



TRANSCRIPT OF ORAL HISTORY RECORDING

Accession number	S00735
Title	Leonard, Kenneth Richard (Able Seaman)
Interviewer	Connell, Daniel
Place made	Brisbane, QLD
Date made	8 August 1989
Description	Kenneth Richard Leonard (AB) Merchant Navy, interviewed by Daniel Connell for The Keith Murdoch Sound Archive of Australia in The War of 1939-45.

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BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE A.

Identification: this is tape one, side one, of the beginning of the interview with Mr Ken Leonard.

I'm Daniel Connell and the date is the 8th of August 1989.

Mr Leonard, if we could go back to before the war, if you could give me some idea of where you grew up, your home when you were a boy?

Well that's not really difficult. I left there, home when I was sixteen and I went to sea but I didn't just go to sea in the ordinary way, I went through a nautical training school and they despatched me to my first ship with adequate equipment and four months training.

Where was that - the place that you grew up?

I grew up in Hull, Yorkshire on the east coast of England and I - I grew up through the years when - well of course it would be the 'thirties. We - we - if you was to start off it would have to start off in 1936 and of course at this time there was no employment for people. It was a period of great unrest. We - we had the 'Red Shirts', we had the 'Black Shirts', we had the Nazi Party, we had mass meetings, we had great hoards of men used to fight each other on Sunday meetings, when police used to bash both sides and the Black Shirts used to go amongst the crowd. They'd have the knuckle dusters and they used to hit people in the back of the neck, in the ribs, with these knuckle dusters and it was the German/Italian movement and at the time they used to call it the - the British Union of Facists and of course they were the counterpart of what was then the German Facists. And we went through the period when men used to write on the wall - '1914 blood and slaughter - 1934 bread and water' and I used to see those signs going to school. And I can quite well remember around the market place, this old men he used to have white hair, very shabby, he had his cap layin' at his feet and he stood in the gutter and he tried to sing and people'd put a penny or a ha'penny in his hat and it was when I was older that I look back on it and remember. While he was singing - his old wife was standing there ... and she was holding his arm ....

(5.00) There was also a little man, he was an Australian, so my father told me, and he lost two legs in France and he used to have what they called a barrel organ. It was a piano honky-tonk on wheels and he had a young lad used to push the thing from pub to pub and he used to turn the handle and play these honky-tonk songs and then he had a little board with four roller-skate wheels on it and the boy would lift the man without legs onto his little platform and wheel him round and he had a little bag to collect pennies. And on his organ he had a sign and he said on it 'Imperial serviceman, no pension, no dole, no nothing', and we had other people used to come round after tea at night and they'd have a basket with a few kippers in it, penny a pair, five for tuppence. Poverty was the ... was the thing of the day and as being a young one, my mother would get a penny Oxo Cube and she'd melt it down with hot water in a cup and mix a bit of flour with it to make a

gravy and cut a thick slice of bread and toast it and put this Oxo gravy on it and that was me meal, and there was no more.

And we - my mother's brother lost both his eyes in the war. Uncle Dick was completely blind, the eyeballs were gone, and she had to take 'im round everywhere with his arm and he used to come to see us and he used to find out which one it was and he'd put his hands on our face and head and he would say, 'That Kathleen, that's Nora, that's Ken', and he got only one pound a week and they told his wife if she wants some more she'll have to find a job and she said, 'How can I leave him in the room?'. So they didn't afford a house, they had one room and they had the bed and a bit of furniture and they used to fry a bit of stuff on the fire and he lost his eyes in the Boer and he got a pound a week.

And next door to us a little family we grew up with - I used to walk out with this young lass and I used to take out - I used to accompany her - and we'd go and get Dad's medicine and they used to give the medicine at what they called the dispensary and you had to wash the bottles and take 'em back. The mother said, 'Now don't you drop them bottles now', and she didn't want to go on her own because when we got there, there was a big room full of people - old people - coughing, old women coughing and belching and we'd put the bottles on the counter and we had to go and sit down till the slip was dispensed and her name was called and we carried it home. We used to hold a bottle each and be precious that we wouldn't drop it.

