





# TRANSCRIPT OF ORAL HISTORY RECORDING

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This is the first tape, and the first side of the first tape, of an interview with Mr Fred Eustace. How's that spelt Fred?

E-U-S - E-U-S-T-A-C-E.

Right. And I'm Daniel Connell, and today is 3rd August, 1989. End of identification.

Right. Fred, if we could just start back a little bit, and hear a little bit about your - your family, and your experiences as a boy. Where did you grow up?

I grew up in Liverpool in England. And at - when I left school I went up to London to start serving my time in engineering, but it - I found out that - when I was up there, that I could get out to Australia for five pound ten. And I didn't like the climate, I always wanted to get out of that Pommy climate, so I decided to come out here to Queensland, and pay the five pound ten, plus I had to have two pound landing money. That was in 1927 I came out. I was fifteen and two days. Because I was - my birthday is the 8th May, and we sailed from Tilbury on the 10th May in 1927.

And what did you think of Australia when you got here?

Well when I first got here I went to the emigration depot on Kangaroo Point, and they sent me to a farm. Up on the North coast, and I was working there for fifteen shillings per week and my keep. And I had to pay back that seven pound ten to the government in - out of my pay, so much per month.

And I paid that off, and stopped up the North coast for a while, and then I went out in the West, in the sheep country. I came back from there, and knocked around Brisbane on different jobs, and eventually I got married.

My guardian was [Canon Garland?], from St John's Cathedral in Brisbane, and he married me and my wife, he did. And then we went out on a - look after a property, and we came - came back, and we went North, into the Tully, and worked a farm up there for a while.

Then we went - after that we went in amongst the cane, and we went back to Brisbane, and went down to my wife's sister's place, and stayed there for a while. And I was on the main roads, bridge-building and things. Then I went to Brisbane, and went on what they called relief work them days, with eleven bob a day we got. And I got a day and a half a week, because I had a couple of kiddies. And then ....

This is about what time?

19 - between 1930 and 1935. In all them - in them years.

And in 1935 I was living in Brisbane, and I got a job in Shell Company. Went in there to clean tanks out. One of the big storage tanks. Anyhow one of the bosses there my wife knew, they used to play together on Kangaroo Point. And I happened to ask him if he knew my

wife, and he said, 'Yes.' Anyhow the job was for ten days, but my time finished up over twenty years with them.

(5.00) And I left Shell Company after twenty and a half years and went with my brother-in-law on the electrical. Looking after the stores and buying the electrical stuff. Then I - he sold out, so I went back on the petrol pumps with [Gilbert and Barker?] as - after the war finished, Shell Company put me through as a fitter. And I was installing petrol pumps, and looking after some of the oil depots for them.

Right. Well the one thing you didn't mention, or you only mentioned in passing in that, is - is the war, and that's what we want to talk about.

Yes. Right.

How did you get - you know, you were doing all those jobs, and what was your first contact with, shall we call it, military life, or naval life?

I - it's - my first contact with - with navy life was there was five of us on [*Balimba*?] and ....

What - when was this?

In 1935.

What's *Balimba*?

No, 1939. Which was - and we - all in the navy together, naval reserve ....

Well - right, well just before you get to that, how did you come to get into the navy reserve?

Just went down to Alice Street and - where the depot was, and asked them what was the chance of getting in the navy. And they said, 'Yes.' I said, 'Well I want to go in the engineering section', and they said, 'There's no room for engineering, that's all seamen we want, it's all we want, seamen.'

This is before the war?

This was before the war. This was in January, '39.

And then I put in a lot of time. They used to pay us - I just forget the amount of money we got, but anyway they used to pay our tram-fare to the - to the drill-hall and home again every time we went, and we'd get paid every half year. We'd get our tram-fare and our money, whatever we were entitled to.

Half yearly?

I think it was about twenty-four shillings.

For half a year?

For half a year I think it was. I just forget the exact amount, but I think it was twenty-four shillings. But we had to do twenty-four hours drill in that six months.

Right. So what did you do per week or per month, what sort of involvement?

When ...?

In the navy reserve?

In the naval reserve you did training, then marching. Rifle drill. Handling different types of guns. Did 6- inch gun drill, and were put through as gunners, to learn how to handle the guns and everything like that. And we did a couple of marches in Brisbane. Through Brisbane, around, at - recruit marches they called them. And on ANZAC day we all paraded in '39, and marched, and when - when the war broke out we were called in, and on the ....

Well just before we get to war, why did you join the naval reserve, say, rather than the militia?

Well I joined the naval reserve, because I wanted to join the Royal Navy when I was fourteen, and my father wouldn't allow me. So I said, when I had my time, I said, 'Well now I can join the navy', so I went down and joined up.

There was [Kevin McLachlan?], [Bobbie Johnson?], [Siddie Gill?], [Georgie Mason?] and myself. And now, at the present time, the only ones I know that's alive is Siddie Gill and myself. I know Bobbie Johnson passed away. Kevin McLachlan, he got washed overboard off a sampan in Macau, the place just outside of Hong Kong. But where George ....

Was that during the war?

No, after the surrender. He went right through the six years of war, and it was after the surrender that he was washed overboard.

And Georgie Mason, I don't know exactly where he is at all. I don't know whether he's still alive or not.

Well let's go back to 1939. You've been in the naval reserve, and then September the 3rd 1939 comes along, what was your feeling when you heard that announcement?

When I heard that announcement I said to mum, I said, 'Well mum', I said, 'I don't know when I'll be called in, but', I said, 'I guarantee I'm called in.' And I went down the navy, that was the ....

(10.00) Did you - did you know they were going to - when you joined up in 1939 did the newspapers make you think that you were going to go to war soon?

Yes. That's - there was something in the papers. You know, there's - it would lead up to war. In my opinion.

How did - how did your wife - that - you were calling her 'mum'?

Yes.

How did your wife feel about you getting involved in all of this?

Well she said, 'If you want to get in the navy', she said, 'I know you've always been wanting to be in it', she said, 'so if you can join if you wish.' And I went down, and I joined up, because I did not want to go in the foot-sloggers, if they brought militia in, compulsory ...

Conscription?

Conscription in. I didn't want to go and be a - be a foot-slogger, because I knew what the navy life was like.

What about your kids, how old were they, how did they feel?

Oh they - they were only young. One would be about - about nine one was. And the others were younger. But it didn't seem to affect them.

And I was - the batch of us was, I think there were some ninety something of us, from Brisbane naval reserve - all naval reserve men, no active servicemen - and it went to HMS *Kanimbla*.

