until we started to get into the uniform and then we had to work out how the uniform works.

#### **How do you mean?**

15:00 How you dress in it, how do you get all this rigmarole and all these ropes and lanyards and there's a



way of doing it and a way of not doing it. But we ended up getting it alright, cause that's when the training starts.

**So you weren't allowed to keep anything personal?**

No, no. No a wallet, yes, apart from anything else they give you everything, the first one, yeah.

15:30 And then we went into training in a big way, the bullring for a start.

**The bullring?**

That's where you learn to march, that goes on for a week, non stop, and this chief petty officer, Hothouse Smith, they called him, he was in charge of it, and all he done was scream, like a ser [sergeant] major in the army,

16:00 he screamed for eight hours a day for five days, how to do this, and do it by so many steps, and how many inches in a step and all this, with a rifle till your shoulders are red raw, doing rifles and, that went on for a week, and then you had an exam for that, if you passed.

16:30 If you didn't, you did another week.

**A week of marching is intensive, what are the different aspects of marching that would take a week?**

Well there is so many different kinds of marching, there is the slow march, and then there's the quick march and how you turned all together, you know.

17:00 Parade ground things, you got to, there's blokes getting, they were getting mixed up, and right arms going with their right leg and all this, and then start over again, if you done it wrong, they'd send you on a double around the parade ground with a rifle on your shoulder, and this bouncing up and down, but cause

17:30 anything you do wrong is punishable. Until you learned to do it properly and of course you, everyday you would get that, you would get this marching business, and marching was every morning, you marched, cause the whole parade ground had to march and the whole, the commodore used to stand up and salute, the whole parade ground would march past him. This went on every morning at 8 o'clock,

18:00 you got more than your fair share of marching I can assure you. Cause you didn't get marching on the ships, so you had to learn it for when you come off the ships. Not like the army, they do it every day.

**You mentioned punishment, what would they do to you if you got things wrong?**

Oh, well it depends

18:30 you get, well if you do something really wrong you, on stop with your leave you come before the commander and that could mean you'd do what we used to call it WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s, that was what punishment was it was WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s, you never called it punishment. It was WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s and he might give you 14 days, and everything was done in numbers and you might get 14 days number 11, so you got to

19:00 you are up an hour earlier in the morning than the other blokes, and of an afternoon from 4 till 6 you were under punishment, with a rifle in your hand, marching. And if you played up there they give you a 4 inch shell to hold above your head and run with it for an hour, which was not very nice. That was one of their punishments, but, or extra work sweeping or washing, depending on the

19:30 officer of the watch that was on, whatever he thought.

**And were there particular COs [commanding officers] that were worse than others?**

Oh God yeah, the British ex, see a lot of the British ex navy blokes that transferred out here from the British navy to here, they were real animals some of them

20:00 **How so?**

Oh they were vicious, cause they hated Australians, and we hated them which made it. And they used to be real, even at sea they were real viscous, a lot of them, but they learnt

**What would they do?**

Oh, extra punishment for, nothing, anything like that and they rave and scream, same for the officers, the officers were as bad as them

20:30 but never had much time for the Poms after that, but they were hard, cause a lot of our blokes were too. But mostly the Pommy blokes, cause they used to get into the regulating part of it, a lot of them, police, there was no such thing as MPs [military police], naval MPs, most of the regulating stuff.

21:00 **You mentioned the numbers before in terms of discipline, did you get to know by the numbers**

**what the WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s were?**

Yes, oh yes, yeah you knew once you went up to the table, the commander or depending on how serious it was, it went to the commodore, mostly you'd

- 21:30 go to cells for that, but ordinary punishment you went to commander, second in command, but you knew the numbers you got to learn them very quick.

**Can you tell us some of the numbers and what they meant?**

The only thing I used to remember was number 11 that was the main one, that was extra work and marching and all that. Now see in the base is entirely different punishment to on a ship,

- 22:00 cause you can't or do anything on a ship, so if you got punishment on a ship is work in the galley or scrub the decks, depending if it was a wooden deck or that, but on a, in a base they got a big area to play with, they make you do a lot of marching and things like that and you're leave stop

- 22:30 number 12s is all stoppage of leave, but you can't go on leave when you're on punishment, but in a depot see you can get away with a lot of it because punishment's over in one week, but on a ship punishment starts, stoppage of leave starts when you are in harbour, not when you are at sea, so you don't get away with, especially at sea for a long time.

- 23:00 **That's a bit unfortunate?**

Yeah, it is, especially if you're doing two months in one run.

**With scrubbing the decks as punishment, was there somebody who usually did that task? Or was there enough punishment going around to keep the decks clean?**

No, to keeps the decks clean, that had to be done by the morning

- 23:30 watch at sea in harbour by the duty watch, they had to get up at 5 and they scrubbed the decks. If it's a steel ship, like a destroyer, well that's al steel you do it, but the Australia it's a wooden deck so you got to do that with holy stone.

**Holy stone?**

- 24:00 Holy stone is a sandstone, a block of sandstone and it's got a hole in the centre of it and you put a broom handle in it and you scrub that with the salt water, and it turns the wood white, it cleans it till it's nearly white. Especially if you have been in dock for - and the dockies walking there with their oily shoes on the deck, and when you go to sea that's when you start at 5 o'clock in the morning, the whole ship's

- 24:30 company did it, they get out and scrub that deck until it becomes white again, but and that punishment, that is punishment. At sea, it's punishment, especially on the wooden decks, the sea gets a bit cold, especially in the winter and you are in bare feet and you got to scrub that thing, they're hosing your feet all the time.

- 25:00 **Sound like you are talking from experience?**

I have, been there and done that, yeah, but I preferred the destroyers because you can scrub them down quick, they don't stain that much.

**What stage during your training could you get to chose what specific duties you could do on a ship?**

- 25:30 You don't get that, you do your training down at Flinders, and then you're drafted to a training ship. Now I was drafted to the Australia, I was on corvette but that was only just mucking around and that, but he actual training was done on a cruiser and you go to, each have a class and you'd do seamanship training there, the real stuff

- 26:00 and everything, you do all the seamanship part of it, not the armament part of it. You do that, the seamanship, that goes on for about six months, that goes on a lot to learn the ropes, you only a little bit at Flinders of that. But on the cruiser itself you do all the lifeboats and all that. And then the

- 26:30 they take you to different parts of the ship and tell you what goes on. And then they say what you are going to do, whether you are going to do gunnery, whether you are going to do torpedo, do radar or you going to carrier base, going to do carriers, or what. A lot depends on how you go with your training, but I stayed seamanship but a lot of my mates went for different ones.

- 27:00 Some went to supply and some went to being stewards, which didn't appeal to me, and all that kind of thing, sick bay or engine room, or anything like that.

**What it was exciting to get on a cruiser and start to do specific training?**

Oh yeah, that was a monster that damn ship when I first saw it. I come off a corvette, their lifeboats were bigger than the corvette

27:30 and when you had to climb up that ladder, cause she was anchored, tied to a buoy in Sydney harbour, and we had to climb up that, and to look at her, I thought, "God, we'll never find our way around this thing." And, but we did, she was big, and we went to sea the same day, that made things, we had to learn quick.

28:00 **No mucking around?**

No because they had to put us into watches straight away, you had to do sea watches, that's how you learn.

**Can you tell us about that day for you?**

First of all we had to get our police card, that's a card with your name your rank, you mess, where your mess is, where you are going to leave,

28:30 even what your religion is on this little card, you must keep it with you at all time, you had to get those. And then they detailed the heads of each mess, usually the leading seaman or a three badge man, whatever it was, and they take you down to this mess, and they say to you, your locker's where you got to stow your hammock and all this, you eat in cafeteria style

29:00 on the big ones and they show you all that and when that's done, they do most of the teaching where to go, the leading hand of the mess, told you where to go, and then you are given a job of part o' ship, they call it, whether you are on foc's'le which is the front end of the ship, if you're in that, there is maybe 60 blokes in there, and then you got the port side, the starboard side, and the quarterdeck

29:30 the four different parts of the ship it was there, that's on the upper deck, and so many people go to each one, and each one of those part o' ship's got a petty officer, he's in charge and a leading seaman, and over all them is a chief petty officer, he's called the buffer, he controls the whole lot of them on the upper deck, all the seamanship part of it. So you get detailed off to which

30:00 part of the ship you are going to.

**Which section did you get?**

I got the bows, the foc's'le or the front end of the ship, where the cables are and the anchors. I was on that one for about 6 months.

**Was that a good one?**

It was good, yeah, not good in rough weather, but it was good, because the waves come over there, but then you leave, go down below and work down there until

30:30 she calms down a bit, but it's steel up there and not much wooden decks to be scrubbing. But then they change you around so you know different parts of the ship.

**So you got on the ship, what happened on the first day you went out?**

Well we went out into rough seas to tell you the truth

31:00 which wasn't very nice, so there was a lot of blokes very sick. Thank God I've never been seasick in my life.

**Never?**

No, been close, but never, no

**How would they manage their seasickness?**

They continue working, you just hang your head over the side. It's not classed as a sickness in the navy, you can't lay down on your bunk and say I'm too sick to

31:30 work, "Uh uh, up you go!" and you still work, unless you get to the chronic part of seasickness.

**What's the chronic part?**

When they start bringing up blood, that's when they, seen a lot of it, not on the cruisers and the carriers cause they are too big, you don't get too much, bit of odd seasickness, not like you get on a small one

32:00 **Did many fellows get that?**

Oh yeah, I've seen then when they are just on the deck, laying out on the deck and she is rough and they're just rolling to the guard rail and rolling back and the ship roll, so you need to put a line around their stomach hook them on to an eye bolt, which is those steel bolts on the deck, and ties them up so they can't go overboard when they roll, just leave them there

32:30 they just, wouldn't put them down below, and they come out of it alright.

**What was the worst case of seasickness you saw?**

Oh, that would be those blokes with that chronic seasickness, but they end up, if they get that way they end up putting them on the big stuff, they never take them down to destroyers and frigates and that sort of thing, because they'd be no damn good, they'd be forever sick, but even the officers

33:00 are that way, even they get that way, the captains I think, if the captain's sick so it's not something that just happens to the juniors.

**That must have been good to see?**

Oh yeah, it's very discreet way, a little bucket beside them.

**So tell us about that first trip out into rough seas, were you on the bow?**

33:30 No, I was, I wasn't on the bow until we got out to Sydney Harbour because we were working on the cable because she was hooked to the buoy and you got to get the cable in reconnect it to the anchor, cause you break up the cable and goes out through the eye. So when we got all that stowed away and when she started to pile drive into it they off they, only the real seasoned blokes stay up there, who know what they are doing

34:00 they wouldn't let us recruits because they'd be all over the side. Until you got your sea legs and knew how to handle rough seas you went down below and we used to go down and do, like school down there on seamanship and navigation and all that kind of thing.

**What was it like heading out through the heads of Sydney for the first time?**

34:30 I didn't see much of it I tell you, we were sent down below until we got out and we turned down and we were going to Jervis Bay, but I think we were on our way to Melbourne, as a matter of fact, at that time, if I can remember rightly. Yes, we were with a New Zealand cruiser, Bellona

35:00 and there were three New Zealand frigates, and we met up with the whole fleet out there anyhow. As I remember the New Zealanders broke their backs and had to go into port, so she was rough. They broke in half the ship across the - they call them break their backs, so they had to come into harbour and be welded, they do that when it was fairly rough.

35:30 **What would be your seaman duties on the bow of the ship?**

Working on the cables.

**Specifically what would you do with the cables?**

We would paint them, you are chipping them all the time, cause they rust very quick in the salt water all time, and all the paint work all the steel work, the deck, the deck is steel and you got two cables, two anchors and

36:00 there is a lot of, there's what they call the capstan that's the big steam engine that hauls them in and lowers them out, that's got to be done, and then you got the all the bulkheads right around, cause the bridge is straight above, and you got all that bulkhead there, you are always painting or chipping the rust away from it. It keeps you busy, and you are still under training because up there

36:30 they are always, the guard rails there, you got to be, they got to be clean, grease those so they don't rust, there is plenty of work to do.

**Are you constantly touching up the paintwork?**

Yeah, you chip the rust away with the chipping hammer, and then you do it again and a couple of days later you knock that off. Cause she

37:00 was an old ship, the Australia at that time, she done one broadside and all the water pipes broke, nothing like, she was that bad.

**What was that?**

She done a broadside with 18 inch guns, all the pipes inside had burst, all the water pipes, the toilets and that, every water from - and the poor old plumbers would be working day and night to

37:30 put her back together again, and away they'd go and she'd broadside again, the next day. all that kind of thing. She was old and she was on a - oh I don't think it was, it wasn't very long after that that they laid her off.

**Were you introduced to the history of Australia as part of going aboard?**

Yeah you were always introduced like that, especially to her, about the kamikazes that hit her and all that

38:00 as she got hit in a little funnel which saved them, which was a dummy one, yeah.

**Was there a lot of pride in the established crew of the Australia?**

Yeah there was cause there was still quite a few old timers on there at that time, yeah they were -

- 38:30 she was the ship of the day. She was doing, I remember, when we were doing that trip we were going down to a capital city tour, we were heading for Hobart, the regatta was on at that time, it was about February I think. We were there for about three or four days, then we went to Melbourne
- 39:00 and then around to Perth, or Fremantle cause you can't get into Perth, and then up to New Guinea.
- You are starting to get around?**
- Yeah that was our first trip, and then we got into New Guinea and we quarantined I think, they thought we had chicken pox on board. And of course up went the yellow flag,
- 39:30 and that means no native will come near it, white man's yellow death they call it, cause it kills the natives if they get chicken pox, so we, three months, we did nothing else but toured New Guinea and all round that which was nice cause they used to stop at every little island, uninhabited by the way, they never let you stay on those holiday resorts, I tell you, and we done a lot of boating and that kind of, yeah it was good.

## Tape 4

- 00:31 **You were just taking about Captain Burrell, can you tell us a little bit about him?**
- I didn't know much about him, I didn't know how long he'd been on the ship but he was, he was a real thorough gentlemen, very strict with his own officers. I've been on the bridge when he's blasted them over a, especially the navigator, for being off course only about one or two degrees
- 01:00 everything with him had to be exact but as far as the crew was concerned he was very fair if he could get any place where he could get us leave, he'd push the ship in and we went into Adelaide with him and Adelaide is 360 foot wide and the Australia is 365 foot long and he put her in there and he turned her around without using tugs
- 01:30 by using dry docks.
- Can you explain that procedure?**
- They are dry docks, docks where they put the ships in and pump the water out and leave them high and dry. You see, and then they do repairs on the bottom of them and that, and when they finish they just flood that, open the cocks and flood it and the ship floats and out she comes, got like a Cockatoo Docks in Garden Island and that's what he did, cause he put
- 02:00 the nose in a bit, and then kicked the tail round a bit, till he got another dock and he got into that and turned it round in that and he was in the papers and everything, it was a marvellous bit of handling a ship of that size.
- Sounds like he was reversing a car?**
- Very simple only he's got this great thing.
- Where you on the Australia when it was happening?**
- Oh yeah, I was on the deck
- 02:30 watching him and we were all in full dress going into harbour for the first time. You had to be in full dress and all this, and the bands playing and all this jazz.
- How long did it take him to do his three point turn?**
- About two hours.
- That's not long?**
- No, but he done a beautiful job of it, so easy nothing worried him,
- 03:00 he just took it steady and done it
- He may have been given permission to do that?**
- He'd do it on his own he didn't have that permission he didn't worry about having anyone's permission. His ship, he makes a boo and smashes it it's what do they call on his 'slop sheet', it means it's on his pay. he'd got to pay for it.
- Do you remember what your pay was when you first started in the navy?**
- 6 pound a fortnight. Different to today
- 03:30 **So you said the band was playing when you were coming in?**

Yeah the band, had our own band on that ship same as the carriers do they all have a full band on them and they play for the - when they get into harbour mainly for the cocktail parties and all that go on and down on the decks

04:00 and of course on the quarterdeck where the officers only, no sailors allowed and on comes all the 'la di das' [important or senior people] and all that and they have the band play, and they march through the cities and all that, they have bands at sea and bands at depots.

**Why would the band be playing when you come into port?**

They all do, I don't know why they play, you know marching tunes and all

04:30 this and Waltzing Matilda and all that.

**I have this image that the captain needed to concentrate?**

But they're down the back end, he doesn't even hardly hear them up in the bridge, long way from the - well they wouldn't play near the bridge, they'd get shot overboard I suppose.

**So they didn't ask you to play your comb in the band?**

Oh good God, no.

05:00 They are marines, the bandsmen are marines, not sailors, God no, they are -

**What do you mean marines, Australian marines?**

Yeah, they were the same as the British marines, they were, they are seagoing soldiers is what the marines are, but

**You mean they were in the army?**

They were actually as army marines are army, but they belong to the

05:30 navy. That's why they call the navy the senior service because it has three services in one: the navy, the army which is marines, and the air force which is the carriers. No they every time they used to come, especially if you were a flag ship, which Australia was, that's carrying an admiral, if you are carrying an admiral, oh yes, the bands go and everything like that because 'his royal highness'

06:00 is on board.

**So the Australia was actually coming into port at Adelaide, there must have been hundreds of people on the docks?**

Yeah, oh yeah, quite a few on the docks yeah, they were all watching. Cause it was the Adelaide part of the navy because there was a base there they were all down there with the - in the full regal - full gear on, cause you had to be welcomed on board,

06:30 welcomed to shore I suppose and all the dignitaries there.

**Were you allowed to wave and say g'day?**

Oh, God no. You'd get shot if you were waving, no you don't wave. I don't know if they do it now but in those days you were never allowed to, you stood to attention and that's what you did, and if you waved look out and somebody saw you, you wouldn't be going ashore in that place.

07:00 You'd be under punishment.

**The Australia was basically used for training groups?**

It was a that time because it finished being a war ship if you might call it, because it was too old and it was doing too much damage to the ship cause firing those 18 inch guns, but she was just going round to, as they called it showing the flag

07:30 and I don't know, I forget if we were escorted or on our own, I think we were on our own, but usually they operated with a couple of destroyers or frigates with them. But no she wasn't anything like a fighting ship then, no.

**What year was this?**

This would be '49, '50, '49 I should think because

08:00 I was up in the Far East in '50.

**Was there any training exercises that went amiss, somebody got hurt or damaged?**

Not on the Australia not that I remember, no, a few blokes fall down ladders and that kind of thing, but that happened all the time, down those two ladders, somebody go down them

08:30 head first instead of leg first, it can happen.

**The stair ladders? You mean inside the ship?**

Yeah, straight down ladders, going down, you can slip on them, if you don't know what you are doing you can go down them very, and break a leg or something like that.

**How high are they?**

About 14, 15 feet down from one deck to another.

09:00 **So you wouldn't want to have been on the grog and then try to go down the ladder.**

No, or if you were going down to steer the ship you go down a ladder that's about 100 feet straight down, because where you steer the ship is below the water line, so you go straight down that one, you watch what you're doing when you go down there, especially if it's rough seas.

**You couldn't really have fat people in the navy, because how would they get down the ladder?**

09:30 Oh the hatches are big on the big ships, you don't have to have people on the small ships the destroyers and below that, no, some are, cause even on the Australia the surgeon captain on there was I suppose he was 22 stone, I mean out like this

10:00 and he was the surgeon captain, he done most of the operations on the. I don't know how he ever come down those hatches, he never come down those hatches he just from the ward room to the sick bay and that would be about him. He'd never go to the bridge because he could never get up the ladders. But I remember them dropping him once in a lifeboat to go and do an operation on a destroyer, an appendix operation.

10:30 I remember that, they rowed him over, not on a lifeboat, they rowed him over.

**You rowed him over?**

No I wasn't in that one, but I remember them doing it because he broke the (fort UNCLEAR) that's the seat in the boat, when the ship was moving, they lower the boat over the side with him in it and of course the coxswain, the bloke driving the ship, and they slip it before it hits the water, it's about that far off the

11:00 water and they hit a lever and the boat hits the water. See they slipped away, because there is only one rope on it and that's the bow and it brings the boat around that way so the ship don't pull it in towards the ship side and smash it. I know he broke the seat in the boat or the [UNCLEAR] as it's known, he was too heavy for it. And I don't know how they got him on the Bataan, the Bataan was the other ship

11:30 how they got him up onto the Bataan, they must have used a crane to get him up because he couldn't have climbed. He was too big. So there was a lot of fat blokes on the ship, but not many.

**Luckily you didn't have to steer it otherwise you would have had to have gone down the 100 foot ladder. That wouldn't have been good?**

No

12:00 but

**Can you tell us about mateship. This is your first training exercise, did you meet any really good mates?**

Yeah, you met a lot of, well every ship you pick up new mates, get what I mean. You go ashore with them and everything, and then you're drafted to another ship and you never see them again or you might wave to them as you're passing them, or fuelling off or something

12:30 like that. But you never see them again, unless you might see them on a weekend or, in Hong Kong or Singapore or something. But other than that you might run into them on other ships somewhere but you change mates every ship you go and you make new ones. Which is good, I think

**Yet you've got a tattoo on you left hand, 'Scotty', and on your right hand, 'Mack'?**

13:00 Yeah.

**So these mates were special? Where did you meet those?**

I met those, well Scotty I met them, I joined up with Scotty. And Mack I met him on the Australia, and I went to I was on the Shoalhaven with him, I went up north with him and then I never met him again after that

13:30 but we all got the same tattoos, believe me we did. One of our nights out it was, in Hong Kong, actually it was.

**Had you been having a bit of drink?**

Of course, more than a bit. More than a bit, oh God yes. We wouldn't have done that if we'd been anywhere sober, I can assure you. I got that

14:00 damn thing too.

**What's this one, it's a ship, it's an old fashioned -**

A windjammer, old fashioned sail.

**What's that called?**

A windjammer.

**Why did you choose that? Can you remember?**

I haven't a clue but you had to be part of the team. Thank God it was only that one, some of them got em all over their back and all up their legs

14:30 that one got a bit infected so I, thank God it did, so I never worried about another one.

**It's a little more interesting than the naked mermaid?**

Oh God, some of them are terrible. How the heck they ever went home

**Why is that in the navy that most of the blokes are tattooed?**

It's just a thing with the sailors

15:00 I think, get tattoos

**An old tradition you mean?**

An old tradition, yeah. Everyone it's the first thing they done on their first trip was get tattoos. Some of only got little ones, some of them have got big ones.

**I suppose it was good you were drunk because you didn't feel it?**

No, till the next morning, then we did

15:30 too late then, the damn thing was on, then you had to hide the damn thing, if the skipper seen it, he'd blast the hell out of you for getting tattoos.

**Why?**

A lot of skippers didn't like tattoos, always tell you you were marked for life once you get one of them on, that time you were.

**What about the drinking, did it get heavier?**

16:00 **You drank when you were working at the mill, was it a social thing to do in the navy?**

Yes, it's a social thing to do when you go ashore but he, with your mates and that, go to the club and have a few beers. But as far as going to excess, no. You did at first at Flinders, your first time up to Melbourne

16:30 you did over drink for a while. Then when you get to sea you learn your lesson the hard way. You never drink the day before you go to sea, for one thing.

**I have a feeling that you did?**

No, I started off I did but then I learnt, once I got onto the small ships different matter, no.

17:00 Onto the destroyers and below that, no because you pay for it believe you me, when you run into rough seas, no. I never, cause I never drank to that excess anyhow, I got a bit of sense after a while I suppose.

**Did you and your mates think, it's great being sailors we'll have a girl in every port?**

I think they think that, I think I did too.

17:30 **But is thinking and the reality quite different?**

Quite different yes, quite different

**So did you have a girlfriend when you first went into the navy?**

No, no.

**Where you interested in women at that age?**

No, not really no, not that much, no. I could take it or leave it kind of set up. I was more interested in

18:00 getting into the navy and getting to sea. Never worried me all, I did meet a girl in Hobart when I was on



Australia, we went together for about 12 months, and I was away all the time so it wasn't going to last and she broke it off when I was in

18:30 Korea, no I was in, just before the Korean War started, cause her brother was on the - one of my mates.

**Is that how you met her?**

Yeah, but it only like that you meet somebody, but after that I didn't worry much about it

**Did you think maybe you'd marry her?**

19:00 No, I didn't think much of it at the time. We were just going out together cause I just, we were only there for two days, or three days, and then we went back to Melbourne. She came over to Melbourne and I went there, we were only there for a couple of days, and we went out there and was on Australia for the

19:30 rest of the time until we come to Sydney, and that's the last I seen of her.

**Where would you go? Would you go to the movies?**

The first time in Melbourne, we went to the opera.

**The opera?**

Yeah, cause she got free tickets to the opera.

**Do you remember what opera it was?**

I wouldn't have a clue. I remember it was this woman come out in a tutu or what ever it was, and she was like a wrestler and I couldn't stop laughing. And we were sitting

20:00 in amongst all these [UNCLEAR] with their fur coats and I got the giggles and couldn't stop. We got asked to leave. That was me first night, time at an opera.

**You thought it was a bit of joke really?**

Yeah, well I always thought that the ballet was you know nice slim young ladies doing, you know opera or ballet

20:30 but God almighty, she wasn't very happy with me either.

**She might have thought you were a bit of a heathen?**

Oh yeah.

**What did you think of the food in the navy?**

Terrible, not like they've got today, no. You never had menus or anything

21:00 like that. You had two choices, take it or leave it. But I never had the food we were getting not so much here in Australia but overseas it was ex war stuff, it had been in refrigeration, you know stuff packed, meat packed in 1941 and we were getting it in 1950, been unpacked in 1950, and I tell you what

21:30 and that, but the food was just potato, you'd go ashore especially to eat, rather than. But onboard it was alright, in some case it was alright in other cases it was terrible, depending on the cook, he could ruin it or, it would depend on the sea too,

22:00 cause the cooks had a bit of trouble trying to work the pots and pans on a galley when she is jumping up and down. No the food was just ordinary, I though anyhow, but.

**Did you get good at playing cards on the ship?**

Oh yeah, we played cards every kind of card game I think there was. We played mahjong, that's a great

22:30 thing on the ships, you weren't allowed to gamble, or you weren't suppose to. On pay nights things come out.

**Did you lose or win?**

I never gamble, that's one thing I never been interested in gambling, on horses or that kind of thing, no I reckon it's too hard to earn your money to give it to somebody else.

**I agreed. I read that you were called Bluey?**

23:00 **Were you a red head?**

Yeah, I got it now, but I was a red head, I was a fuzzy head.

**I do see some red hair there.**

Yeah, I had a big mop, they cut it nearly off when they give us our first haircuts.

**Were you the only redhead in your family?**

No, I got a younger brother, Merve, we're

23:30 nearly like identical twins, and yet I've got Lionel, he's dark he's got black hair, well he did have, he's white now. And Kevin, he's only a little bloke, my Dad was only 5 foot nothing, and yet the two of us were 6 foot 2 each, Shirley, me little sister, she's only little she sits under here.

24:00 But that's just the way things go.

**On your training was there any exams you had to pass in order to be sent onto the next operation?**

Well you had to, all seamanship exams you had to pass those. Practical as well as theory, but yeah we had to pass all those

24:30 to become a, you started off as a recruit and an ordinary seaman. That's what I was on the Australia. And then naval seaman and then leading, then you go up to petty officer, but you had to pass exams, oh yeah, they are very strict on that especially the seaman part of it.

**How did you go with your seaman ship?**

No problem, I got it through all that, I got to naval seaman I was happy with that. And then I never worried about it

25:00 then after that.

**You didn't want to go any further?**

No.

**Why is that?**

No, I preferred to stay down with the boys, what we called the lower deck, a lot of us did that. We got seniority in a different way.

**Can you tell me what you mean?**

25:30 We ended up leading hands of messes, we were bosses of that, we done as we pleased on a lot of the small ships, we got the perk jobs, a lot of perk jobs if you were three badge man. See each badge you get for 6 years, ah 4 years, well I was a three badge man, I didn't do much after one at the end of it, it just pleased

26:00 meself what I done.

**Was it because you wanted to stay with your friends?**

Yeah,

**Rather than train to be an officer?**

No, no up there, no. I preferred to stay down with the - with the boys down in the lower deck.

**Did they say ever approach you and say look I think you can be promoted?**

26:30 Oh yeah, they wanted me to do the leading, the leading seaman's thing, and I did one exam and passed it, but it's in two parts. And I was transferred off ship before I got to do the second part. I never worried about it after that, I'd have had to reapply to do the second part. But I never got around to it, I was swapping from one ship to another and it didn't worry me.

**So what did you know,**

27:00 **on the Australia when you were doing your training, were things heating up in Korea, did you hear about it?**

No, we didn't know much about it, it was all Americans we thought, nothing to do with us. We knew there was some problems with American and Korean but we never took much notice cause we weren't even training for it, you know,

27:30 we were just doing our ordinary training exercise, gunnery exercise and that sort of thing, not like we were supposed to have done if we'd have known there was a war going on.

**So you had no idea when you were doing your initial training on the Australia that you would be going over there?**

No, I knew we'd be going, when I got my next appointment, that I was going up north to do the strategic reserver -

- 28:00 was occupation in Japan was still on, we knew that and we thought it was all the Japanese you know. That's all we were doing it for to occupy Japan, when we got there, there was no fraternisation, you weren't allowed to talk to them or anything like that when we first got there. But we thought well that's what it is, we were patrolling off Korea, we didn't know a war was on, they hadn't told us then.
- 28:30 **Had you heard about the kind of things that went on in the Second World War with the Japanese?**
- Yeah, we knew all that cause Lionel, my brother, he was in that, he was in the commandos and he told us a lot when he came home, before I went into the navy he told us a lot what the atrocities, what the Japanese did
- 29:00 and I read a lot, I still got a lot of books in there about the atrocities they did and I've seen in Japanese what went wrong
- So was there a feeling of hatred for the Japanese before you went over there?**
- Yeah, there
- 29:30 was very much a hatred, because it was instilled in us even with the officers and that in the training. Because they were, they'd fought the Japanese I suppose they weren't too happy with them, and it was a terrible lot of hatred. After we'd seen the place it and the devastation, they got what they deserved, kind of thing,
- 30:00 especially Kure and those places and Nagasaki, Hiroshima.
- How did you know on the Australia that that's where you'd be going?**
- No, they after you finish your training, on the notice board it comes out your drafted to a, different ships, and I knew when I was going to Shoalhaven that
- 30:30 I was going north, going up to strategic reserve so I knew that, I knew we were on our way.
- So did you feel ready for it?**
- Yeah, we were happy to get away
- Get out of Australia do you mean?**
- Yeah, we went up we didn't go straight there, we went round through Melbourne and the west and up through to Singapore first, we didn't go straight to Japan.
- 31:00 Because we were joining up with the British fleet there, the British Far East fleet, and we had to, the aircraft carrier, Sydney I think it was, they were going up for exercise up there outside Singapore there. We were there we had Tobruk, I think it was Tobruk, and someone else it might have been Anzac or, was with us. Because we got
- 31:30 going through the Sunda Straits that's where the Perth was sunk, and President Sukarno was the - the boss of Philippines? No Indonesia, Sukarno was the just as the
- Megawati?**
- Yeah, he told us he would sink us if we went through the Sunda Straits, cause he was with the Commos [Communists] at that time.
- 32:00 But we went through just the same all we'd seen was one gun boat a long way away, we met up with the British fleet on the other side of the Sunda Straits.
- How did you find the Shoalhaven after being on the Australia?**
- A lot smaller, you could find everything, God yes it was smaller.
- Did you like it?**
- The Shoalhaven was alright didn't mind the Shoalhaven but it
- 32:30 wasn't a happy ship, I can tell you that.
- What do you mean by it wasn't a happy ship?**
- Well it's not where you get, the officers are always snarling and you get the petty officers and the chiefs always snarling, and people were always arguing with each other and mess decks arguing with others and all that. You get that on some ships, on other ships you are all one big happy family
- 33:00 and the skipper's a gentlemen when he talks to you. And on the Shoalhaven the skipper would walk over the top of you before he would say hello, a lot of the officers would to. It was alright, the crew were quite good but they were alright, but it wasn't a bad ship, but I've had better.
- Did you go ashore in Singapore before heading to Japan?**

Yeah, we went,

33:30 when we got to Singapore we found that half our guns and that wouldn't work properly, complements of the dockyard in Garden Island. They hadn't fixed them properly so we had to go in, cause the British naval base there, we went in the naval base and they fixed everything for us. ERAs [engine room artificer] did a mechanics that worked on the machinery

34:00 they worked on them all the way up there and it wasn't successful so they had to do that in Singapore so everything would work. There is no use going into any place up there without everything working, but their radar wouldn't work, that type of thing. Half of it would work and half of it wouldn't. So we got it all fixed there and then took off for Hong Kong

**How long were you in Singapore**

34:30 **before you took off?**

Only about a week I think, if I remember rightly.