Now that *Kanimbla* was the passenger ship on the coast, and she left Sydney in December, we did, and went up to the - New Guinea, all around there, and finished in Hong Kong.

Were you a passenger, or what were you - what were you ...?

We were - we were navy men. It was an armed cruiser. Seven 6-inch guns on her, and a couple of high-angle guns for aircraft.

And what - what were you doing?

I was a seaman on board her, in a guns-crew. In the after gun. On the poop - what they call on the poop deck. I was on - in the guns-crew there.

Well then in - we stayed up there till about June or July, up on the Hong Kong station. And we went into Saigon to - they did, to try and get the French, when the French threw their hand in, try and get the French ships out of Saigon to come to Singapore. And we went to Singapore.

Well just talking about Saigon for the moment, did - what did the French do, did they cooperate, or what happened?

Well the French, I think - I think if - if the French had had their way they would have cooperated. But eventually all their ships did come into the - on the British side. There were - they had arm - like what we call armed merchant cruisers, which - the *Kanimbla*, the *Westralia*, the *Manoora*, and there were a few of the other ships, were all classed armed merchant cruisers. And we ....

Did you go ashore in Saigon?

Yes, I went ashore in Saigon.

What was that like?

Oh it's as funny as a circus.

Tell me about it?

Eh?

Tell me about it?

Well all the boys were going up to see the French girls, and my mate and I, we decided we wouldn't go anywhere near it. And [Andy Claxton?] and I, we knocked around the town, and when we were fed up being in town we went back to the ship. But we had a look around.

Why - why didn't you go up to see the French girls?

(Laughs). We - we had more sense. We - we weren't going to waste our money on - on harlots. There was that many of them.

No, we - we had enough sense, and we - him and I, we kept clear of them all the time. In fact there was a few of us, you know, but us two always went ashore together. And the others went ashore in different - different lots. You know, you took your - your mates went ashore together, well that's how it was.

But the - in Singapore, when we went to Singapore ....

Well just - just before we go to Singapore, the ordinary French people around the town, were they - how did they react to you as Australians?

They acted well. They did, they acted well, and they treated us well, they did. And we got real good treatment, and they were pleased that we come in. And they said, 'Well', - some of them said, 'Well, we only hope the French will let our ships go down and help you out.' Which they did.

(15.00) But the *Kanimbla* picked up a lot of merchant ships on the Yangtse light, and put a prize crew on every one, and she was running out of seamen, the *Kanimbla* was running out of seamen, as she had that many away on these prize crews.

What nationality were the prizes?

Norwegians, Danish and all the - like European, ships that were registered in Europe.

What, ships that are in areas that had just been conquered by Germany?

Yes, they were - belonging - they were in the areas where Germany had conquered. And we took the ships over. Took them down to Hong Kong, we did.

And there was one, a Russian ship, named the [*Valdimir Mayakovsky*?]. She was carrying contraband, and we picked her up. The snowstorm we were in just happened to break, and we sighted the ship, the *Valdimir Mayakovsky*, and we ordered her to follow us, and she reckoned she was running out of fuel. We put a towline on her, started towing her. The - the weather was that rough, the towline got snapped, so we put it on - another line on her.

And when we got to Hong Kong, instead of her going into Hong Kong, there was a French cruiser there waiting to pick her up, and the Russians wouldn't work the ship for them, so the Russians - the French had to put a crew in - on board to take the ship to Saigon. Because we already had a Russian ship carrying contraband in Hong Kong.

How do you spell the name of that Russian ship?

Oh.

Say it again slowly, that'd be a help.

What?

Say it again slowly.

Well, no - *Valdimir Mayakovsky*. I've got a photo of it.

No, well that - that sounds fine.

So you went down to Singapore?

Went to Singapore, and we were loading ammunition in Singapore. Anyhow I got injured and ....

What happened?

Hernia. And went - when we left there we went to Durban, we did. And we had a bit of time in Durban, and the people there treated us well. In fact there was cars lined up at the wharf waiting to take us up into the town.

And we had a few days there, and then we took the South African troops up towards the Middle East, and when we got just about level with Bombay the cruisers took over. And the *Kanimbla* went into to Bombay, and, seeing I'd put in a request for medical treatment, I was

put ashore in Colaba Hospital in Bombay, operated on, went from Bombay up to Poona. From Colaba. See Colaba Hospital, I went from Colaba Hospital up to the British military hospital in Poona.

Right. So, just before we leave the *Kanimbla*, could you tell me a little bit more about life on - on that ship? I mean what - what were the - how was it organised, was it a completely naval ship?

It was a absolutely navy ship. Captain Gettings [sic], who went down in the *Canberra*, was the captain at the time. Captain Gettings lost his life in the *Canberra* he did.

Well what sort of accommodation did you have?

We had hammocks. The cabins were ripped out, and there was a - hammock hooks put in. We put our hammocks up and everything and she - the lower-decks were full of forty-four empty gallon drums. For buoyancy it was.

And so what was the idea of that?

I don't know why that - why they had all the drums in, but they had forty-four gallon drums, and they were all in, and they - they couldn't shift.

And was the ship disguised in any way, or did it look like a naval ship?

No. No, the *Kanimbla*, when she left Sydney she was in her original colours. But when we were at - up at - at somewhere - somewhere or other along the line we painted the tunnels black. Then she got a couple of white bands, and she looked like an [AUI?] sandboat to me. One of the Adelaide steamships, with the white bands on her. And then they run up the coast to ....

(20.00) Did they - did they disguise the guns at all?

No. No, the guns were - could be seen. And we were running up the coast to Japan, because there was German and Italian ships in them ports, and we were sweating on them coming out.

But they never come out while we were there. There was the *Moreton Bay* and the *Arawa* were there too, and they were HMS. But the *Kanimbla* was actually the only Australian ship I know that was made - commissioned under the HMS. There was no other - no other Australian ships here. All the others were HMAS, they were.

But HMS, what you mean that was a British ship?

British ship. We - we used to get a tot of rum a day, and in the Australian ships never.

Let me just sort of work this out a little bit. So you were part of the Australian naval reserve?

Yes.

And how did you end up on a British ship?

The British hadn't got the men to man it, and they wanted the Australians to man it, because she was here in Australia, getting fitted out in Sydney. She was. And that's where she - when she was fitted out the British government asked the Australian government to man the gun. To man the ship.

And the - the captain, who went down on the *Canberra*, now he was an RAN captain?

No. RAN - yes, he was an RAN captain, he was. And all the officers on her were RAN. And they were ninety-day wonders as we called them.

What's a ninety-day wonder?