**What did you think of Singapore at that time?**

I was alright it was good, yeah. We never went actually into Singapore itself much because the naval base was about 14 mile out, I forget what they call the damn thing. But they had a wet canteen, movie theatres and all that in the base, and so we stayed most of the time in,

35:00 we did go up once into Singapore I think on that ship, and by taxi we went . I remember the mad Indian driver, cause they were all Mercedes Benz diesels and this mad Indian, I'm sure he's never driven a car before in his life, no such thing as keep left there, or look out for your right, he went straight through the centre. But that was one -

**You'd be better off on the ship?**

Yeah.

**How many blokes went in?**

35:30 Four of us, we went to Raffles Hotel in Singapore and we never stayed, we only stayed about an hour.

**Why?**

Because it's an officers', and they kept giving us a dirty look. Common sailors in with the officers, in Raffles, no way. We said goodbye and back to the base.

**Could you have said, 'Bugger you, this is a public place'?**

Yeah we could have,

36:00 but some of the officers were our officers and it wouldn't have been very, wouldn't have been very nice, they wouldn't have said anything but it was all. But we were quite happy and soon as we were fixed we were heading for Hong Kong.

**And did you go ashore in Hong Kong?**

Yes, I like Hong Kong, I've been, had 5 Christmases in Hong Kong

**Like a roast dinner or?**

36:30 Oh roast dinners, we had roast dinners on board, we had Christmas dinner onboard. We'd always stay in Hong Kong for Christmas before and then we'd either head out to Singapore or to India or Japan, but we seemed to always get this Christmas in Hong Kong. Maybe the skipper liked Hong Kong

**What did you like about Hong Kong?**

The people, very clean, and very

37:00 friendly place, and there is so much to do in the place. It was very good then. Cause it was cheap was the main thing, we used to buy all our rabbits there, the rabbits are presents, the navy calls them rabbits. If you buy presents to bring home, they are called rabbits.

**What would you buy?**

Well the first trip up there I bought toys. I had

37:30 a whole suitcase of toys for my nieces, they were only, cause they are old women now with families. They, Robin and Dianne, I brought them all little toys you used to wind up and go, they weren't down here them, and these transistors and that kind of thing, no transistors down here and we

38:00 could buy them for next to nothing, see. So all that kind of thing and I had a suitcase full of them.

**What about the beautiful silks did you buy anything like that?**

I did, I bought quite a few. I bought bedspreads for Mum and my sisters

**You would have been popular when you went home?**

I was popular for about a week, I was very popular. Brocade I had a lot of

38:30 these gowns, brocade gowns

**They're beautiful?**

They are, I wish I had them now, they'd be worth a fortune.

**They would, that's what you get for giving them away?**

Oh well at the time, they would have disowned if I wouldn't have. But yeah we used to, but Hong Kong was great for that. And the movie theatres they were very good because they were getting stuff straight from America before they were even released

39:00 down here, the new movies and we used to go there nearly every night because it only cost 10 cents, Hong Kong and that was next to nothing as far as we were concerned. But shopping and that, and the food, some of the - we had the big China Fleet Club there, a big 9 or 10 storey club,

39:30 took up a whole block.

**For navy fold?**

Navy, all navy, and of course for the American, British, every country in the world, we used to come in there the sailors, Cause it used to be one mass of ships in Hong Kong harbour at that time. And you could have everything there, you could sleep there is you didn't want to go back to the ship at night, if you had leave of course. Except on the

40:00 what was a it? National day, Communist National Day, you had to be on board.

**What was that sorry?**

A Communist National Day, you weren't allowed ashore that night because you get yourself shot very quickly, which they, they wouldn't think twice over there at that time. But Hong Kong was good.

## Tape 5

00:31 **What was your first impression of Japan?**

Yeah we came in. Our first port of call was Kure. We come in there Inland Sea during orange blossoms. It was the most beautiful trip, of all the trips I've done, it was the most beautiful. With the orange blossoms on each side

01:00 of the Inland Sea as you come up towards Kure, takes a day and a half to get from Tokyo, but we never stopped at Tokyo at that time, we went straight through.

**Can you describe the sight then?**

It was beautiful it really was beautiful, we came into Kure it was just flattened cause that bomb, that's where they built all their big battle ships and it was just the

01:30 Americans had just flattened it. Only thing was there was a big pontoon there, the only thing we could tie up to, and it was a complete floating workshop. Instead of bringing the battleships into Kure to repair them they took the pontoon out to sea, and it was just above the water

02:00 and it was a complete workshop down below. Every single thing you could think of was in this pontoon and that's how they used to repair their battle wagons so there wouldn't be a target inside. But it was a mess when we got there, the day we got there

**Can you describe that?**

It was just flattened, the dockyards, they'd had 4 million people working in the dockyards at that time

02:30 and there was no dockyard there was just one mass of mangled steel everywhere you looked, all the docks was, what ships that were built were smashed up in there and the - it was in a mess and we wanted to do a refit in there as well, which we did. But yeah that's as much as I could see of Japan the first thing

03:00 in Japan and then we went from Kure to Sasebo, that the northern part near the Korean border and we joined up with American 7th Fleet there and that's when we got, and we were ordered to do patrols all the time from there and we went out with the two Canadian ships, the Sioux and the

03:30 Athabaskan and we were patrolling the east coast of Korea when the war actually started.

**What was it like hooking up with the US forces compared to what you'd been used to?**

Very much together

**In what way**

They look after their people, I mean they do look after them, they get a medal if they run out of coke and ice-cream, no they are very generous cause we were the only Australian ship there at the time

04:00 and they were generous to us and we were there on American Independence day which made it a lot better cause everything was free. They even invited the whole crew to go over to the the Hermes, the big battleship, the big cruiser.

**And how did they celebrate it?**

The food was no doubt, they had everything, they were flying stuff in from America, they'd fly steaks in great big steaks, they'd fly them in every day.

04:30 And we had a ball with them, until the British came in and that stopped everything cause while we with the Americans we were really happy with it. But then the war started we were off Korea when the war started and we were ordered back to Sasebo and we

05:00 had waited I think one or two days and we had a convoy of troops to escort to Pusan in Korea, all American troops. Young blokes that had been living the life of luxury in Japan all of a sudden they put a rifle in their hand and said they were going to war. All young blokes.

**These were the occupation forces?**

05:30 Yeah, the occupation forces, yeah. And they thought they were going to kill the Chinese and the wall in Sasebo they had this great big building they had in six foot letters, "Through these gates passed the best goddamn fighting men in the world." And late at night one of our blokes went up and put

06:00 'Bullshit' on the -

**How did that go down?**

Did go down well, we went to sea straight away. We were going out anyway so it didn't make any difference so we took these all these heroes to Pusan and we waited around and three days later we brought them back on hospital ships, they got cut to pieces cause they'd never been in battle and they didn't know what they were doing

06:30 and then we went out on patrol most of the time then. And we were supposed to be relieved but cause that was all cancelled. Bataan arrived the one that was going to relieve us and we went to sea with her, and

**What was it like for you to be suddenly in a real conflict? What did you think of it all?**

07:00 Well we didn't have much time to think, we had the rabbits and all this brought on board ship and all this stuff had to go off, and go into a warehouse in Japan. Everything that wasn't actually war stuff and we unloaded all that and then we had to take on extra ammunition, we had ammunition stacked everywhere cause we didn't know how much we wanted

07:30 and how much we'd use. And that was us we had to change a lot of the ammunition cause the ammunition on board was entirely different, it was practice stuff. Like we practised on the way up, we hadn't re ammunitioned because we were supposed to be going home so we had to leave it all there for the next ship to come in. So we had to change all the ammunition over and check everything and put to sea. And then we went

08:00 up the coast of Korea and patrolled up there for months on end with different ships. Sometimes we had the carriers with us sometimes we had the British sometimes we had the - but we only came in to fuel stay a couple of days and then we go back out again and do more patrols. And now and then bombardments, we took on a tank and a couple of trucks, they were coming in close

08:30 they opened fire on us, we didn't open fire on them, we didn't even notice them cause we were close to shore so they opened fire once and never got near us so we opened fire on them. We got two trucks and the tank was badly bent I think before we left. But then we started going into the Han River

**You actually went into the Han River at that stage?**

Yeah, on the Murchison, yeah, cause Murchison was the only one

09:00 we went into Han River on, but yeah we went in there, we used to go in there. We were in there for 40 days and 40 nights only come out to ammunition, fuel and store ship, and then we come out on a high tide and go back on the high tide. Because it was a 30 knot tide on that river it was you had to have both anchors down to hold it otherwise you were dragged out and our

- 09:30 little motor boats could only just keep pace with the water, going full bore. And we used to bombard at night. And the idea was to keep the Commos awake so we used to put star shells out. I don't know if you know star shells? They're a shell that bursts in the air and on the little parachute a flare and it lights up the whole. And that's what we used to put two star shells up and then we'd
- 10:00 put the real stuff in. And this went on by the watch by the watch of all night every hour, cause we were in two watches that night we used to bombard all night and sleep all day, just to keep them awake and upset them. And we done this for weeks, and we had a two JMLs with us, they're Japanese motor launches, they were gunboats with
- 10:30 a 40 mm gun and a couple of Oerlikons each side, and they were Korean, and they used to go in along the shore and they'd machine gun and all that and come back out. They made it where we could, a passage way, we were in the basin inside and there was a passage way, like a gully, you could go right around. But you had to drop
- 11:00 your anchor wait for the tide to turn so you'd turn around cause you never had enough room to turn around with engines and turn around and then come back out again. And we had done this three or four times and it was good, but this day we went in and they were waiting for us, we were going, we hadn't turned, we were going up towards the turn and the lookout looked over, it was action stations, and the lookout looked over and said to the captain,
- 11:30 "Sir, those haystacks are moving," and the skipper looking at them with binoculars, anti-tank guns behind then, tanks moving, and they wanted until we stopped and waited to turn, so that's where they hit us. And they threw all this at us, and of course we threw a lot back too. And that's when they put all the holes in us as we turned cause we had only turned one turret on them.
- 12:00 **Where did you get hit?**
- In the up near the stern underneath the after turret, in the mess decks. They used armour piercing straight through and out the other side and there was quite a few holes in her and we came back out again after that.
- So what was it, what were you doing during the fire?**
- I was getting the ammunition from the magazine, driving the hoist, the hoist comes up and down the magazine underneath and I was passing it out the shoot to
- 12:30 the gun crew because my action station is anti-submarine mortars, no use using them, you couldn't use them in the river so I changed over the help ammunition . Yeah we got out of that, we had to tear out, and -
- 13:00 **What would you feel and see around you as you were coming under fire?**
- Well there was a lot of yelling screaming going on, and look out for this, and all this business. But you don't think you think about one thing and that is to do what you are there to do and you don't worry about anybody else, you haven't got time, that's when that shell
- 13:30 come through, but when the shell come through the side, just went phew and out the other side, one bloke standing beside me bent over and it went over his back. If he'd been standing up he would have wore it right between the chest.
- Was it that close to you?**
- That close, it was, yeah it, we got one Beaufighter on a 40
- 14:00 mil he got hit. They went, you could see where they started at the water line and come up the they tore out the scabble and he got it in the arm only because the shield covered him quite a bit but he got it in the arm. He was the only one that got wounded out of the whole, which was a miracle I can assure you
- How long did this go on?**
- 14:30 This went on for just over an hour, till we got back out again and then we tore back out to sea again and we had to get rid of him onto the carriers were outside there, the Sydney was outside there, so we had to get him on the hospital. Our sick bay couldn't handle that, and then they. Previous to us going in there, the aircraft had naphthalene bombed
- 15:00 that place, naphthalene bombed and it was just one big fire and you'd think nobody would be there then, and then they went in and done another job after we came out, they put the naphthalene, but I don't know how many they killed but. And we were only out there for about an hour and come back in again. Started all over again and we stayed there
- 15:30 for the whole time was 40 days until the river was started to freeze over, it was getting up to nearly minus 25 and they were driving tanks over the river up the other end, once it freezes over, and we had to get out then. You used to see all the bloated bodies floating past the ship coming out on the tide. Cause the ground was that hard they couldn't bury them
- 16:00 they just throw them in the river.

**Bodies of?**

Americans, and Koreans but mostly Americans.

**Soldiers or navy**

Soldiers, all soldiers.

**How did that affect the fellows on the ship?**

They weren't very happy with it, thank God it was like cold so there was actually no

16:30 smell. Only one where one of our motor boats hit one and it exploded the body exploded and there'd be a smell, that wasn't very nice but apart from that, all we were worried about was catching in the anchors cause the boat anchors but we never had any problem with that. It wasn't very nice just the same.

**How many bodies?**

You could see them, they were going night and day,

17:00 just floating down, as the tide changed, they'd take them out to sea and some would even come back on the tide but caught up the reeds and that on the side, not far off the - cause the neck going out was only very narrow out of the river to the open sea. But no we never had much problem.

17:30 **Was that the only time you came under fire?**

Yeah, it was enough to, yeah but they a couple of there's brought the - I think it was the London a British cruiser in, but they couldn't stay in there a 6 inch cruiser they couldn't stay in there because of the tide, she was too big and she'd drag her anchors so she had to go to sea. She went back out again and never come back

18:00 and the Black Swan came in and that was a British frigate and the Black Swan and Amethyst come in. Amethyst was the one that got caught in the Yangtze, the Black Swan was Prince Phillip's ship. But they never stayed long, not as long as we did, they reckon it was stupid staying in the - they didn't seem to think so,

18:30 so we get back out there back to Sasebo on leave and out on patrol again.

**Doesn't sound like you liked patrol much?**

Was boring, patrol. Cause you're way off, you're not in close where you could see things until we done one night patrol escorting two rocket ships up there. Landing ships

19:00 and their upper deck is one massive rocket launchers and we went up near the mouth of the Yangtze for that, two broadsides and they were out of ammunition, but I tell you what the firepower they had and they went in there and we had to get out because there was 180 mm coastal gun sitting in, and we had 4 inch which is a lot of difference. But we got in and out of that all right. But that was the only

19:30 other thing that was war like you might call it.