A ninety-day wonder was a - was a chap who went through an officer's course and came out as a sub-lieutenant. But these were merchant - some of them were merchant mates of - first

and second mates on different merchant ships. And some of them were what we call 'the Rocky Navy', that was the interlaced gold braid on their arm, that was.

What was their background, the Rocky Navy?

Well they were the same as the naval reserve men. They had a private - worked in private jobs in the time. And served so many nights or every so often in the navy.

What, they were gentlemen yachtsmen?

Yes. Similar to gentlemen yachtsmen they were.

And - I mean you just called them ninety-day wonders, that suggests that ....

Yes. That's what we called them, ninety-day wonders.

Did you sometimes find it a bit hard to put up with them?

No, it was good - they were - they were good to put up with. Some of them were thorough gentlemen.

Some of them weren't?

There was the - some of them, some of the merchant ones were not.

What did they do?

Eh? Oh well, I'm not absolutely certain what they did, but some of the boys just didn't like them. I was lucky, I was under one whose father was in charge of the Western Australian naval depot. Farquhar-Smith. I was - he was my divisional officer. And some of them had these merchant seamen mates and - as their divisional officer. But there was two of us out of the Shell Company on the *Kanimbla* and we'd - one come from the East coast, and the other come from the West (laughs). And I come from the East, and the one - there was one, he was an officer, he came from the West coast.

So - just to go back a little bit, so you've got a completely Australian crew?

Yes.

On a British-commissioned ship?

Mmm.

And you've got British regulations applying, including a tot of rum?

Yes. Yes. Everything was like - as the British run [sic]. You either had your tot of rum a day, or your pay increased threepence a day. See. That's how it was.

So you went down - going back to the story, you went down to Singapore, and then you - you were up, went around, and you were up in Poona Hospital was where we left it.

Yes.

And what happened then?

I came back here, and went and saw people I knew, and [Cec Curtis?] - he was the foreman in the pump shop in the Shell Company in Bowen Hill [sic] in Brisbane - and I went and saw

him, and he said, 'What are you doing Friday night?' I said, 'Nothing.' 'Well', he says, 'you'd better meet us', he said, 'at the Railway Hotel', he said. 'There's a few of the old submarine men have a beer there', he says, 'and have a beer with us.' I says, 'Oh, righto, Cec', I said, 'I'll come - be up.'

(25.00)I went up there, and when - I got into the Roma Street Hotel, there's a beer on the counter for me. They said, 'There you are, there's your beer.' I says, 'Oh thanks.' And when it was gone I put a quid on the counter, and I said, 'There you are', I said, 'I'll buy the beers this time.' 'Oh no, you're not buying the beers. We're going where it's cheaper.' I says, 'What?' 'We're going where it's cheaper.' And we went over into the Railway Institute, and little did I know that I was in an RSL meeting, and I become a member of the RSL there and then, on the 8th December 1940. So I'll - I'm in my just about fiftieth year in the RSL. I think I'd be the longest serving second world war man in the RSL now.

So - right. So, going back to the story, you came back to Australia, and ....

Yes, I ....

And were you well again by this stage?

I was put into Flinders Naval Base on the 3rd December, 1940. On the 4th December I was sent out on leave, twenty-eight days leave. Came home, went back again, and, when I got back there again, I wasn't in the place twenty-four hours, and I was on my way for another twenty-eight days leave.

And then I came back ....

That - how was that?

Don't know. They just decided - they decided that I'd have another twenty-eight days. So they wouldn't let me do any work, so I finished up down the guard-house, doing a bit of guard duty. And then I got sent to Brisbane to join a minesweeper.

What's the date?

Mmm?

About what date are we talking about?

December, December, '41. Yes, it would be December, '41, it would be then. I was on the minesweeper.

This is before the Japanese came into the war? The Japanese came in on the 7th, according to ....

Yes, it would be just before the .... And I was on a minesweeper called the *Tongkol*. She was an old Sydney fishing trawler. I was on that for a while, and I came off her, and I went onto the *Gympie*.

Well just - just before you - you go on, what were your duties on the minesweeper?

Minesweeper? My - working the - the minesweeping gear, and helmsman. And that's where I got my helmsman certificate to say that I was able to steer a ship correctly.

And what waters were you working in?

Working Moreton Bay, all over Moreton Bay we were.

[Inaudible].

The North - the - the South passage, we - we used to keep the South passage clear, right across to Caloundra. And now and again we'd - we'd drop a line in off Smith's Rock [sic] buoy and get a few snapper, if we were feeling a bit hungry and didn't want meat. We used to get some beautiful fish.

Did you get any mines?

Pardon me?

Did you get any mines?

No, but I joined the *Gympie,* and we'd been up North and come back ....

What sort of ship's the *Gympie*?

A corvette. And I was the first one to go to her. I was. The first one drafted to her, the first one went on board her. She was at Evans-Deakin shipyard getting fitted out. She wasn't known as the *Gympie*, she was just known as a number at - at that time. And I was on her, and we went up New Guinea, up Port Moresby, and Milne Bay, Orro Bay. Mmm?

And a corvette, what sort of - what sort of duties?

And a corvette. Mmm?

What sort of duties was the corvette?

She was a minesweeper and duty escort, you know, convoy work. Used to have to do convoy work. And she was a minesweeper. And she was the only one fitted at that particular time for acoustic minesweeping.

Anyhow we were going our way up North after having the Asdic cleaned off a couple of times, the new ones put on, we were on our way North, we got a recall to Brisbane to sweep the North passage.

I'll just change the tape.

[Recording ends on Side One of Tape One].

This is Side Two of the first tape of the interview with Fred Eustace. End of identification.

Right.

And as we swept the North passage, and we'd just - I believe they'd just sent a signal to say there was nothing there, and next thing was an acoustic mine went up. I was right down in the bilges of the ship, where all the food was, because I was the tanky, and used to view the supplies.

What was the tanky?

The tanky - the tanky's job was to give - supply the men with their bread and their butter, their tea and their sugar, and - according to the rations.

And I was right down in the bottom of the hold getting some gear out, and nobody moved faster than me to close that watertight door on that one, and up into the victualling store, and get that watertight door shut, and up on the top deck. And I can tell you I saw the water coming down. I was that fast I mean, moving and closing them hatches - watertight doors, and screwing them tight, and up - and saw the water coming down from - after the explosion of the acoustic mine.

What the corvette had actually hit that?

The corvette had actually swept the acoustic mine. And it was the only one I know of being swept anywhere this side the line.

What's the line?

Well the equator see. It's the only one I know of. She's the only ship that I know of that's swept an acoustic mine.

Right. What - so the water's pouring in?

Mmm?

So what's - what's happening, you ...?