**Where there times along the Han River, apart from the haystacks that could actually see?**

Oh yeah, even had a woman walking along the beach picking up twigs and bits of wood. She was a decoy so we wouldn't notice her, but we ended up firing over the top of her, don't know what ever

20:00 happened to her.

**What happened with her?**

Don't know whether she got killed, cause our blokes opened up with everything they had I mean we had Beaufighters we had 4 inch guns, we had Oerlikons all going at once so I never did see her again after, on our way out, but on our way in we'd seen her.

**She was on the shore in front of the enemy?**

Yeah, only a matter of say

20:30 100 feet from us, that's how close the shore was from us, and she must have been the decoy, cause there was only one building there it was only one shed with a tower up top. Must have been where the observers were that were watching us from the - I don't even know whether they blew that up

21:00 maybe the aircraft did. I don't know, we never actually seen them. We'd seen them after we had opened fire when they were running because the machine gun fire was cutting them to pieces there, it was a lot of running going on. Away from us not towards us, thank God. But we got out of that alright.

21:30 **What had you been told, what were your personal feelings to towards Communism?**



I didn't know much about it to tell you the truth, most of us didn't because we had never seen any of it, any Communism part of it

**Do you remember your understanding of what it was at the time?**

Yeah well we had an idea they

22:00 kept telling us what was going on and especially the newspapers up there, the English newspapers, and we were getting mail, you know newspapers sent up from down south. So we had a fair idea of what was going on. All they kept telling us was if we didn't stop them there they'd come further down and they had to be stopped and that's what it was all about.

22:30 But we didn't know that much about it, we just done what we were told.

**Can you tell us what it's like, how you dealt with the Korean winter? It's very, very cold?**

It is yeah, yeah.

**And the ship's metal?**

Our ships at that time were not built for cold, not built for Antarctica

23:00 or anything like that, but we had our gear was fairly good. We had underwear, they supplied us with underwear and big duffle coats and fur hats like the old Russians wear, and fur gloves and fur boots we had them on. But as far as the inside of things, you couldn't have a shower cause you get, steam pipes would work because it was hot but the cold was frozen so it couldn't work.

**23:30 You were just telling us how the ship wasn't built for cold weather?**

No it wasn't built for Antarctic or anything like that, I mean to have a shower you couldn't. We had a little bowl a little hand basins we used to fill them up with water

24:00 and then put the steam into them and heat it up that way and then wash all over and then get a little bucket and throw it over you. It was the only way we could a bath on that thing and you can imagine all these blokes and these little bowls and we only had ten of them in the bathroom, you couldn't have a shave or anything like that, it was a punishment to shave, cause you get frost bitten the moment you went up

24:30 on deck, so you had to grow a beard, so your beard would freeze over but it protected your face, and you're only up there for 20 minutes was the most you could stay up top on watch, especially on the bridge, because we had an open bridge, not like these modern ones, they've got enclosed bridge with air conditioning. We never had no such thing, open bridges and but it, you

25:00 it was alright I suppose. Food, it never affected our food, those cooks could still cook as long as it wasn't rough of course. But except at night time, when you're bombarding all night, they had the soup - a big bowl of soup made by the time you left the galley to go back to the gun it was frozen from, it was boiling when you left and it was frozen when you got back to the gun. We give that away.

25:30 The guns had heaters in them, like a tube built into a shell, and empty shell, you used to push it into the breech, the guns and it would lock itself in there and it would be switched on to keep the barrels warm because the barrel's cold and you fire the barrel split to pieces. And a moment before you're going to bombard and you pull these two out and put two in its place, and boom,

26:00 away you go, and you could do that for a while because it keeps the barrel warm. As soon as you stop for an hour in they'd have to go the heaters and they had these, the guns crew, because they had to stay on there all the time, they had these electric suits. Had batteries used to sit in, like boiler suits, with batteries sitting down the side of the - and they used to keep you warm while you

26:30 were on the gun turrets. But it was cold, believe you me.

**The batteries in the suits how big were they?**

They were long thin ones inch and a half two inches probably about that long and that's what they, that was an American idea not ours, but we got a lot of stuff off the Americans, cause they were built, they were air conditioned

27:00 but our wasn't but that was all right when you stopped, but if you were at sea it was a different ballgame altogether, because if it was rough which it was most of the time up there, every time a wave come over it throws and you're getting ice come down on you, ice all over and

27:30 everything gets frozen, and -

**So it freezes before it crashes?**

Yeah, it freezes before it crashes yeah, like having a hailstorm all the time but it's sea water.

**And of course you're up on deck?**

You're up on the bridge cause lookouts you had to do your turn at look outs with binoculars and it was cold believe you me it was cold.

**28:00 And when you get, with the deck wouldn't you actually get a thin layer of ice?**

Yes we did and we used to get it, it's the only time I'm ever used pick and shovel in the navy, we had pick and shovel to get the ice off because the ice made the ship top heavy, if it got top heavy go up and have a dig, around the mast and that, everything used to come over, the water used to come up and freeze the mast and you used to have to break the ice off that so it wouldn't get top heavy, and you had to

28:30 really watch where you were walking because the guard rails are down, war time the guard rails go down because the gun turrets have got to be able to train low, so they all the guard rails are dropped, so if you go for a slide you go for a slide. And if you hit that water they don't even stop to pick you up, you are frozen to death in three minutes.

**Did that ever happen?**

29:00 No, the Canadians did but we didn't. They lost a sea boat, six blokes I think, the ropes, they were in the boats and the ropes got that brittle and snapped tossed them straight into the water and they froze to death. They didn't even stop, they couldn't anyhow because the sea was too rough.

**29:30 And what would be the effects of the ship getting to heavy? Would it roll?**

Everything, everything, when she's on the side, everything goes, oh you can't eat because all your food, you go to dig and it's all gone down the other end of the table and we got stainless steel aluminium tables and there's only little ledges about that big and nothing to have your tray go straight off the end,

30:00 straight onto the deck and you got to clean it up. So and the lockers go, if you haven't got a lock on your locker, everything falls out, the oil tanks which are underneath the mess where you live they start to, when it gets too, oil comes up through the - because they got hatches on the board dipping down through to check how much oil and you get oil in the mess decks which it smells nice, believe you me,

30:30 when the mess deck is completely closed down because there is only the cowls ventilator, it stinks to high heaven, you tend to get out of that and get somewhere where it's a bit drier. Oh, everything, the cooks can't cook, nothing when it's rough

31:00 so you are on a can of bully beef and a packet of Sao biscuits and good enough till they, till she stops.

**If you can get them in your mouth you are doing well?**

Oh yeah, some of them can't, yeah and you cuddle up and keep as warm as you can, which is very rare

**How could you actually sleep in a rough sleep?**

You get, if you can get into your hammock you've made it because if they ship rolls the hammock stays still

31:30 which is beauty, cause these bunk things they got today, too many broken bones with them, cause they fall out straight onto the steel deck, the blokes at the bottom are alright, but, no I don't, the hammock was the best, you'd bump into each other, once you were swinging, if you're heavier that the bloke beside you

32:00 you are going to bump him all the time. But you don't worry about - he only wakes up when it's his time to go on watch.

**So how close would you be together in a hammock?**

Touching.

**Even on a calm sea?**

Yeah, you're touching, got thirty blokes in a room about this big. And there's thirty hammocks got to go in there, yeah touching oh yeah, you have some fun getting out of them at night,

32:30 you've got to push the other bloke out of the road to get out

**So if there is call to action stations?**

Then there is some panic but you got to have them done too, they got to be down because they clog up everything, if pipes if you got a hole in the ship and the pumps can't pump it up because your bedding's going to clog the pumps. So the idea is to get them in a very big hurry down,

33:00 never had any clothing or anything like that hanging around because it will do that to them.

**So how quickly could you actually strip that down and make it safe?**

A minute you could, a minute you'd be able to do the hammock, you'd just do two ropes down she come, don't worry about tying it up, in that situation don't worry about tying it up, might get a couple of loops around it and there is a special rack

33:30 where your hammocks go in there is a big steel rack, they won't move out of, and they stand up on end so -

**What were your duties aboard when you were out on patrol during the Korean War?**

Mostly watch keeping and mostly on what ever you were working on, the mountings, I was on the

34:00 Murchison - I was on depth charges, that was my job, and you've always got to make sure that everything works cause, they got salt water going on them all the time, even when it's calm, the water seems to come over the stern end cause they are built so low to the ground, the water, and you always checking them to see that nobody hasn't played with them, if they've set them and things can happened

34:30 **Like what?**

They can blow up, cause they got the detonator and all inside them, see when you are at war time, see we tend to take it out at peace time when we, so you can drop them over the side and they wouldn't explode no matter what depth they went to but when you are at war time you put the detonators in them all. It's only a matter of pulling the lever or setting what depth you want them to blow at because is quite only a matter

35:00 of a minute, I suppose.

**And did you have a standard level you would set them at?**

Yeah, you set them, you only set them for 6 feet.

**Pretty shallow?**

It is yeah, but that's what they are set at, but then you get orders from the bridge they tell you, because the ASDIC [Anti Submarine Detection Investigation Committee radar] deck will tell what the

35:30 submarine is at and they automatically tell us, and we set them and they tell you to set them at 100 fathoms 50 fathoms something like that, and you pull the pin which is the safety pin and then pull the lever and away they go and they go over the top of them.

**They are like a big grenade?**

Yeah, but boy when they go off, especially at six feet they lift the back of the ship up in the air.

36:00 **That was my next question. Six feet that would be shallower than the ship's hull?**

Yeah.

**So you would feel that kick?**

Oh my goodness yes.

**And what would that be like?**

Well you think the deck is coming up to you, and the water the amount of water they blow up is cause we used them for fishing sometimes

36:30 those depth charges, and they are very effective I can assure you.

**So they would be at the rear of the ship?**

Oh yeah at the tail end, they got to be there, cause they just rolls straight off they got a ramp that rolls them into the water, oh yeah, you couldn't have them anywhere else, you couldn't lift them,

37:00 they weight five hundred pounds each. But there is no problem with them as long as you watch what you're doing you could lose a finger or a hand with them, if they roll over. If you've got your hand in the wrong place when they start to go down that ramp, at five hundred pound and you got your hand in the way, or you only got to down a little bit and they're passing down the shoot, away goes your hand. I've know blokes who have done it

37:30 but not me, not on our ship that I know of.

**So what sort of damage would they end up with?**

Might lose a hand or that but, a lot of sore fingers, would smash their fingers to pieces because they are going very fast and

38:00 cause you haven't got time to worry about it though, but I never seen anyone do it.

**What kind of regular checks would you do on the depth charges to make sure the salt water wasn't playing havoc with them?**

Salt water wouldn't affect, it might affect the detonator if it was in, but not when it's not in and you got to, and there's a pin you've got to pull out which keeps the detonator from the primer to keep that away and

38:30 you make sure them pins are in because you got to lock it, you got to go and check every single one of them every watch that goes on, every four hours, day or night, makes no difference you got to check them to see if they are right. Woe betide you if you let one go over the side, especially when you're darkened ship and you are supposed to be doing it secretly and all of a sudden, a depth charge goes up behind you

39:00 the captain wouldn't be very popular, or we wouldn't be anyhow.

**And how high would the water?**

About 100 feet in the air with a 6 foot. At least 100 feet in the air it throws it high and I've seen it, and I've only seen four go up like that but I have shown movies of a hull pattern, they call that

39:30 the hull line, I've seen a movie in Watson's Bay they showed movies and I've seen it where they put the whole pattern down and brother they throw some water in the air, but they do make a noise.

## Tape 6

00:31 **You were just saying that no matter how cold it was in Sasebo that you still went to have a cold drink?**

Yeah we'd go ashore, we were allowed off at 4 and you had to be back by 11 and just for a walk around mostly because it was too damn cold and we used to go into, the Americans had a lot of clubs there, forces' clubs, and we used to

01:00 go into one of them.

**What was it like?**

They were good they were very up to date, they had every damn thing no shortage of beer or anything like that, no shortage of any alcohol and a mix of nearly every nation in the world, except the Commos of course, were - there was a lot of ships there and there used to be some

01:30 wild things go on in there. Of course there was women there too you see, plenty of them, they used to come down from Tokyo I think.

**Were they bar girls?**

They were everywhere down there.

**Can you tell us about the bar girls?**

02:00 Not much, they were just you know the ordinary, I suppose we had in Kure or we had in Tokyo, much as bar girls, were much the same. Dancing most of the time, rock and roll as it was in those days.

**1951 was this?**

Yeah, jitter bugging.

**Could you do that?**

I tried but I wasn't very

02:30 good I can assure you but yeah all that kind of thing went on. All the hot stuff music, they had the latest music, Elvis and all that, I think Elvis was in those days. Yeah they had, those Americans they had the best of everything.

**What was the bar inside, did it have a stage?**

Yeah, yeah I think you see the girls dancing

03:00 up in cages, that kind of thing, and all this.

**Go-go girls?**

Go-go girls, that was the one, yeah they had them. They had them there, and in Kure too, not as much as Korea, Sasebo, cause that's where all the troops were they had plenty of girls and plenty of them all, soldiers, sailors and airmen, not so much airmen but soldiers and sailors were there.

03:30 **Was prostitution rife?**

Yeah, oh yeah. You were for ever getting a lecture on it and movies on all that kind of thing. that was

going on the time, and the police patrols were definitely there. Because you weren't supposed to fraternise with them therefore you weren't supposed to talk to them.

**But they were in the bars?**

04:00 Yes, but that was only for us it wasn't for the Americans didn't have that. No, we were the only silly fools that had that.

**What do you mean, that the women would only come onto the Aussies?**

No, the Aussies were the only ones that had this fraternisation law, the Americans didn't have it, neither did the British, and I don't think [UNCLEAR] did or any of them either, but we were the only ones that had it.

04:30 And only time you could talk to them was in the shops if you were buying something, but that went out very quickly I must admit when the war got really into it, but they couldn't enforce it. The British military police tried to but didn't have much success, I think they lost too many of them, but there was

05:00 plenty of bar girls around and that, yeah, in Sasebo.

**Did you come across any yourself?**

Only to talk to but, I wasn't that much interested in that, no, no. But mates of mine were, but my mates were nearly all married and they were pretty scary of playing around because VD [Venereal Disease] was very rife in those days up there

05:30 they were a bit scared, because no leave when they got home, that was punishment. They made sure that they stayed true to mama.

**How did the Americans behave in their clubs?**

They were well behaved, you get the odd one that's

06:00 a bit rowdy and puts on an act, but their shore patrols are deadly, and their police patrols come in and they stop it in a hurry because they used batons and they'd belt the skull in and just drag them out by the feet as far as that's concerned. They're very cruel a lot different to our blokes, our blokes didn't carry batons or guns. But the Americans carried a 45 on the hip and batons and they'd use them too

06:30 **What about the Australian military police, how were they perceived over there?**

Not very well by our blokes, they were, cause Australian military police were hated by the military themselves, the soldiers. They hated them.

**Why?**

Because they get out of action that's why they joined the military police because they never went into action,

07:00 and that's they reckon, and all they done, these blokes would come around after fighting and the military police would pick on them if they were drunk and maybe their shirts open or something like that. And in the wagon they'd go and then they're booked and they had the power over us too, navy blokes, it wasn't very nice either but they weren't very liked. None of the military police were - British red caps -

07:30 they were a pack of animals too.

**Did you have any experience with them?**

Yeah we were under them too cause we were under the British navy too at the time, and we had a lot to do with them. They done a couple of our blokes for fighting but that was all, cause we never come in that much, only at Sasebo come into contact, and Hong Kong because the British navy got a bit

08:00 tamer naval base, not there now but, tamer where the police done their training and all that, but we never had much to do with them thank God.

**Was it a different feeling aboard Shoalhaven when you came under General MacArthur?**

We never did never worried us in the least

08:30 it made no difference actually to us. He was only the supreme commander but then we had the admiral from, the British admiral we had him too and then, when we were in Sasebo we were under the Americans, Admiral Van Fleet, he was our boss then because we were working with the American fleet and but the British they've, they'd give orders and then somebody else, an American would give you an order

09:00 you didn't know what you were doing, it all depended on seniority which captain, cause we didn't like the British, especially the Belfast were - the British cruiser come in, we'd won the Davis Cup off the Yanks and our ship rights had built a great big tennis racket and we put it to the mast just as, you know,

a joke against the Yanks, and they took it as a joke

09:30 and the British admiral sent a signal over that we were to take it down immediately, we were a disgrace to our King and flag and we were put to sea that day as punishment. But ah, that's the kind of thing that went on there. And yet the British we had fights with them, spud fights.

**With potatoes?**

Yeah, Christmas

10:00 Christmas morning in Hong Kong we were, at that time you could tie up to the wharves in Hong Kong, the wharves were there, they are not there now. And Christmas morning the battle beyond between the British and Australian spud fights. There were the commanders and the officers and all the men, all except the captains till you run out of spuds.

**But wouldn't they be very hard?**

Oh yes,

10:30 a few bruises I tell you.

**So you wouldn't boil them first?**

Oh no they were raw straight out of the bags.

**Can you tell us what happened?**

Well we were already tied up to the wharves on Christmas and you don't go to sea on Christmas Day, or very rare, but we tied up to the wharves and you run along the wharves and pelt us with a spud and then it's on. There was spuds flying, cause there were six ships there, and they were all

11:00 throwing spuds. You got to wear one, you generally got the things up to guard yourself, the lids off, the garbage cans you know the lids of the cans, or any darn thing to protect yourself, but we used to have some good fights with that.

**Did you ever cop it?**

Oh copped it, many a time. But that didn't worry you got a few bruises, it was part of the fun, the fun of breaking the monotony of Christmas being away

11:30 from home with the British. The Americans wouldn't be in it, they wouldn't play spuds with us, no they reckon we were mad, we were.

**The captain allowed it?**

Well he, I don't know whether he allowed it or not but he couldn't do much to stop it when he's got an officer leading the push from the British, who was a higher rank than he was. He was the commander of the Belfast and he was leading them so our skipper

12:00 couldn't say much to him. Our skipper at that time was only a lieutenant commander. Seniority counts.

**It was also a good chance to get them back for taking themselves so seriously maybe?**

Yeah, and it was over in a matter of an hour or so and it's back to routine again. That was good fun while it lasted.

**Do you think those 40 days of being involved in the bombardments was the most scary time you had in Korea?**

12:30 Yeah, yeah, I think so. The only other was we were playing decoy with the Missouri American battleship and we used to, we went into close shore to draw the coastal guns and Missouri just sits just over the horizon and as soon as we got he range of their guns

13:00 the coastal gun and everything, radioed to the Missouri we took off full speed out. But then you get these 18 inch shells coming over and they are big and you can hear them, it one ever fell short they'd go right through our ship right down to the bottom without exploding but listening to those things go over while we were going out underneath them, that was the only one that was scary.

**When was that?**

13:30 While we were doing patrols, they were over in the north coast and we were in the east coast of Korea. She used to bombard, the Missouri got that bad that their firepower they used to, try and bombard Korea they used to go over the top of Korea and land on this, and mortar near their own ships on the other side until they got the range and they done this a couple of times.

**How could they be so out?**

14:00 Don't know, typical Americans they just fired first and then worry about it later. They done that, I know of a couple of times where they done that with the battleships, the Missouri especially cause she was

the only one we were working with

**can you tell us about that?**

The Missouri, she was big.

**Much bigger than the Australia?**

14:30 Well we were the lifeboats for the Missouri, we used to tie up alongside of her, run alongside of her to pick mail up or fuel, and you'd look up and there was this great thing and it seemed to be miles up in the air. I got photos of her there bombarding but she was big, but

15:00 she used to, when she done a complete broadside she used to move six feet across, and that's a lot of water to push. With a 16 inch gun.

**What about being on the Shoalhaven and coming across rough seas there outside of Korea?**

In the typhoons, that was the Murchison

**Oh you were on the Murchison.**

15:30 **So that was when you got drafted to the Murchison after Shoalhaven?**

This was in Sasebo when that typhoon got, and we got word to get to sea, everyone got word to get to sea. Even the Ladybird, it was an admiral's barge, it was an ex destroyer that had a cut right back with a

16:00 big dance floor. And his wife and family used to live on it with him, and it was all canvassed over, you know, and it used to have a beautiful dance floor and they used to have cocktail parties and that all the time, day and night. And they even sent it to sea and it was the greatest God send we'd ever seen, we didn't mind going to sea as long as it went to sea.

**Why did you feel like that?**

Well he was sitting there with his wife and family having cocktail parties and we were out there

16:30 fighting the war. He wouldn't go to sea, no way, he'd just give order. So when we seen the Ladybird, I don't know whether his wife and kids were with him, I don't know. But boy they pounded out there cause we did and the carriers, especially the carriers, they did, they lost all their aircraft off their flight deck

**It probably would have been safer for people to go ashore but the ships would have been damaged had they stayed in port?**

Yeah, all ships

17:00 must go to sea when the typhoon is on, I'd seen the Americans there in that last big typhoon the whole lot of their fleets to sea, you got to ride it out and point your nose into that typhoon and you stay there until you run out of fuel or the typhoon stops. That's all you do you just keep your nose into it, so you're just moving, that's all.

**So you really, the idea is the ships goes with the weather?**

17:30 You go into the weather you never go with it, cause if you go with it the sea will pick your stern up and drive you straight down. So you've got to put the nose of the ship into the weather, into the storm, and that's, you've got to keep it there, and that's the biggest part keeping it there, cause if you get side on she'll roll you and you'll go right over. And if you stern you get tossed and go down to the bottom

18:00 American destroyer did go to the bottom, was a Captain Penny who tried to turn and he got caught half way around, and it picked him up and crew and all to the bottom.

**What was that one?**

I don't know it was one of the 7th Fleet destroyers and -

**That was during that typhoon?**

Yeah there was 16 destroyers in amongst the 7th Fleet, so I don't know which one

18:30 it was. But yeah that happens very often you've got to keep that nose into the ship the top heaviness is another thing. There's nothing to put a charge around and blow the masts and that off, so it didn't get top heavy. And you flood all your tanks, all your fuel tanks if it wasn't empty, you pump your tanks out to one tank and put sea water in the other one to keep you down in the water.

19:00 The less fuel you got the higher you are coming out of the water, the more you are going.

**Where would the fuel go, where would you store it?**

It all goes into one tank.

**Just one tank instead of having?**

Instead of having a little bit in each tank you pump in the one tank and then fill the other, see. Well we had four tanks the other three would be filled with salt water, to keep her down.

**Was that the first time you had experienced weather like that?**

Oh no we've had a lot

19:30 not to the - I've had one, going off the Philippines but we only got the tail end of it, on the Quickmatch going up to Singapore we only got the tail end of it we were nearly on the outside of it but one of our gun turrets was flattened on the deck from one wave, but that was all, we were lucky we were out, but you do get them a lot, especially up in that, that time at sea,

20:00 they come out of nowhere.

**So tell us about this one, were you ashore or onboard?**

We were onboard, we were ready to go to sea we were fully loaded with fuel and we were ready to go to sea, we were going out on patrol the next morning, or the same day, I forget. But we were fully loaded with fuel and everything to go when the

20:30 big boss said all ships to sea to ride it out.

**You were up on deck, did you have to tie yourself to the rail?**

Yeah, you have, we put special life ropes go around the ship and you grab onto them, but when you are out in a thing like that, no one goes on the upper deck except the duty watch, the

21:00 blokes that actually got to be there and they stay on watch, if they can get, if you can get relieved through going through the hatches to get to the wheel house and that you could, blokes on the wheel you could relieve them, but blokes up on deck lifeboat crew and that, they stay there. They tie themselves and stay there until the blow is over or you get into a harbour or something like that

21:30 from the typhoon.

**Were you worried?**

No, we had a tin of bully beef and some biscuits.

**And a pack of cards?**

Cards are no good, tables were going everywhere, everything was going. All you had to do was hang on, if you could get a good piece of steel that you could hang onto, that would be it, and you stayed there.

**But you were out for a few days?**

22:00 Yeah, four days.

**Could you sleep during that time?**

No, we couldn't even get the hammocks up. No, no way, you just cuddle up in a corner on the deck, mostly on the deck because then you haven't got far to fall and with your duffel coat up over your head and sleep when you can.

**That's crazy, could you also smoke and have a cup of tea?**

No, you couldn't have a cup of tea

22:30 no water, that's all you could. You couldn't boil the billy, I can tell you that now, you'd wear it, you'd scorch yourself. Cause the cooks, they shut down everything. They shut down their fuel stoves, was diesel fuel, so they're shut down, anything that's electric is shut off, and the galleys and that

23:00 and you just ride it out, they never last more than about four days. But once you get through the eye of it, it starts to calm down a bit, but then the seas stays awhile. Then you got to turn around and come all the way back again or fuel out there, if there is a tanker out there. Which there nearly always is because they go out there

23:30 and they make you fuel off them and then you continue on patrol or come back depending on where you were, or what you, who was out there. But you survived, that was the main thing.

**Well, yes you're here telling us which is a good thing.**

24:00 **So when you were in Korea were you aware of what was happening there? It has been termed the silent war? Were you aware of the strategies for the navy?**

No, no. I don't think they knew, I don't think they knew. But we were told nothing just told to go on a patrol or do this or do that, go and bombard a place



24:30 and no matter where it was, and you did it. As far as, we never knew what was going on, we never knew what the army was doing. The only time we ever knew what the army was doing was when we met the army blokes, we met them when we where back there in Hong Kong, they used to come back there for leave to Hong Kong and we'd meet them in the bars there and they told us more of what was going on than we ever knew. We never knew a damn thing

25:00 that's how it was, they kept everything hush hush with Korea. I don't know why, 'the lost war', they called it. It's always been that way

**Did you hear from the army fellows about fatalities? Did you know how many people were being killed?**

No, no. We weren't told nothing about that only what we read in the newspapers

25:30 and most of the newspapers we got were either Chinese or American only ones were sent from home. There was much in them about the death or even in the navy they never told us whether anyone died or, and I'm sure on those carriers there must have been some, on the Sydney especially, cause it was aircraft, cause we'd seen

26:00 the aircraft on the ground after it crashed. I guess there'd be a few pilots and that missing.

**Did you actually see that?**

Yeah cause when we went up there was a little passageway where we got hit you could see the planes over in the mud flats where they had crash landed.

**That must have been very sad?**

Yeah, and of course, we, one of our jobs was to pick up

26:30 pilots from the water when they bailed out, especially the B29 crew, went out and got one bloke and we had to row through a mine field to get to him, just couldn't take the ship in and there was a flying boat going overhead and everyone had told us that we were in a mine field and he was in the middle of it, this pilot. So we had to drop

27:00 our lifeboat and I think it was six of us had to row in using oars two mile to get him and two mile back out again. Because we couldn't take anything that was mechanical because we didn't know what kind of mine they were, whether they were an acoustic mine or magnetic mine, so we were all wooden, the lifeboat. So we rowed in and got him home, that was the only pick up

27:30 we done, there was 8 men in that crew, he was the only one we got. He couldn't even tell whether the others got out.

**Or if they got out?**

If they got out, or if they were picked up, they were rescued from other ships, but we only got one.

**He was an American?**

Yeah, very nice bloke too, he didn't want to leave us he wanted to stay with us. "I'm not going back there, I want to stay here."

**I wonder if they made him fly back out again?**

28:00 Oh they would yeah, they'd put him in a plane as soon as he got back yeah, they were like that, don't let him be no good he'd never fly again they reckon, put him straight up again

**Did you get shot down or crash?**

He got shot down

**What did you know about the people of Korea and the country?**

28:30 I, we were two nights and two days I lived onshore at the Han River, myself and two others, we were doing, testing the tide. We were measuring the tide to see what depth the tide went, cause we couldn't do it on ship so we went ashore and we lived in a little hut, little straw hit with all these, the gear we had to measure the depth

29:00 and we had Koreans with us, Korean army, four of them and that's the only ones we ever struck with - they pinched my camera, I remember that. I had a brand new camera I had it handing in the hut when I was out on watch and somebody nicked it, but -

**Do you think it was one of the Koreans?**

It was one of the Koreans yeah, it wasn't our blokes, they had nothing

29:30 when they come back so it couldn't have been them. No it was the Koreans, they gone and sold it. But that was the only time I come, oh we had one bloke on board he was, I don't know if we were on the Murchison or the Quickmatch, but he was a navigator for us, he navigated us to get these trucks and

that

30:00 and next thing we know he's, an American destroyer comes up and he's taken off in handcuffs. He was a spy, because they tell me they'd shot him two days later. He was a nice bloke, spoke beautiful English but the Americans come in and they must have found out what he had done. Very hush hush

30:30 they come in on the boat, and he's on the boat and away he'd gone, nothing said. One of our officers told me what happened.

**He was definitely a spy?**

Yeah, well they said he was a spy, but I don't know if he was a spy why he took us in to get these trucks, seems strange but that's how it goes.

**What do you mean he took you in?**

Well he navigated,

31:00 cause there was a lot of shallow water and that, along the Korean coast and most of them are ex fisherman and they knew the coast like the back of their hand so they could take us in the channels and all that and he was navigating for us cause our maps were not the best. They were Korean maps, but too old not the latest models and he was

31:30 navigating for us, told us which way to go.

**Where you scared for your life when you went ashore for those two days?**

No, no there no. We had enough guns, Thompson machine guns, if we'd have shot ourselves with them, but we had the Thompson's sub machine guns, we - .303s - we weren't worried.

32:00 But we were right out on a point see, there was a lot of traces going over all night there, you'd see these traces, the bullets going over all night but it didn't worry, we weren't scared of that. I suppose we would have been if anyone would have come close but any army, gunfire, but it didn't worry us that much. We were glad to get back on ship, it was cold over there.

32:30 **When were you scared during the Korean War?**

Only when that shell come through the side of the ship

**And your mate bent over and didn't get it in his chest?**

Yeah, it went straight over his back and straight through the other bulkhead. Boy that, we kept our head down after that.

**Do you remember it flying past you?**

No, I don't I remember the flash as it come through the Korean

33:00 side of the bulkhead, heard a bang and a bang the other side, that's all we knew, we knew what it was though. When you could see daylight through the side of the ship.

**You had an idea?**

We thought there might have been some more coming too. We were lucky there wasn't

**So when did you get leave? How long were you in Korea until you got leave?**

33:30 We were, we used to come for fuel, we'd stay about a fortnight, and then we might come in for a weekend or two days mainly, and then we'd go back out again. Except when we were up the Han River we stayed 40 days. But we the only time we come out was for fuel and food and that, but they had ships out there waiting for us to fuel us

34:00 and give us ammunition cause we had a time limit. We had to go out on the high tide and back on the high tide. Otherwise we would have scraped the bottom, it wasn't very deep in there.

**Were you able to receive letters from home during that time?**

Yeah, they used to fly them in off the carrier, the carrier was out there a long way off the coast of Sydney and they were flying mail from

34:30 Sasebo to the carrier and then the - when we went out to fuel and that we'd get the mail that way. Some of it, not parcels or anything like that, but the letter mail

**Who would write to you at that time?**

My wife at that time.