No water, no water came, no the water just went up. See this - this acoustic mine gear sent a vibration so far ahead of the ship that it would explode the mine before the ship got there. And this is what happened.

And then we went back into Brisbane. After that. We stopped the sweeping bit - another day or two, went into Brisbane, then went and picked up, and went up North again.

And come into town .... I'd put in for a gunnery course in the meantime, and we come into Townsville, and I was told to pack my bags, I was on my way to Flinders. And I did six weeks in Flinders. Gunnery course.

Perhaps if you could tell me a bit more about that gunnery course, what were you learning at the course?

Right, you were learning how to handle every position on a 6-inch gun, and the different types of ammunition you'd use. You were on Bofors lent a - I think it was a - yes, Bofor, we - we had a Bofor we were trained on. We were trained on Oerlikons, and different types of material that was used on the merchant ships. It was all on the merchant ships what we learnt.

And at the end of six weeks we sat for an exam. Did actual firing on Port Phillip Bay. And on the Friday afternoon, after six weeks, we got draft notices. I got [inaudible] the shock of my life. Townsville. Start the DEMS pool at Townsville. The first DEMS gunner ever to go to Townsville.

So when I got up there ....

Now, did you know what you were being trained for, that you ...?

Yes. Yes, we knew what we were being trained for, we did. We volunteered, we were all volunteers.

Could - could you describe what are the duties of a DEMS gunner?

Duties of a DEMS gunner was to train the merchant seamen to - how to handle the gun that was on the ship. Whatever type of gun was on the ship, to - how to handle it, and fire it, and look after it. It was the DEMS gunner's duty to see that gun was kept spotlessly clean, ready for action at any minute. He not only had that to look after, he had all the different types of ammunition to look after. He did.

(5.00) He had also the magazines where the - where they were all stored, and everything like that. And when he was on - when he went to a ship he signed on that ship as a deckhand, he did not sign on as a gunner. And the minute he went on board all his naval clothes he took them - took them off and stored them away and never used them again until he hit a port, and he went ashore, but he must go ashore in navy uniform.

Why - what was the reason for not having naval uniform on the ship?

Because if we were captured we don't know what would have happened to us, so therefore it was better for us to be classed as a deckhand on board a merchant ship and be merchant seamen.

What were you - what was wrong with being an ordinary naval man?

Well say a Japanese got - captured us. The ship. And they found out that we were navy. We would suffer more than what the others suffered. So therefore it was better for us to be just ordinary deckhands on the ship. And the Japs would never know. We never even wore our dead meat ticket, tag on our neck. We wore nothing to show that we were navy man.

How did - so you went on as a disguised naval man?

A disguised navy man actually.

Right. And on the ship what sort of conditions - where did you fit into the - to shipboard life?

We had a cabin on - the ships - each ship I was on I had a cabin supplied. There were sheets, like - just like an ordinary merchant seaman. He was supplied with sheets, towels, pillow-slips and everything. And a steward to look after us. He was. He was supplied with his meals. Nine times - most of the time I the ships I was on I - I ate with the captain. I did. And had - had the same food as the captain.

Why didn't you - I mean in your own mind, why - why do you think you didn't eat with, say, the able-bodied seamen, or the seamen or whatever?

They - why we didn't eat with them? Well we were respected more by the officers of the ship than the merchant seamen, because we were hard. If the merchant seamen didn't do the work in - in the gunnery as we expected them. We - we had to train them. And learn them how to handle it. And they used to get niggly on us, if we told them they were doing the wrong thing. And that's how we went along.

Were there times when you told them they were doing the wrong thing?

Yes, yes, there was times when I told them. See it was - show them how to pick up a shell to load it. And they - they might go along, but they mightn't do it - do it right. Well the right way to get a shell was to go alongside, get down, push it over into the - the armpit, and put the other hand underneath, lift it up, take it over and put her in the breach. Well if they didn't do it like that it was no good. See. And we used to have to tell them straight. 'That's no good. We want you to do it the right way.'

See 'cause if you - if it was a 6-inch shell, well that was a fair weight. Because I think it was twenty-four pound of cordite went in behind that. He has to ram the shell home, and then put the cordite in. And then put - close the breach, and put the detonator in. See?

So - so the charge wasn't attached to the shell?

Mmm?

This was - this was the old-fashioned type of gun with a charge?

This was the - it wasn't old-fashioned, it was - but the style, you see. Like the *Aussie* and all them, they were
the same with the 6-inch shells. They had twenty-four pound of cordite to put in behind the shell. The shell had to be rammed into the muzzle. It did. And then turn around, and put the cordite in behind it. Close the breach, and put the detonator in, and then when it was - when it was ordered, everything was right, the gunlayer'd fire it.

(10.00) Because there was nine men in a crew for a 6-inch gun, and there was seven in for a - a 4-inch. And you used to have to train - you see you had different - different size guns. We had one gun, we called it the Woolworths gun, because, when you fired it you could track it. You could watch that shell go through the air, and track it, and see where it was going to fall. Because the speed it travelled wasn't fast enough.

Why'd you call it the Woolworths gun?

Because it was made in Australia, and it had such slow movement in her that we just decided to give it a name and call it the Woolworths gun. You see. Because it was - it wasn't fast enough for our liking. It wasn't.

It was a hard thing - it was a hard thing to - you know, after being on fast-moving guns, to come onto what we called the Woolworths gun, well it was hard. I think they were made in - in Lithgow. That's where I think they were made.

So just coming back to - we left the story in a sense at the end of your training course, and you were about to be assigned to a ship. What ship did you get assigned to?

I got - well I was in Townsville depot, and Bob Orme, petty - he was a petty officer. He came in, and I knew Bob well, and he said - and I said to him, 'How's things, Bob?' 'Oh', he says, 'not too good', he says, 'I've got to put one of my gunners ashore.' I said, 'What do you mean?' He said, 'Well I've got a - a gunner ashore', he said, 'and I've got to get a gunner.' I says, 'I'm a DEMS gunner.' 'Right,' he says, 'you're going to the *Katoomba*, troop-ship.' So I went to the *Katoomba* as a troop-ship, and we finished up - I finished up on her for a - a good while, see. There's no - no record of ever, on my papers, of saying what ships I served in as DEMS gunner. There's none, see. And I know every ship that I served in. I do.

I should have asked you earlier, DEMS, what - what do those initials stand for?

Defensively Equipped Merchant Ships. That's what it actually stands for. And that was - they brought that out at the start. They had - in fact they had the guns on the ships prior to '39, in the hold. So if anything happened - they knew it was going to happen - they had - they'd load - loaded some of the guns in England, and they were put down in the bottom of the holds.

And then when the war broke out they just pulled them out and put them on their mountings. They did. And the gunners - the gunners were picked up.

Quite a few Australian gunners were - went over. I know Allingham, Pat Ahern, Bob Orme, Jolly Jack Rogers, Snowy Findlay. And there's a couple of others in it. There was. But all told, out of the Australian navy, there was 1070 of us DEMS gunners. And we still class ourselves as a DEMS gunner.

Why do you attach more significance to being a DEMS gunner than the other parts of your naval career?

Because it was a bigger risk. There was more risk in being in the DEMS gunner than there was being in general service. In general service you had all the ammunition and all the armoury in the world around you, where in the - as a DEMS gunner, you might only have a 4-inch gun, and a couple of Vickers, or a couple of other small arms that you could use. Well therefore you didn't have the armoury to fight with that - where the cruisers and destroyers and corvettes all had.

We never had the armoury. We had whatever was put on the ship. And I always say the DEMS gunner run a bigger risk of losing his life than what the ordinary seaman did. Because they had everything in their hands.

(15.00) The ordinary - the - when you were sailing on the *Katoomba* ....

Mmm.

Do you remember any particular incidents that stick in your mind from that trip?

Yes, yes. It's a sad one too. It was where a - I think he was an air force chap had applied for leave to go and see his mother, because she was seriously ill, dying. They refused him, and he went on - was put on board the *Katoomba*, and he was in number five hold, sleeping. And one morning, oh, it might have been around ten o'clock, we heard a rifle go off, and somebody went down the hold, and this chap had shot himself. And it meant that we had to bury him at sea.

That's stuck in my mind ever since the day it happened, that has. It's always been in my mind. Why they never give him time to go and see his mother when he knew she was dying. And I think that was a hard thing to do. It was hard for him. And I - it always sticks in my mind that does. I often think of that.

Why do you think it happened?

Mmm?

Why do you think it happened?

He got - I think he got that depressed with it that he didn't know what he was going to do. He got very depressed, he did.

And we did a few trips up, went up as far - I think it was as far as Finschhafen in the *Katoomba*. And in Milne Bay one trip we picked up a load of Yanks and WAAAFs and brought them back to Australia.

And there was another chap and I, we were running what they call a dhobi firm, like a laundry. And we were asked, would we iron some of these WAAAFs' blouses? So I said, 'Yes, we'll iron them, don't worry, we'll iron them. A dollar a time.' The Yankee dollar we wanted. So we got our Yankee dollars we did.

And we were issued every day with two bottles of beer for two bob. We never used to drink the beer, half of us. We used to store it up till we got up the islands, and then we traded the beer for cigarettes. And we got the cigarettes, and eventually we put them on the black market here (laughs). Yes we did. We used to get a few quid out of it that way, see.

> Right. So on the *Katoomba* how were you getting on with the other sort of - the merchant marine people, how were you ...?

Oh we got on well with them. We got on real well with them. In fact I used to go down - I was on the aft gun, and - the 6-inch - and I could go down the galley and get a bucket and fill it with coffee, and have a look in the pantry, and if there was jam roll there, you know, if they'd had a jam roll for lunch, and there was still some jam rolls there, I'd chop them up, and take them up, take the bucket - bucket of coffee up, and say to the sergeant in charge of the aft gun, 'Righto, a cup of coffee and a piece of jam roll for each one. Then, when you've got yours, send it on to the next gun.'

And it went right through from one end of the ship to the other. The bucket of coffee did, and the jam roll. We used to - I used to do it. Give - or - give them whatever I could. If there was nothing there, well I'd just give them a cup of - see that they got a cup of coffee. I would. See.

Because I was - the sergeant was in charge of them. I was in charge of the sergeant, and I'd say to the sergeant, and to the captain, 'Just knock - give me a nudge.' I might be half asleep, see (laughs). On - on the job.

But he - but we never had any trouble all the time we were on that gun.

> So there was no trouble sort of mixing in, the two of you, you know, even though you were basically subjected to different regulations?

Yes, there were - no trouble between us, no.

I come - I come down - we come down to Sydney after we brought these Yanks out. And we loaded up Italian POWs and German POWs, and took them to Western Australia. Now what happened I'll never know, but we got back to Sydney, and there were sixteen gunners on the

*Katoomba*, and there was an order came out, them sixteen gunners had to leave the ship, and no two were ever to be put on ship again together.

So I picked up the *Barossa*. Adelaide Steamship Company.

(20.00) Well just before you - you go on, that's a very strange order. I mean it suggests that there was some sort of trouble?

There was some sort of trouble - well I don't - I don't know what the trouble was. I still don't know, and I've asked different ones who was in - in the ship with me, and they don't know what the trouble was. They don't know what was wrong. See. But I've asked them, and I can't find out anything.

And then I got on the *Barossa*, and went north, and loaded sugar at Lucinda Point. And Saturday morning the phone went, and the chief steward answered it, and he said, 'Fred', he said, 'they want you to go to Ingham.' I said, 'What - what for?' 'Well your two mates are in boob.' I said, 'What?' He says, 'Your two mates are in boob.'

So I went up, and bailed them out, paid their fine.

What were they charged with?

They'd pinched a - a push-bike each, and was going to ride from Ingham to Lucinda Point, only the copper was too quick for them in Ingham, and caught them. And anyhow they still owe me the money that I paid their fine for. And one's from Newcastle, he is.

So how long were you on the *Katoomba*?

Oh I was only on her a short time. Yes, I - I did - I did two trips. No. One trip from - I - I even forget where I picked her up. One trip round to Western Australia. No, two trips to Western Australia, that's right, because I worked a racket with a chap in a big store in Adelaide. I wanted Onkaparinga blankets, and he said that I could - you could get them, if I could get the coupons. And I said, 'But I haven't got the coupons', I said, like that.

So we were talking, and I said, 'Oh', I said, 'I've got some beautiful pawpaws on board.' He says, 'You've got some what?' I said, 'Beautiful pawpaws on board', I said, 'in the cool-room.' He says, 'You bring them along', he says, 'and you'll get your Onkaparinga blankets.' Because he was a Queenslander, and he hadn't tasted a pawpaw from when he'd left Queensland until I give him them.

Well the next trip down I took down pawpaws and pineapples, and I got a dinner-set. And I brought the dinner-set home, and give to the wife. See. It was just a bit of a racket between the two of us it was. Yes.

But we - I made money while I was a DEMS gunner. I made a fair bit of money.

How's that?