**So you had met your wife?**

Joan's my second wife.

**I didn't realise you were so young when you got married the first time?**

No I was

35:00 I was married just when, just before I left the Murchison.

**So that would have been '52 or '53?**

No, '50 was when the war started, then we come back, I was only back two months, two or three months, and then went back up again, on the Murchison that time and I was married when I was, then.

35:30 **So how old, you would have been 22?**

Something like that.

**How did you meet your wife during this time?**

At a party.

**Where was the party?**

In Sydney, at a party in a hotel in Sydney.

**So this is before you went back to go back on the Murchison?**

Yeah, and that's who I used to get the letters from on the Murchison.

**That was pretty soon after meeting her and getting married. Did you just know that she was the one?**

36:00 Yeah, but, cause I knew I was going out again soon, so we got married early because of the money mainly, so she could get her allowance, her married allowance, that way we could get a banking account, but -

**What was her name?**

Pat.

36:30 **So did you just go up to her at the party and say, 'Hi, I'm Max?' Is that how you met her?**

No, we were, just, we just met and started talking and having a few and I met her again the next night, and then we started going out together for a while. Then that was it

37:00 **Was she aware in Australia of what was going on in Korea at the time?**

She did yeah, well she was reading about it in the papers, it was all in the papers at that time. She did, she used to send me the cuttings out of the newspapers, anything that was interesting. She'd cut it out and send it out, that was the only way I got to know that, and I was -

37:30 I used to have a friend in the GPO [General Post Office] in Sydney and he worked in the overseas mail, part of the services mail, and he used to send me the Sunday's paper on Saturday. It comes out on a Saturday night, he'd put it in, it was the last thing that would go in the bag, that would be my paper and when I got it in Hong Kong or where ever it was, I'd go to collect the mail

38:00 I was a postie so I'd get me, and then I'd read it and then there'd be a big battle to see who's next.

**Did you sometimes feel like you were reading about it, that someone knew more about than you and you were in the actual war?**

Yeah. Because the skipper never told, everything was hush hush, I don't think any of his officers, maybe his second might have known but the rest of the officers didn't know what was

38:30 going on, I'm sure of it.

**What do you think about now? Do you think that was the wrong thing to do?**

I reckon they should have but that was the old thing, that hush hush business, secret service business, when you are at sea, usually the day out on patrol the skipper would clear the deck and he would tell us where we were going and what we were doing, going to supposed to be going to do, he was good like that

39:00 skipper of the Murchison was, he always, or he'd get on the blower and through the broadcast what we were going and what we were going to do, and of course then he'd say get all these ready and check everything out and all that sort of business. But he was very rare man that one.

**What was his name?**

Dollard

**So it was a nicer ship than being on the Shoalhaven?**

Oh it was family,

39:30 they were a bunch of no hoppers. Well he was, before he joined the Murchison he was officer in charge of manning, that's the man that says who goes to what ships, he was in Canberra, oh no - Melbourne at the time, the navy board down there. And he used to make up the crews and he picked the crew for the Murchison,

40:00 a bunch of no hoppers, he told us one day.

**But he chose you?**

Yeah, because he told us once, he told us, in harbour, hopeless, no one does a thing they are told, they get into trouble, take them out to sea and you can rely on what they do, cause they are all good seaman. They were too, a lot of old blokes but they were good at what they done, gunnery or anything like that

40:30 they were good at what they done, but in harbour -

**Well I guess that's what matters is that you do your job out at sea?**

Yeah, yeah, if we got into trouble in the harbour, and you had to go to be punished, he always punish you the day out at sea, he wouldn't do any punishment, for two watches anyhow. He'd say you've got this, and that one again

41:00 he didn't until the next night.

**Is he still around, Dollard?**

Yeah, very old man now he's in his nineties.

**Have you been in touch with him?**

Oh yeah, well I haven't been for the last few years but on Anzac Day, cause we march together the Murchison. The old crew, 'the Barons on the Han' is the big banner we carry.

**Why is that?**

Cause we were the barons on the Han River, we'd go in the Han River. We fought for it.

## Tape 7

00:31 **Where were you when the Korean War finished?**

Korean War finished, finished in '54 didn't it? Cause I know the Murchison did another trip up there

01:00 after that

**You'd been drafted off the?**

Yeah, when we came back we had leave which was three weeks and then we took on nearly a whole new crew except for a few of the old blokes and we took on a whole lot of national service blokes to go to sea.

**What were they like?**

01:30 A bit of everything we had Jews, all these different religions some of them had to fast on a Saturday and break their fast with a glass of wine and this garbage and our new skipper we had by this time he weren't too happy with that lot. And he, and they wouldn't eat pork. And we had a lot of pork at sea, and the first things the blokes do when

02:00 they get a bloke like a Jewish on board they slam a hunk of pork in front of him, they eat it, and all this business. They were good they ended up doing the trip around. We went up Townsville, Darwin, stopped at Darwin and went round to Fremantle and went out to Monte Bello Islands when the atomic bomb test.

02:30 **You did that with that crew?**

Yeah, 14 miles off it when it went off.

**You'd been in the pit at Nagasaki?**

Yeah, right into the hole where she went off yeah. Because there was nothing there only a couple of walls of a couple of building that was all that was left there was nothing just

03:00 like a 'phooph' and everything had gone. I went into - not into Hiroshima, Nagasaki I did because this Queensland priest took us he had a little church in Nagasaki and we were there and he was showing us

where they wrote that Madame Butterfly -

03:30 was looking after the house where they wrote the opera and that. And he took us into that, it would be still hot then, still plenty of the stuff there but we went in there, there was only two of us with him and had a look, but my God it was a hole and a half, it was like a crater from a volcano

04:00 crater was left of it.

**And what were the locals in the surrounding regions, how were they faring?**

You never seen many of them, very little and what was little was scarred and all covered up you know, they only had towels over their faces and this business, whether they were from the bomb, scars from the bomb or what

04:30 I don't know, but he never said much about it the priest.

**What did you think when you saw the devastation?**

It was devastated, yeah. Good God what this thing could do, he showed me the photo of Nagasaki before the bomb and the amount of people, they say they killed so many thousands, but it could have been millions by the look of the housing, cause they were only little

05:00 cardboard things, packed on top on one another, but there was nothing the concrete buildings that was it, you wouldn't call them buildings, but it was terrible to look at it. I didn't feel very proud I tell you, the Americans might have but I didn't, have that much destruction just for one bomb

**So when you went around to Monte Bello Islands, what ship were you on?**

I was on the Murchison.

**You were still on Murchison, with a new crew?**

New crew yeah, and of course when we got back we had leave and most of them were drafted to other ships

06:00 sort of bases and they left me on there to do that trip around there and -

**What was the naval idea behind redrafted crews constantly?**

I don't know why they do it, but you never stayed

06:30 18 months would be the most you'd stay on one ship. I might have been a bit longer on the Murchison but that was because of the war, but normally 12 months that would be the - and you get the different, you never go to the same ships a lot of the time, I mean you go a destroyer to might be a carrier so you know how to work the equipment on every ship

07:00 different kinds of ships, never done submarines. I was on a submarine but that was only an American one where I went on loan, you could go on loan for a couple of days, and he'd come onto our ship that kind of thing, but familiarise yourself with different ships. Cause I went from cruisers, corvette to heavy cruisers

07:30 to carriers to frigates, two frigates and then to U class destroyers.

**So was the navy changing in its administration to have such a mixed crew come onboard?**

No, they weren't changing, nothing was changing.

**But you were able to accommodate all these religious?**

Yeah but only for that one trip, believe you me.

08:00 I don't know what happened after that, they ended up putting them on a carrier I think. On bigger stuff where they could accommodate them cause they cut down, when the Sydney stopped flying after that and they had a lot of space because all the aircrew went off and they could accommodate them on that then, but it wasn't a success on the Murchison I know that.

**In what way?**

They couldn't get on, they would have killed somebody.

**How did that come about?**

Well they were only kids. But I had one thing we were going around we were testing guns, and I don't know if you've ever seen a four inch gun loaded, you lift the shell lays across like that and you lift that up and the nose goes in the breech and you punch it, you got a pad on and you punch it and the breech closes

09:00 and it's loaded. Well we loaded it and these kids were training and they were loading the guns. But as soon as it was loaded this young bloke run round and put the nose of the shell against the breech block,

it was just about to fire, and we hit him and he rolled down and went over the top of him, she'd have blown us all to pieces if

09:30 he'd had the nose of that shell against the breech block, just the force of it would come back, and boom it would have gone up and we had shells everywhere too, but that was the first time they loaded the fun. But they were too dangerous, they did, they weren't sent in down to Flinders to train, they were just put in uniform and put on the ship left to their own

10:00 dilemma I suppose. But it's too dangerous.

**Were you aware why they were put on a ship with training?**

No, I think they wanted them to sign up as full time, they did get a few but not too many, it was, I don't know what their reason was. If they'd have gone into Flinders down there for a couple of months and learnt the

10:30 basics of seamanship and that may have been a lot different but to put them raw onto a ship, it's like these reserves, you put them on a ship and they are dangerous too, take them away and then they won't come back.

**How else did they not shape up as new sailors?**

11:00 Well they, their seasickness was a major, to start off with and oh they, they didn't know how to do a hammock, they never heard of washing their clothes, mummy had done it all for them, and they come on ship and they got to look after everything themselves, they hadn't a clue what they were doing, cause on these ships you haven't got laundry and that, you got to do it out of a bucket

11:30 **So were you in a position where you had to teach them everything?**

Yeah, we had to teach them, cause in my mess alone we had 9 of them, and our mess was not very big, only a little side passage way, we were for ever telling them to do this and do that, I don't think they went to sea again after that trip.

12:00 **Were they what did they feel about being aboard the ship?**

Some of them liked it. But some of them, ah, it's just something to do. Some of them were university students and that kind of thing, they wanted to get back and finish their education they didn't want to go to sea but they were told do that or go in the army. At least they thought they'd get a trip

12:30 around Australia by going on the navy.

**So you were expected to ship off with them inexperienced and come back with experienced sailors?**

Yeah, didn't happen that way, maybe one or two that had sailed a boat, maybe the father had owned a boat and had done a lot of sailing and were used to the sea but all these young boys that come out of offices, no it didn't work that way.

13:00 **What did you know about the atomic tests that were going to take place on Monte Bello Island before you got there?**

We didn't know anything. We weren't told anything. We were told how to do the - the fall out how to handle the fallout, we had sprinkler systems set up on the ship

**Can you tell us, walk us through getting there and**

13:30 **finding out what was going on?**

All we were told was going over for British atomic tests and we started on this how to protect yourself if you got in to fallout and we ended up with these suits on with helmets down around shields and all on, and we just

14:00 rigged up a sprinkler system like a shower, and everyone was supposed to stay down below when the bomb went off, only the actual blokes working on upper deck were to, and we had 14 scientists onboard and all these Geiger counters and all this machinery to all that, well they nearly took up over the upper deck, all the scientists with all the equipment they had.

14:30 **How so?**

To measure the what the - but everything went wrong with it. I think the wind changed and it went the wrong way, went straight over Western Australia. From what I've been reading, I belong to the atomic ex servicemen's thing and I read a lot about what has happened since then, but I know a lot of the blokes what were in Maralinga

15:00 done the tests at Maralinga as well as Monte Bello and they're, well there is not many of them alive now, they are all dead now. But that's when I go to Sydney for Anzac, I know there is a lot of them missing all through cancer.

**Were those on deck suited up?**

Oh yeah,

15:30 the scientists weren't – they were just in ordinary clothes, but we had to because we were, it was a new thing for the navy cause it was the first time they had played around with that atomic stuff. And they never told us that when we walked into Nagasaki.

**So having been to Nagasaki what did you think of suddenly being?**

I thought it was going to be one great,

16:00 well it was going to be one great wave you know, I thought they were exploding it on the water, we were going to get a tidal wave out of this lot after seeing what they done to Nagasaki, thought the old Murchison is going to bounce more than it usually does. But it didn't cause they exploded it on land which was a godsend but –

16:30 **Can you tell us what you saw?**

It looked like a koala bear, the head of a koala bear, that cloud. It wasn't like a mushroom like the usual ones are. From where we were it looked like a koala bear head, and it lasted right up till dark you could see it, cause we took off.

17:00 **The cloud that formed stayed?**

It stayed for quite a while but here was a lot of wind up high, high wind that took it over Western Australia which they still reckon it's causing trouble. Radioactive is still happening in the Northern Territory and that now, it was caused through that. But this

17:30 they are still fighting for recognition that it did but no one will admit it. The Americans admitted it, the British admitted it but the Australian Government, Mr Hawke [Prime Minister 1982-1991] would never admit it.

**This testing was part of a UN or was it Australian?**

It was British,

18:00 Australian British, that's who it was, nothing else. I don't think it was, New Zealand wasn't in it no. Actually it was the British but the Australians took part in it cause it was their territory but they admitted to all the troops that were here, working at Maralinga, but the Australians never and the

18:30 which is a shame. They will eventually when everyone's dead, they'll admit it and then they will pay nothing. Which always happens.

**So that trip was around Australia, you stopped for testing and?**

Yeah, then we came back to Fremantle, yeah, that's right we had this new skipper

19:00 old Colin T. Thompson, he was a real brainwave he was. But we were in Fremantle, the Sydney was against the wharf, we were behind her, the stern of her and the Tobruk was brand new and right in against the wharf and we were tied up to

19:30 Tobruk. And we were going to sea on a Sunday morning, going back to heading for Melbourne, and he came back onboard, the skipper in civvies, and drunk as a skunk he was, he couldn't scratch himself. And on the flight deck on the Sunday morning was the admiral of the fleet and the captain of the Sydney watching him

20:00 and in civvies he was taking the ship to sea, not that anyone would unless they told the navigator to take it to see, cause the navigator could handle it, and he went full astern and rammed the Sydney, went straight underneath, broke the white engine pole. We took off, I was on the quarterdeck, we took off down the hatches cause I know what happens when you go underneath one of them, everything smashes

20:30 and he went, then he went full ahead and he tore all the early rafts off the side of the Tobruk, brand new destroyer that was the first trip and went to sea. Got as far as Adelaide and we got a new captain. Yeah never heard of him again, I did hear of him because he owned a pub in Sydney

**How did the admiral let this happen?**

21:00 They couldn't stop it cause they didn't know, they were just standing out there waiting for, cause it's divisions as they call it on Sunday morning and they were just up there waiting for them, everyone was just falling in it was just about 9 o'clock and they were just standing up there watching. Thinking you could do that, in civvies too, and everyone around looking at it, oh God it wasn't very good

21:30 we never seen him on the whole trip from Fremantle around the Adelaide, we never seen head nor tail of him, whether he was in bed or whether he was locked up I don't know. I know we had a new skipper, we went to Melbourne from there, and I left Murchison in Melbourne and went down to Flinders.

**To do some more training?**

No I was staff down there in midshipman's college.

**You were teaching?**

22:00 No I was staff I wasn't teaching, no. They wouldn't let me teach those little boys, no way. I might have taught them something wrong. The only thing I taught them was how to drive power boats that was all. I used to take them out with the power boats, nothing else we were just staff down there. But I lasted six months there and then they drafted us straight to

22:30 Tarangau.

**Then straight to Manus Island?**

Yeah that's it.

**Can you tell us about your duties on Manus Island?**

Yeah

**Cause you were teaching?**

In PNG [Papua New Guinea], yeah,

23:00 we were doing patrol boats up there, we had four patrol boats gun boats and at that time they were still looking for a lot of Japanese in the jungle up there was their idea and we had, we used to do these patrol boats and drop people off on different islands and with the natives they'd go in, and some of them didn't even know the war was over, some the Japanese in there

23:30 and that the idea of what Manus was for apart from the oil tanks, we had I think 6 oil tanks, I could be wrong there could be a lot more, 6 that I could see, enough to keep a whole fleet of ships at sea for two years. And we used to look after that, we used to look after the Mokarang, a RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force] base there was still on the same island, and we used to look after

24:00 the flight keep the bulldozers going to keep the jungle off it. And native labour, we used to look after the natives, we had over 300 natives there from the mainland, and then they played up they sent them over to, because that's where the big native jail in New Guinea is on Lorengau which is part of Manus Island. And they'd shave their hair off and

24:30 that disgraces them, worse than putting them in chains, then they shaved their hair and that's their punishment. And we had them there for, that's all we done was patrol boats and look after the jungle.

**So what were you actually teaching the locals in terms of navy?**

Navy stuff, everything to do with the navy

25:00 mostly to, on ships because they were used to being on the lakatois [small South Pacific water craft] and all that but, to dress up properly and discipline and all that kind of thing. That was, and that was about all that they did teach them. They knew they were going to take over their own navy that was on the cards long before I was there, but

25:30 they wanted to train them, especially the officers of command ships and not big ships about patrol boats.

**You were there to help it happen?**

Yeah, and then -

**How did they take the training?**

They were good, really good, yeah, very conscientious, if you could keep them off the betel nut they were good. If they got on that betel nut, a lot of them did,

26:00 and they get punished for that, that was funny, when they started eating that.

**And how would you discipline them?**

Well they get no tobacco which was like a tube of liquorice, they weren't allowed tobacco that was that was stopped, tobacco that really hurt them. They lost their wages cause and then they couldn't buy meri [woman], see when they were finished they could go back to their home

26:30 village, wherever it was and they could buy a wife. They'd save up and save up and do it all in one night, playing lucky or being punished. Playing lucky is playing cards, but how the hell they ever played, no white man ever knows, who comes the winner and who comes the loser.

**You couldn't work out the game?**

27:00 No whoever grabs the card first is the winner I think. I could never work it out, they'd eat betel nut and play this lucky, it would go on for but and no one could work out. There was no suit or anything in the



cards, there could be a piece of wood just, but they worked it out I don't know. But it was very boring up there

- 27:30 on that island, very boring indeed. Because we never had anything to do, keep the jungle back, well the natives done that. We just supervised and made sure they done it properly

**What do you mean keeping the jungle back?**

Well the jungle grows over everything the Mokarang airstrip we had control of that, not the RAAF, even though they flew their planes on it, but we had to keep it clear of jungle, that was working every day on it.

- 28:00 Cause it was the first time they were tested this fuelling in the air, from Japan from Iwakuni in Japan to Sydney, non stop planes and they fuelled them in the air from tankers at Manus Island. And that was the first time they had done that, was while we were keeping the old flight deck open for them. The only thing beside that was

- 28:30 an old DC 3 biscuit bomber, that used to fly us from Townsville to Manus.

**Can you describe the camp that you established there?**

They were all half moon huts, bell army huts, like a water bell cut in half, a big long one. That's all they were with bunks

- 29:00 down each side, and of course mosquito nets which were essential and just a little cupboard, cause you weren't allowed to bring any clothing like woollen clothing, it was only just shorts and shirts. They issued you with a ground sheet and army boots and a big army hat, they usually do that

- 29:30 you never brought any of them others with you cause you had to have a, in your cupboard you had to have lights on 24 hours a day cause of the humidity, everything gets rotten, it rots straight away if you had any clothing in there. So you had to have the lights on 24 hours a day in the cupboard, close the door with the lights on

- 30:00 you might have four or five bulbs in there 100 watt bulbs, and they'd go on all the time to keep your clothes from the dampness. We never had to do our washing the natives did that for us, which cost us one pound a fortnight for them to do it, which was damn good compared to being on a ship I can tell you. You didn't lose them

- 30:30 over the side, as long as they didn't eat beetle nut, you sacked them, because it would get on your clothes and nothing you could do to get it out, that red, blood red.

**Was there any strife in terms of cultural differences?**

With the natives? No, we had a few blokes go troppo

- 31:00 but apart from that

**What happened?**

Well they go jungle don't come back and you got to send the police boys out to find them. They make their own home brew and get stuck into it and go berserk and you had to go out into the jungle and find them. Generally find them at a village somewhere, they've been tattooed with, you know the native tattoos where they cut the skin and put it. They used to come back like that and

- 31:30 **You are pretty isolated up there what did you do for entertainment?**

Movies, we had movies, the RAAF used to fly our movies in from Townsville or Lei whichever, and that's all. Done a lot of drinking cause we used to have to go over to Lei and get our beer

- 32:00 and that was a terrible beer, made from onions. Good to taste if you drank it straight away, as it come out of the tap, down it. But boy in the morning you couldn't get near yourself you stunk of onions. And some blokes used to leave the jug under their bed and get up in the morning and drink it.

- 32:30 My God, the top would be covered in mosquitoes, my God, bugs and, no. That wasn't for me.

**Did any of the fellows on board go troppo being stuck there for so long?**

No, a lot of the women did, a lot of the petty officers and officers had their wives there cause they had little houses there,

- 33:00 self contained houses, and a lot of the women did, they couldn't stand the boredom.

**What would happen to them?**

They'd take them back off, demand to go off. And they'd fly them out back to Townsville and back to Sydney or Melbourne or whatever, but the husbands still had to do their full time, had to do 12 months up there, if his wife was only there a couple of weeks and wanted to go home she could go home but he

still had to stay and

33:30 do his time. I remember one petty officer, he was smart he'd only been up there three months and it was time to retire and they wanted him to sign on and he said no I won't, so they flew him back to Melbourne, he signed on down there, two days later he was back in the island. They put a special plane to bring him back and he didn't get off that island until he finished his 12 months either.

34:00 **For the wives up there, what were the symptoms of going troppo?**

The heat, cause you are right on the equator at Manus it's like 40 degrees day and night and the women couldn't handle it, couldn't handle the heat, couldn't sleep, couldn't do any damn thing, they just wanted to get out the damn place.

34:30 So did we, but we couldn't. They shouldn't have brought women in there in the first place, it was no place for them.

**That was fairly unusual?**

Yeah, they couldn't go in the jungle or anything like that because, they got, two of them got malaria. Cause we were covered with malaria we had to, we got tablets every day, malaria tablets and of a night time we had to have full long trousers on

35:00 and long sleeve shirts and that, when we go out at night to the movies and that. But the women there was no law and they used to go and with the bra tops and shorts and that and the mosquitoes were having a feast and they wondered why they were getting malaria. Cause the navy had no control over them.

**Didn't they offer?**

They offered them

35:30 but they wouldn't take it and they were getting malaria and of course we only had a small hospital there and, they never had a shuttle service there for aircraft either, one a week.

**Can you describe the scale of community you had there?**

They were in one part of the jungle and they had little houses, one bedroom kind of set up

36:00 a kitchen a little kitchen and they had a house boy each one had a house boy to do the washing and cooking and all this, so the women had nothing to do, only sit round, I mean what could they do? There is no clubs to go and they the officers the petty officer would have his wife and

36:30 then you get a lieutenant's wife, two different people . One doesn't associate with the other and that type of thing, class and all the seniority it went on with the women as well as the blokes, we didn't care with the blokes, because we treated petty officers and chiefs the same as we treat ordinary blokes, but an officers up there. It was different with the women, some of them

37:00 had a hell of time up there. Boredom, boredom, and all they could do was scream at their husbands to get them out of there get them back home. Which they ended up they had to do.

**And with the - did you ever come across any reports of stray Japanese that were found?**

No, no. I never seen any report but

37:30 I don't think they, on the mainland they did, on the mainland of New Guinea they did find them but not on the island, it was only a small island, Manus, I didn't find any on Manus, and I don't think they got any on islands, not ones close to us anyhow.

**What would they do with the ones they found?**

Return them to Japan the war was over, they couldn't kill them

38:00 and they used to they had to have a coast watcher with them who spoke Japanese and all this and I think they ended up where they brought people down from Japan with the patrols to speak their language because they wouldn't believe the patrols. We had two coast watches on Manus Island and the blokes had been right through the war on New Guinea and they spoke perfect Pidgin

38:30 cause we did too, we spoke more Pidgin than we did English but. They did fin quite a few in caves and took them back to Japan and they took a lot of corpses back too, they had special crowd come down with a big ship and took a lot of them back that way too

39:00 in the jungle there was anything there, brand new jeeps, still packed in grease the motors, brand spanking new. And the Yanks wouldn't take them back, we got them and played around with them we had nothing to do. We had an amphibious duck we rebuilt it, we used to go out to all the islands fishing and diving, it was good.

39:30 **Not a bad life?**

We couldn't bring that duck back either because the taxation department would have put duty on it so we had to leave it up there. But everyone had a jeep, the officers and anyone that was mechanical could put them together.

**And these were ones that had just been found?**

In the jungle yeah, the engines were packed, still packed in boxes

- 40:00 and they just dumped them, they got a floating dock out in the middle of Manus Harbour one of the biggest floating docks in the world. It can lift a cruiser, when the ships come into Manus island they come straight up the centre, it's a monster, I've been down there to have a look at it and it's a monster. But they wouldn't take it back they could have, they just sunk it, opened all the coxswain let it go to the bottom, they could have taken it back but they didn't want it,
- 40:30 they never take anything back Americans, those landing craft that they just beached and left there, worth thousands and thousands and just rusted to pieces, waste of money.

## Tape 8

- 00:31 **What was the difference on being on board the ship in the navy at peace time as opposed to war time? What was your every day like life was it much different?**

Not much no, except in war time you're on two watches, that's four on four off

- 01:00 night and day but when you are in peace time you are in three watches four on and eight off which makes a big differences as far as sleep is concerned. And routine is the whole even inside it's cooler because you can open the scuttles and the wind scoops in when in the war time you've got everything closed up and blacked out and inside
- 01:30 the ship in the summer it's like an oven, believe you me it is like an oven. The reflection off the water is enough without the steel on top. And you got to sleep down there -
- You just reminded of the story you told earlier of when you fell asleep next to one of the guns?**
- On the Australia yeah, I went to sleep under the turret which is shaded but the ship swung round in the tide, I ended up in the sun, I was fast asleep
- 02:00 had my cap over my face and I got burnt, I was one big blister and this Sanders, as punishment made me put a cork life jacket on and so when it burst water, you know, the blister burst so I went down to sick bay,
- 02:30 and the surgeon captain was there, and he was the big fat bloke I was telling you about, 'Guts Slavery' [?], they called him. And he asked me he said, "How did you, what happened?" and I told him the whole story and he said right you are excused from duty for the next four days. I could do nothing and he went up and
- 03:00 nearly court martialled that lieutenant commander, he did he took him before the captain and everything I believe. He used to do that the dangers of getting infections through that kind of punishment.

**But it was also cruel?**

Yes, he was cruel but he was like that, I was glad to see the teddy ogies got him

**Which for the record is pasties, is it like a Cornish pasty?**

Like a Cornish pasty yeah, called them teddy ogies

- 03:30 **And he died of food poisoning?**

He did of food poisoning from eating one of them I believe. And in Sydney but he was not missed that man he was the old monocle in the - he'd look at you.

**How old was he then?**

Well he was a war time bloke so I

- 04:00 suppose he'd be 45, 50. He was on loan from England, just come out to do, King was supposed to come out and do a tour just before he passed away. He was out here to organised everything, so they left him out here, maybe they didn't want him back there and he ended up on the Australia and then I struck him again on the Sydney, he hadn't changed any either. And he
- 04:30 remembered me too by the way, we got on alright after that, that was before he got the teddy ogie.

**Why did you stay in the navy?**

I loved it, I loved going to sea, didn't like shore bases. Every time I was drafted to a shore base I always looked for some bloke to swap me, you could swap drafts.

**How could you do that?**

Well if you had another

05:00 bloke with the same rank and with the same right arm -- I could swap him, I could let him stay on shore and I could go to sea in his place, if he was drafted to go north again. And I used to swap mainly with at that time with married blokes, who wanted to stay home with their wife, if they had children and that and didn't want to go. I was quite glad to go to sea.

05:30 Especially going north or India or over that way.

**What was so great about going there?**

To see the places I'd never seen it before.

**So for adventure?**

Yeah, adventure, not much adventure going to India what we'd seen of it, but not too bad I suppose. Colombo at that time, it was under martial law at that time so it wasn't too bad.

**What about your wife how did she take you being in the navy full time?**

06:00 She didn't like it much, but she was sick most of the time.

**Did she get sick soon after you were married?**

Yeah well I was away she got leukaemia and then she went into remission. And when I come back on the Murchison

06:30 she was going alright and the doctor said well she beat it, and she went back to work and she was working for the railways, and I went back to sea again, and I came back on the yeah I done a trip on the Quiveran, that was to the Far East and back, good will tour nothing much on that thing. And then I came back and

07:00 she got worse and I was drafted to Quickmatch, she was in Melbourne and I was in Sydney, but the skipper at the time was a nice bloke and he used to let me come home every weekend, I used to fly home every week to Sydney and then she got that bad at the end, I pulled out of the 15 years and she got bedridden then, and I was a

07:30 shuttle between Prince Alfred Hospital and home. Just be home for an hour and she'd get worse, and this was a two or three o'clock in the morning and away I'd put her in the car and take her back to Prince Alfred, went on that way for two years, and then she died.

**She would have only been in her thirties?**

08:00 **So did you ever think about going back into the navy?**

I did, at times I did, but I was in Melbourne in the post office then cause I was working in the post office then while she was sick. I was doing two deliveries at that time when mail was morning and afternoon deliveries then, and I used to do the morning one

08:30 and come home and give her a feed at lunchtime and come back and then come home and it got that way that I had to put her in hospital I was up all night anyhow she got that bad that she passed away and I stayed with the post office

**What made you stay?**

09:00 Well I was just like that whether I'd go back to sea again, I didn't at the time, and then I met Joan a few months later. There was no use going back to sea then, we went together for 5 years until she got divorced and then we got married. But I was working

09:30 in the same post office she was.

**That was a bit of luck?**

Oh yeah, good luck for a change.

**And Joan had two children?**

Yeah.

**And how did they take to you?**

Good, oh my buddies, always been buddies, never -

**Isn't that lovely?**

Yeah, Jeff the one in Sydney and of course the wild one out at Roma, hopeless but, he was just here last weekend.

**He's the country boy?**

Oh, country mad,

10:00 horses and bullocks and guns.

**That would be something for you to talk about?**

He's wild though this bloke, a real wild one.

**You headed into Vietnam at the beginning of that war?**

Vietnam? Yeah I was on the

10:30 Quickmatch, no the Queensborough, no the Quiveran, there is that many different Qs. The Quiveran, I commission to Quiveran, during the war there was the Q class destroyers there was Quiveran, Quickmatch, Quality, quite a few of them that were over in the middle east. And when they come back they shut them down

11:00 and recommissioned them, rebuilt them and turned them into anti-submarine frigates, sub chasers in other words. And I was on the first crew, I was first crew after she'd been commissioned to go at Garden Island, and we done that at the Queen Mother's tour the last time she was out here. We brought her from Manly to Circular Quay, what a trip, nice trip.

**Can you tell us about that?**

11:30 **That was in 195 - ?**

I forget now.