Well I run a - run the laundry firm. Doing - on the - on the *Katoomba*, and there was two of us in it, and we were making - making good money. And I was able to give the wife a lot more money. I was able to give her a couple of hundred in one hit. And I said to her, 'See - see that the house is paid off.' I said, 'Make sure the house is paid off', I said, 'so you've got a roof over your head, if anything happens to me.' See. And that's what went on.

Well then I got on the *Barossa*. I didn't bother running dhobi firm there. I used to get a job wherever. Like a trimmer might have to go down and trim coal four hours overtime. He wouldn't do it. I'd go down to do the four hours, and I'd get paid the overtime rates. When it was payday whoever I'd done it for, that trimmer'd come and pay me the money that he should have received for the overtime.

And that went on all through the DEMS. All - most of the ships did it, they did. And one - in fact one ship the gunner had to take the ship into port, because they hadn't got a member in the crew that could steer the ship according to the directions given. And it's in the DEMS book about it, and everything. So I mean everything's right as far as DEMS go.

We used to have to sign on the ship when we went to it, and sign off it when we left. And we got sixpence a day from the shipping company.

(25.00) That was on top of your naval wages?

On top of our naval wages, yes. My - my navy pay was eight shillings as an AB, threepence a day for my gunnery rate. And sixpence from the shipping company. Then, after three years I got another trey a day on the left arm for my good conduct. I did. So it meant that I was able to get eight and sixpence a day from the navy, plus sixpence a day from the shipping company, give me nine bob a day.

Right. So how long were you on the *Katoomba*?

I was on her for - oh, about two months. Might have been a bit longer. Might have done three months on her, and then went to the *Barossa*, and did two trips to Western Australia.

Sorry I - I meant the *Barossa*, not the *Katoomba* before. How long were you on the *Barossa*?

I did two trips from Lucinda Point, I'd say from Townsville, round to Western Australia. Which took her a few weeks to do, and I got taken off in Western Australia, because of these other two, the - the gunlayer wanted to make sure he didn't pay me the money he owed me for his being pinched in Ingham, and he got me put off, and I was in the Western Australian Fremantle depot for a week or so, and I picked up the *Koomilya*.

And I came back to Sydney in the *Koomilya*, and ....

But wait a minute, the way you're describing it now, is the way it happens with merchant marine men, they sort of finish one ship, and they go into another ship.

Yes.

But how - if you're a naval rating, you've presumably been attached to these ships in - on a more formal basis?

No, no. We worked out exactly the same as the merchant seamen. We could sign on and sign off the - the ships, you see. Get - get to Western Australia, I signed off the *Barossa*, and I signed on the *Koomilya*. Came - got back, I think it was to Sydney ...

You mean you didn't have to contact the navy before you changed ships?

Navy - the navy - the navy were the ones that contacted us, and asked us if we wanted to change. See? And we used to say, 'Yes', if we wanted to change. So if I'd have put - reported the two that was on the *Barossa* with me, for having stolen the bikes in Ingham, they would have been up on a charge. But I'd never squeal on them. I'd never squeal on anyone, in any way. So therefore they never got taken out of DEMS, they were left in it. You see. And I ....

Did they want to - was DEMS a good thing to stay in, was it, it wasn't ...?

Yes. It was good - good to - when you were in it it was good to you. If you didn't like it, get out. If you were scared - too scared, you know, of a torpedo or something like that happening, well get out. But if you weren't afraid of that, well you were alright.

And what - basically, I mean you've been talking about this before, but the conditions of life, what are - what would you say, there was more freedom, or what was it?

More freedom. Yes, there was more freedom. You were just like an ordinary civilian on board the ships. You were. You see. But some of the ships - now, I - it's in the book, in the DEMS book, some of the ships, they were wicked. Conditions on them were absolutely wicked. But I happened to be a lucky one, to strike ships with good conditions. See. I was lucky.

I come off the *Koomilya*, and went straight on to Burns Philp's *Merkur*, where there was quite a number of gunners. Because the *Merkur* was the supply ship to the whole of the Yankee fleet, and the Australian fleet. She was. And I was on the *Merkur* when the - the time the surrender came through. We were up in Morotai. Up in Morotai when the surrender came through. But the silly- looking Yanks ashore sent a red warning out, and we all manned the guns.

What's a red warning?

Red warning is there's aircraft coming. Watch out for bombing, see. Anyhow, eventually they found out it was their own - own planes. Coming back after dropping the atomic bomb, I believe. And then they give us the green light, so we just got off our guns, and we were right.

And then from there we went to Subic Bay, in the Philippines, and give the Yankee boats their supplies and that, what they wanted. And we went to Tarakan. And I'm not sure where -

no, at Subic Bay this was. We supplied the corvettes, and the Australian boats, with food and rations, to take them to Hong Kong, for the surrender.

[Recording ends on Side Two of Tape One].

Identification: This is Tape Two of the interview with Mr Fred Eustace. Tape Two, Side One. End of identification.

Right. So - right, come the surrender, you remember the surrender?

Yes. Well the - there was corvettes and a few of the other boats in there, and the Yanks. And Kevin McLachlan[?] was one of my mates that joined up with me. He was going to Hong Kong on a - one of the corvettes, and I said, 'I'll swap you places, Kevin', and he said, 'What?', he said. 'I'll swap you places', I said, 'you can go home, and I'll go to Hong Kong', I said.

Anyhow we couldn't swap, because I was a gunner, and he was not, he was just AB. And anyhow I come back - I went - oh from - from Subic Bay I went to Tarakan, then around to Balikpapan. Then from Balikpapan back to Tarakan, back to Subic Bay. Back to Tarakan, then back to Subic Bay, and then back to Morotai. And from there we came back.

And what duties were you doing after the war, what was the ship doing?

The ship was - after the war - we came back after the - we'd done that trip, and on arriving in Brisbane ....

No, I meant before you came back, you were still, what, supplying ...?

Supplying the fleet. We were - kept supplying the fleet with food. The whole of the fleet. There was a lot of navy men on the *Merkur*, but there was merchant seamen on her, working her, and out of the navy men that was aboard her, the navy gunners were allowed two bottles of beer a day, but the navy men that was in the Royal Australian Navy, serving, were not allowed a beer.

Why not?

That's the - that was regulations. We were civilians, they were navy.

And so all the civilians got two bottles ...?

All - all civilians got two bottles of beer. DEMS gunners were classed as civilians on board a merchant ship.

Alright. But army people got two bottles of beer. I don't know whether they got it a day, I think they got it a week.

Yes, but they - they got it ashore. Well the navy - no naval ship ever carried beer, only in the wardroom. But they never carried it for the men. See. And on the merchant ships, the merchant ships carried it for the men, and the DEMS gunners. They got it.

So when navy people and DEMS gunners would get together, what sort of things would be said by ...?

Oh, we - we got on alright. Like - now up in Subic Bay, when I run into Kevin McLachlan, I said to him, 'See if you can get permission to come over', I said, because he was tied up alongside of us. So he got permission to come over. And I says, 'Righto', I says, 'down the cabin.' Went down the cabin, knocked the top off a couple of bottles, and he's as happy as could be. He said, 'That's more than I've had all - all through the war', he says, 'I've had today.'

And he went back - back on board the corvette to go to Hong Kong, he did. And he lost his life. And I reckon - to think that a - a man should go six years through it, not get hurt in any shape or form, and then lose his life in - taking - when he was in a ship that was taking the surrender from Japan.

(5.00) So, just coming back to the role of DEMS gunners, the status, you what - in naval terms your rank was what, petty officer, or ...?

No, our naval terms in - in DEMS, according to the navy, if we were ashore, we were either an AB, leading seaman, or petty officer. See. Now there was the three branches. There was a petty officer in charge on a lot of the ships. Some ships carried an officer, a gunnery officer, and he was - then there was the petty officer. Then there was the leading seamen, then there was the ABs.

And what were you?

I was an AB. Yes. I never wanted to go on - wanted to climb the ladder, because I knew if I went for leading seaman I'd get transferred back to general service. So I'd sooner stop at an AB in DEMS.

So - but on some ships you had DEMS who were officers, you were saying?

Yes. Yes, we had - we had a DEMS officer on board. I'd - on the *Merkur* there was a DEMS officer as gunnery officer.

But you were saying that you normally ate with the officers, with the captain?

Oh. No, that was in the other ships. We - in the - in the *Barossa*, and the *Koomilya*, I did. But in the *Katoomba* we had our own mess hours. We did. After the troops had been fed, the - the gunners would be fed, and on the *Merkur* we had our own mess, which was separate to the navy men's mess, you see. And we had good meals. Real good meals. I can't complain about any of the ships that I served on as a DEMS gunner as being a bad ship.

What would you do in your time off, what would you do then? How would you spend your time off?

Well you - you did four hour - four on, four off, you see. Well when you were off duty you'd either be having a sleep, or might be doing some of your washing, or just sitting around on the deck.

What would you do for recreation, when you did have some time for recreation?

There was no - no room for recreation on - on the merchant ships (laughs). That I was on. See. But on the *Katoomba* all the gunners used to get on the poop - the poop deck, which was originally the hospital. And it was turned into gunners' quarters. See. When the gunners went on board, well the hospital was turned into gunners' quarters, and we used to sit around there and have a - talk all the time.

So how much would you mix with the ordinary merchant seamen?

Oh mixed with them fairly freely.

What, play cards, tell stories?

Yes. Have a - sit - go and have a yarn with them, you know, and that, we would. We mixed in well, we did.

What about when you were on shore, on leave, in port leave?

On port leave? Well we - like, say we were in Sydney, well we'd go up the park, you know, where the - Hyde Park, where the big canteen was, and have a look around there. Or we might get in - I had a friend in Sydney that I used to go out and see. He had a femur broken on the *Hobart* in '40. And he came home with me. In fact I looked after him on the - in Poona, I used to do everything I could for him in Poona. And then on the trip home he did the same. I was - there was an officer off the - off the *Kanimbla* - the *Kanimbla* coming home. I know what he was coming home for, but better - better left alone (laughs). And ....

What, he was in disgrace, was he?

(Laughs). And - and he put me for duty.

What - what had he done?

I don't know (laughs). I know, but I'm not saying. See. But anyhow he - he had me for duty. So I said, 'Well according to my papers I'm going - going back to be discharged, so I'm not going to do that.' So I goes down and sees the doctor, and gets the doctor to state that I was unfit to stand the watch. I just took this up and give it to him, and I had no more trouble (laughs). We just laid around the decks all day. Because it took us no time to come home in the *Mauretania* from Bombay. We come home without an escort or anything from there.

But we had a - I had a good life in it. I enjoyed it. The life. I know at times we were a bit nervous, but - I think my nerves still suffer from it to a certain extent.

(10.00) Why, what were the - the things that made you ...?

Well when - when you see a periscope up in - out the water, that sort of give - you know, put the nerves on edge.

Did you see a periscope?

Yes. In - in the Big Bight, the Australian Bight, there was one. I was on the *Barossa* at the time, and I saw one. And I warned them. I did. There was a sub.

And what did the ship try and do, did it try and attack the sub?

No, she just kept a zigzag course. The old skipper did on her.

Had - they - they treated us well. I had - I had no complaints against them, but if you get hold of this DEMS book and can read it, you will find out that a lot of the gunners had a lot of hardships. We lost a few. A few gunners was lost. Although there was 1070 of us, all told, there was some lost their lives. In fact it's not so long ago that I picked up a *Pix*, and it had the photo of the ship exactly the same as what's in the DEMS book. All the stern blown away and the guns with it, and the gunners lost their lives in that.

So when you came back at the end of the war, when were you discharged?

I arrived back in September, '45. It was a Sunday morning. And this naval officer walked aboard, he said, 'What's your name?', I said, 'Eustace, Able Seaman Eustace.' 'Right', he said, 'you apply for your discharge', he said. 'You can go up now and apply for it if you want to.' I said - thanked him. So I took my port home, because I was tied up at the Mercan..., the wharf, alongside of the Vacuum Oil Company, and I just had to get on the ferry, and go over the river, and straight up the road, and I was home.

And I took my port home, and I said to the wife, I said, 'I'm not stopping here long.' I said, 'I'm going into Brisbane.' She said, 'What are you going to Brisbane for?' I said, 'I'm up for my discharge.' She said, 'What?' 'I'm up for my discharge.' And I went straight into navy, and told them I was told to report for my discharge, they said, 'Right.'

So I applied for my - first thing they said, 'Go up and see the doctor.' So I went up and saw the doctor. Next thing was, 'Down to Eagle Street for x-ray.' Went to Eagle Street and got x-rayed. And the chaps in - it was an RAAF x-ray place, and he - the chap says to me, he said, 'You're lucky, you know.' I says, 'Why?' He says, 'This is all getting dismantled tomorrow', he says, 'and getting sent to the exhibition ground', he said. 'And they're all going through the exhibition ground', he said. He says, 'And I think you're the last one', he says, 'going through here.' (Laughs). He said, 'Now.' I said, 'Well as long as I'm through that's all I care.'