**1954?**

She was only on the ship for an hour at the most, but all the rigmarole that went on, God almighty, spit and polish gone on there, and all she done she walked on board up near the bridge she stood there, we left went across to Circular Quay and she left, went off and that was it. She spoke about two words the whole trip

12:00 no to us but to the hierarchy, there was that many dignitaries onboard, and that was it. Thank God we left after that, we went north again, up there hat s when we went to Colombo and those places with the Quiveran.

**And so you went into Vietnam?**

We went into Saigon, yeah

12:30 we weren't at war with them then, the Americans were, but we weren't. And we went in there for the weekend and it was a beautiful place then, before the American troops or anyone got in there, they used to scrub the streets, all the streets with brooms, the women, all in white, brush the whole

13:00 main street of Saigon. And it was spotless, they tell me as soon as the Yanks or the troops got in there and of course in come the go-go girls and all that and everything went. When we were there they blew up the royal palace the day we left, I don't know whether it was to tell us goodbye or what but they blew it up.

**The VC [Viet Cong]?**

Yeah, and that's all

13:30 we came back, after we done Saigon we came back down here because it was only just a goodwill tour, about three months or something like that.

**So you got out just in time?**

Yeah, and I left the Quiveran and went to Quickmatch then, and we went up there but we never went near Saigon or any of those places, just to Hong Kong and Singapore

14:00 and we went out to India to do a jet exercise that was with the Americans, the British, the French, the Japanese, all the ships in the United Nations, this went on nearly 3 months I believe. But carriers and submarines and everything you could think of was there, three months we were out there doing that, one of the biggest exercises they had

14:30 and then we come back home again, and that just about finished me off the Quicka Maru, as I called it.

**Why do you call it the Quicka Maru?**

More time in Japan than it did down here, all Japanese ships got the name 'Maru' after it, meaning Japan in Japanese and then I went to Watson's Bay and paid off.

**What do you mean by paid off?**

Finished, they discharge you then, I did the torpedo anti-submarine school there

15:00 at Watson's Bay. A home away from home for sailors.

**Did you ever think about going into submarines?**

Too tall

**You're too tall?**

Yeah, I'd end up with a bad back bending over all the time, the American ones are quite high, I could have handled American ones, but the British, I've been on a British

15:30 and they're very small and you have to stoop, about 5 foot 8 is the highest for a submariner, but going under water wouldn't have worried me in the least, but it's just the height, I'd be forever bent over, and I couldn't sleep on any of their bunks, their bunks are very small. And they sleep on top of the torpedoes and they exchange, as soon as one bloke gets out another bloke jumps into bed, it's never cold.

16:00 And the British don't wash, that's one thing I don't like.

**Did you pick that up during Korea?**

Yeah well when we were in Kure doing a refit there, out there our bathroom were getting remodelled and we were using the bathrooms of the Triumph there the British aircraft carrier and we used to want to use their showers and then of course leave's at four o'clock, so

16:30 at quarter to four we'd all troop over there and be in the shower, and not one British bloke would be there in the shower room, and when we fall in, you got to fall in they inspect you to see if you're dressed wrong, be all the British sailors there and you could tell because there'd be the tidemark there around their collar the officers and that you could see the dirt there, the tide mark we'd call it

17:00 the tide mark and they'd just wash their face and hands after been working down the - we didn't like that, not the British, no way. You wouldn't dare go ashore without a shower on our ships. but the British, one a week job, alright for them

**Luckily you didn't have to sleep next to them on a hammock?**

No I've slept on a British ship but

17:30 in my own hammock a long way away, on another deck as a matter of fact. The smell down there was, cause they have Chinese cooks and all that, they don't cook it themselves.

**Did you think about going back into the navy after you married Joan?**

No, she wouldn't have allowed me to go back to sea again. I would have.

**You would have?**

If I hadn't met Joan, I most likely would have

18:00 gone back again, I would have gone back especially with another show brewing up there, I might have gone up there, but of course they were buying American Ships then, I would have loved to have, I went on a trip over there once, but it was not long enough only a weekend, but I would have liked to done a few trips over the UK and around the place

18:30 cause mine was nearly all the Far East.

**Did you have any physical or mental effects of being in Korea?**

No, no never had anything, the only thing I've got is diabetes, I've got diabetes now, that's the only thing I've, but I don't take any drugs, I control it by what I eat

19:00 and that all the sickness I've ever had. And yet mates of mine their very sick all with cancer and no, mostly I suppose it's from up the Monte Bello, nearly all the Murchison crew have got something wrong with them, and they were up there but they

**The Monte Bello was when the atomic tests were taking place?**

19:30 **Do you think that has something to do with it?**

Oh yeah. I do and so do a lot of the blokes and so do a lot of the doctors, but the government says no. The scientists they call themselves they know but I don't know.

**You were lucky to escape?**

I was very lucky, cause I don't know but some scientists say no and the British scientists say yes,

20:00 they give them all compensation, paid them all pensions for atomic bomb tests, cause if a blokes got nothing that went over there, you know the new blokes we took over, they got nothing for that even if they got cancer, they got no gold card they can't get free medical, we could because we had been in a war. But these young blokes the national service and all that that went over there, they get

20:30 nothing, which I think is wrong. If they've worked on those atomic bombs, not only that but in Maralinga I don't know how many they exploded in Maralinga, but they should have got some compensation but they didn't. They're still fighting, costs them a fortune but fighting the government, you never win but, do you?

**Did you join any naval associations**

21:00 **after the war?**

Oh yeah, I belong to the naval association, yeah and a few clubs

**And you said that you march with the Murchison crew on Anzac Day?**

Yeah, oh yeah and no other one

**How does that work, do you all decide that that's you crew you march with rather than the Shoalhaven for instance?**

Yeah, yeah, well cause we are all mates, we go and have a party after the march

21:30 and the little pub in a little room all on our own, and anyone's that's died, wives come and, have a little talk and talk over old times, and the skipper comes and all that. And even we were marching, you know David Martin, Governor General? Admiral David Martin of Sydney? He was

22:00 dying with cancer from the stuff on the - asbestos, and we were marching at George Street, and he jumped in the middle of us, he was Governor General at the time, in civvies, cause I knew him when he was sub lieutenant when he was up in the ship I was on and he

22:30 was talking to all of us that he knew, then slowly he slipped out again into the public and they never knew who he was, and see it comes like that because he knew a lot of the blokes, he sailed with them and we all stick together, every Anzac Day they march.

**Where do you march?**

When I do I go down to Sydney.

**So you don't march every year?**

No, no

23:00 Runaway Bay here they've got their own RSL [Returned and Services League] they made it last week, last Anzac Day, I may join that one, I belong to Southport RSL but that's no good, it's hopeless.

**Why is that?**

They're arguing going into receivership, they built this big mansion and didn't have the money to pay for it and

23:30 the sub branches are fighting against the club itself and it's in that much financial strife so I am going to pull out of it this year, as soon as I finish, I may join Runaway Bay, if they've got, or I'll stay out of them, I still belong to the RSL, combined RSL, and I still belong to the one in Sydney I don't have to worry about it now.

24:00 **What about other associations?**

Only the atomic association I belong to that and that's about the only I think, the Atomic Ex-serviceman's Association. It's quite a big association that one because you've got the air force and all them pilots and the air force at Maralinga, because that was a RAAF place

24:30 not too many navy but, but yeah I don't belong to any of the others though, I rarely go to RSLs these days, yeah. Well I don't drink now, I can't because of diabetes.

**When did you, did the diabetes come on as an offset of drinking or genetic?**

Genetic, inherited,

25:00 my sister she's got diabetes, Lionel my brother he's got diabetes and my grandmother on my Mum's side she had diabetes. Only she had the big one, she had the one, where the insulin, well in those days they didn't use insulin, but I'm going back about 60 or 70 years when she had it, but they didn't have insulin or anything like that. No it's inherited through the genes

25:30 or whatever they call it. But we haven't got the insulin one yet, thank God, but I can control it with diet and less sugar, which is beer, but I don't miss it one bit, I might have a glass every now and again. My doctor goes crook on me for not having one.

**Not having a glass of wine or beer?**

Because you don't completely,

26:00 have one when you like, as long as you do it moderation.

**What about alcohol, I've heard stories about navy blokes being big drinkers did you find you had any problems after the war?**

No, no. Because you don't get an alcoholic in the navy because you're off it, when you come into harbour you'll have a few beers maybe a bit more than a few, but the next day you might be at sea for a fortnight

26:30 and they're dry, so don't, not like the army blokes they can go down to the wet canteen if they want to of the RAAF bloke but the sailors don't. And they reckon the drunken sailors but started only, well they wobble if they've been in rough sea they can't walk straight anyway but get off, no they wobble when they walk off straight away, but no because they don't drink all the time

27:00 can't, they're not allowed to. That's the beauty of the navy cause you if you were ashore all the time, I know when I'm in the bases, in the bases used to be at it every night, I don't believe it. I used to like beer, I like me beer but in moderation, but I never drank the day before going to sea.

27:30 **Can I ask you about this wobble, how long would it take to correct yourself?**

A couple of days maybe, you'd still be a bit stumbling, especially if you'd come out of rough seas and a long time, coming from Japan back down to Sydney, it's a 9 day trip and you might have rough seas all the way and you maybe call into Caloundra or

28:00 Townsville for fuel that's the only thing, if you didn't meet a tanker out there, but you'd wobble for two days then, but we used to go out looking for the rough seas as we come into Caloundra cause we took customs on there, always took the customs on there at Caloundra and they come with us to Sydney and they do the ship, they do the customs thing so we go out and find rough seas. We're used to it, they're not.

28:30 **Just for a bit of fun?**

Yeah

**When you look back now do you have any political thoughts about the Korean War?**

They had to stop them or they'd have taken over Indonesia after that. Cause they were on a roll, believe you me,

29:00 Indonesia wouldn't have stopped them, Sukarno was the boss then, he wouldn't have stopped them because he was a Commo. So they'd have gone there and they'd have ended up in New Guinea and there'd be a third world war over again, so they had to stop them somewhere and they stopped them there which is a God send they did, or slowed them down anyhow, the 38th, but I think they done the

29:30 right thing there. They're not doing the right thing today though.

**What do you mean?**

Over there in -

**Iraq.**

Iraq, I think there's nothing they can do now, the Americans they should have gone through took the place over completely or not at all, not leave it half, cause they are going to still kill. And the poor soldiers going to be,

30:00 not the politician, the one that's going to get killed but. Either that or the United Nations or I don't think they'll do much. They are toothless tigers the United Nations, all talk and nothing else

**Where do you think Australia will go in the future do you think we stay with the monarchy or do you think we'll become a republic?**

I think we'll become a republic

30:30 England is too far away from being in, should have done it years ago but see now I think if anything should happen to the Queen, the monarchy will be a write off. I don't think Charlie will ever get there myself, people, he's not that popular, I think it will become a republic I hope it does anyhow

31:00 it depends on who, who's going to be the president, I hope it's not these stupid politicians we've got today.

**I hope we become a republic as well.**

Yeah, why should we, we're paying 600 thousand for this young bloke just for security, why don't the



Pommies pay, it's a bit unjust

31:30 **What would be your advice today for a young person who wanted to join the navy?**

Go, especially these kids that haven't got a job, but first get a trade, do an apprenticeship, do a trade you go in as a petty officer, but go in you see the world and you get paid to do it, and you come out and I reckon they make them

32:00 the discipline's hard but you can make it easy, or you can make it hard. If you want to make it hard they'll make it hard for you. But I never had any problem with it, cause you get into a few blues and that, but that's nothing.

**We didn't hear about these blues?**

What blues?

**Caught you?**

But that's, no you take the good with the bad in the navy.

32:30 I'd advise young blokes to go in but I nearly had the young bloke in there, but he chickened out, and Jeff, he didn't want to go in there. I would have liked to have seen them in there, all these long skinheads and that, I reckon they should bring national service back, now that they got peace time. Give them two years national service and they come out

33:00 men not like creeps that they are, they still get their money, their dole money, but the country would be a lot better off I think.

**What about now, do you have any regrets that you didn't stay in the navy?**

No now, good lord no. No the navy changed after I came out of it

33:30 it's changed, the ships changed the and the females become crew, no way. I don't know how they wouldn't have done it on the ships I was on I'll tell you that, no.

**Doesn't sound very comfortable?**

It's not comfortable, I mean you got everything you've got to have special places for them, no. What happens if the ship sinks, who gets in the lifeboat? Every man for himself

34:00 or women first, I don't believe in women in war at all, I think that's a men's place to be. The women can be in the army or navy, not dispute that, them WRANS [Women's Royal Australian Navy Service], were good when I was in, they were good they took all the jobs in the bases and the blokes could go to sea, but be on ships

34:30 no, no way.

**I don't understand why anyone would want to be shot at.**

No, not only shot at but to be on a ship like that in -

**Be hard not to have hands all over, I think it would be hard in living quarters.**

Well on a ship now, when you are up in the tropics

35:00 the dress on a ship when I was on it was just a pair of shorts a pair of sandals and a hat, that was it. Now the women got to completely dress up, they can't go around in just a pair of shorts and a hat can they? So they'll have to have a shirt and all that on, so I think they've been penalised for being women, it's wrong, even though the ships are air conditioned now

35:30 not like ours were, but I still don't, I can't - the merchant blokes and I and we had a real confab on this even the skipper, no, hey, could never have happened on the Murchison.

**What about homosexuals, did you meet any in the navy?**

Yeah, there was quite a few of them, different, mainly stewards

36:00 and sick bay. Had one petty officer that was but he was a complete idiot. But a very lot of gay people in the sick bay and the stewards the only ones that would take the steward's job, running after tables and all this bit, but down in the mess decks, no. I never struck any down there, not that there couldn't have been on some of the ships, but I never struck one,

36:30 even on the big ships, even on the carriers, I never struck any.

**That would be hard to because you'd have perhaps people in love with each other out on a ship in war time. It could be dangerous.**

It could be yeah, and they could get pushed overboard very quick too. There's a point.

**It's changed the navy**

37:00 **over the last 30 or 40 years. And it will continue to change.**

Yes, I don't know for the best or the worst, very electronic now, you've got to be a scientist to go in the navy now with all the stuff they've got on them. But I don't know if they hit one part of the generators the whole ship stops, everything stops you can't fire the guns you can't fire anything.

37:30 Well before we could fire the guns and do anything, but no power on the ships, a lot of times you'd lose power and a ship would stop dead and you still could be able to use the guns and that, you could use the radar that would be about the only damn thing, and the engines of course because it's too hot down there when the boilers when there is not

38:00 air pressure going down. But I think, I don't know whether it's for good or for bad, it might be a thing of the past it might be all air this time, cause the carriers I think are going out, the battleships are gone cruisers are gone, aircraft carriers are things of the past, they are alright for the Americans but the Missouri was the last battleship to

38:30 survive and I think the British have only got a couple of aircraft carriers.

**Are you glad that the navy was the service you chose to go in?**

Oh yeah, I couldn't have gone in the army, I wouldn't have volunteered,

39:00 I tell you that. No I had a good time, but I wouldn't change it for the world, no. I don't think any other blokes would too, to tell you the truth, there are the odd ones but they got out early maybe done their six and got out, or twelve, twelve when I come in.

**What about your brother Lionel was he glad he was in the army?**

39:30 Oh God yes, God, he lives the army, drove his wife mad.

**Is she still with him?**

Oh she's bedridden, she's had three heavy big strokes one after the other, she's just like a vegetable, terrible, I

40:00 was over there the other day, the other night and just after he, and he said, "Come over and I'll tell you what I had to do."

**This is the brother that dobbled you in for the archive?**

Yes, my big brother.

**Is he too old to bash up?**

Oh God yes, he's 85, yeah.

**Thank you for sharing your memories and experiences with us.**

Now I'll shut up for the next twelve months.

**INTERVIEW ENDS**