Anyhow I got through and went back to navy, and they told me I had to return certain articles of - of stuff belonging to them, like my hammocks, bedcovers and mattress, anti-flash gear, lifebelt, and a bit of other stuff I had to return. So put all that in one place. And I said, 'Well you'd have to send them - send down the ship for us.' So when they sent to the ship I just give it them.

And I went up to the navy on the Wednesday, and I was in there and about twelve o'clock I was due for discharge. Anyhow it had gone twelve o'clock. And there was a Petty-Officer [Tiley?] there, and he called me up for my discharge. I went up, and he says, 'Put your hat on properly.' I said, 'It's on properly from where I am.' He says, 'What?' I said, 'It's on properly from my end', I says. 'Address me as Mister now', I said,' it's after twelve o'clock', I said. I - because this Tiley hadn't left the Brisbane depot, and that was one thing I was crook at. I believe he hadn't left the Brisbane depot, he'd been in the depot all the time.

What, right through the war?

Yes. Six years of it, I believe he was in the depot, somebody was telling me. See. So well I said, 'Well if he - if he can be in the depot for six years, I can be at sea for six years, I'm not going to let him tell me what I have to do now.' (Laughs).

(15.00)I had my hat, not quite flat at back. Had three parts [inaudible]. And he told me to put it on properly. He was going to put me in before the officer of the watch, and I told him it was too late, and I told the officer of the watch it was too late to charge me (laughs).

What did the officer of the watch say?

The officer of the watch said, 'Well here's your discharge.' (Laughs). And I picked it up, and went up to Shell Company. Went straight up and saw me crowd in Shell, and Alec Forbes was my - the one I was - had to see. And I said, 'Well', I says, 'I've got it. Look, I've got it.' He says, 'Got what?' I says, 'That bloody paper I chased for six years.' (Laughs).

So he says, 'What do you mean, you got your discharge?' I said, 'Yes.' He says, 'You starting work tomorrow?' I says, 'No', I says, 'I'm not starting work tomorrow.' He said, 'We want you to.' I says, 'Oh well', I says, 'you've got to wait until I get some civilian clothing.' Of course I had plenty of civilian clothing and - all what I had before the war, from - even what I carried around on the DEMS, see. I even went ashore as a civilian. Although I was in DEMS. And I said to him, 'I'll consider it.' I said, 'I'll let you know Friday', I said, 'what I'm doing.' I said. 'If I'm there Monday', I said, 'you'll know I'm there.'

So on the Monday I went to work, I - and Cec Curtis[?] says to me, he said, 'Oh', he said, 'we've got to get you a kit of tools now.' I says, 'Why?' He said, 'You're a fitter.' 'Oh', I said, 'am I?' He said, 'Yes', so I said, 'Okay then.'

So - it would be about half past nine I get a message, the phone goes, and Cec Curtis says, 'Fred, you're wanted on the phone.' 'Here don't you know you've got to report to Shell House before you're - before you start work?' I says, 'I know nothing about that. So I went up to them. I said, 'If I've got to come up there, I'll come up there', I said, 'but I'm not in a hurry.'

So I went up to Shell House, and seen them, and they wanted to know where I'd been, you know, and everything like that. And what medals I was due - entitled to. I said, 'I don't know', I said, 'all I know is that I've got the 39th Star. That's as far as - see. And the Pacific Star.' I said, 'That's all I know.' See.

So anyhow finished up with - I finished up with five of them. '39 Star. Pacific Star. British General Service Service Medal, which is given by the British. The Australian General Service Medal, and my ten-year - twelve-year good conduct medal.

Twelve-year? But you weren't in twelve years.

Mmm? No, I - every year - year of war counted as two. Six years of war is equal to two - twelve years. See. But I was in before it started, and I was in after - like I went right through it, and I was in after the peace was declared, so therefore I was fully entitled to it. There was quite a lot of us got our twelve-year. Some of them dipped out. Played up, and missed out on them. They were.

Looking back, were they good years, those six years? Or hard years?

Well - they were hard years. They were hard years. Like discipline. But, I mean, I made sure that with the discipline, although discipline was strict, I made sure I never stepped out of line. I said, 'I'm not going to lose money. Step out of line. I'm not going to have to do punishment, if I step out of line', I said. 'Or anything like that', I said. 'I'll just stay - do as I'm told.' And it was the best thing you could do. Just do what you were told. Whether it was right or whether it was wrong. You just do it, and you were - you were in the clear. See.

And I - I mean as far as I went I was happy with the six years. As I say now, if war was declared tomorrow, and they'd take me as a gunner again, I'd go back. I'd go back as a gunner.

But now I - I go down to - I've been down to Sydney a few times, and generally go down the - with the Twin Town Services Club, for bowls. And we get - get down there, get round the harbour. And the *Brisbane* was tied up down there one time. There was a sentry on the wharf. I says to him, I said, 'What's the chances of getting on board, and having a look round?' 'Right, sir, see the quartermaster.' So see the quartermaster. The quartermaster races away, and he comes back. He does. 'The officer of the watch will be here in a minute.' The officer of the watch comes, and I told him that a party of us were down from the Gold Coast, and most of us were ex-navy men. I said, 'We would like to have a look round.' 'Righto', he said, 'bring your party aboard.' Took the party aboard, and he said - he explained every mortal thing about the ship to us.

(20.00)The - the boys afterwards, they - they all said, 'Well that's the best thing we've ever had, Fred. How did you - how did you wangle that one?' And I said, 'Oh well', I said, 'when you've been in the services, in the navy', I said, 'you know what you can do.' But there was only two of us navy men (laughs).

And there's only two DEMS gunners in the Tweed. There is. There's a crowd in Brisbane. Because I used to go up to the meetings at Kedron and Wavell Heights. They used to have a meeting there once a month. In fact I've - I've been up North for a few years, and only got back here in April, and I'm going to write up and ask Jack Rogers if the meetings are still on, and if they are I'll go back to them.

Because Jack Rogers, I knew him better than any of them. Always called him Jolly Jack. There's Rogers, and Pat Ahern. Well Pat Ahern, his father was the one who walked around

the Post Office you know, seeing that everything was right. Used to be on cruising round. Well when he retired Pat got the job. But since then I heard Pat's passed on.

There's - and the daddy of DEMS in Queensland is Bob Orme. Petty officer he was. And we always called him the daddy. And one of the youngest DEMS ratings I know is in Toowoomba. He - he was the building inspector of the Toowoomba Town - Town Council. Oh. Tige[?] - Tige Denyer. He was one of the youngest ones.

How do you spell that?

D-Y-N-E-R.

Tige?

Yes. RJ Denyer. D-E-N-Y-E-R. And ....

[Recording ends on Side One of Tape Two and interview ends].