Now her father, he was gassed in France - with the mustard gas - and his face had all eaten away from the jaw bone and every year it grew further back and now you can see all his jaw and his teeth and up to his eyes and he wouldn't go out. He wouldn't be seen so his wife got a piece of cardboard and she covered it with some black cloth and a bit of elastic band and put it on his face like a mask and when it was a bit dark at night, she'd take him out with his top coat and he'd put the collar up and put the hat down and if anyone was coming towards him he used to turn his head. He as afraid to be seen and if anyone came to the door he would only talk through the door. But I used to go in and out there and play with Lil and Bill and Walter. We'd play ludo and draughts in the house, and nobody looked at him. So I got used to it and it didn't bother me and he had four children, the wife and two bedrooms upstairs and a couple down - a little [inaudible] thing, and he used to pay eight shillings a week for that. All them houses were eight shillings, they were all the same - and he had no face. And for his whole family he got thirty shillings a week.

(10.00) So his missus used to take the baby's pram and she set off early Monday morning and she'd go to the outer suburbs where people had a bit more money and she'd collect old clothes and she'd bring them home and wash them and sell 'em. A little second hand shirt, washed and ironed, for thruppence, and the little old jumper, she'd pull all the wool out and wash it and stretch it and knit it together and sell a little remade jumper for fourpence and that gal - this lassie next door with me - we used to sit up and I'd come out and sit on the step and .... If we'd had our tea already she'd say - she would say it like this:

'Ya had your tea?' 'Yes.' 'Did you get ought?' 'Nah, we didn't get nought.' It means we had very little.

And then they set up these soup things in 1935 and you could go to this big sort of mobile thing on wheels, like a caravan, and they - the people run it, they used to call it 'Mother Humber' [sic]. I don't know who she was but ... and then the ladies could go and get soup for the children and when you came to the - to the caravan it was like a counter and you had to line up and some women would bring the jug, some would bring a billy can, others would bring something else, but we had an array of something to put it in. Oh, some women had shame and they didn't want to be seen queuing at the soup kitchen and others had thrown care to the winds and they queued up and couldn't care so the women had a bit talk until their turn come and when you reached the counter they had this big pot of soup and the ladies, who were a better breed would say, 'Now how many children have you?' 'Three.' 'Are you sure now?' 'Um, yes three.' And she put the ladle in and filled the woman's jug; one, two, three. And of course the woman would scamper home with this cheap pea soup and she'd put a drop of hot water in and they'd all have a bit of soup and that's what they called livin'.

And so I come out of school - it was 1935 - '34-'35 - there wasn't a job anywhere. The Labour Exchange sent me down on me first job - I was just fourteen and when I got there it was an ice-cream firm and they used to have these ice-cream carts .... But they had a couple of shops and I used to have to put these ... it was a wooden barrel, open top, and you put the tank of ice-cream down the middle and packed the ice all round it and your wheel in, you had to push this bloody heavy hand cart and then come back and all that sort of delivering with a hand cart. But when I found out then it was only three days a week and they gave me one and six a day. Then the man came to the shop one day, he was delivering bread. He had a big van and he says to me one day standing in the shop, he said, 'How old are you?' I said, 'Fourteen.' He said, 'Look would you like a job?' So he gave me a job, start tomorrow. I used to go round in the van with him and he'd come to the shop and I'd carry the bread in and he used to do the business and then I'd probably get the van ready to move on and that job was five shillings for three days which was sixpence better than the other one. So on five shillings he said, 'You'd have to have a decent pair of pants and a decent shirt and look your best going round the customers and all'. And so I found I had to have the two jobs, so I managed to keep the two at the end. One for three days I'd push the ice-cream cart - one day was Sunday - and the other days I'd work with the baker on his busy days, and there was nothing going. And then I heard of a job, I went to see the man, and he had a butcher shop and he wasn't doing too well but he had to have a delivery boy. So my job was to deliver these things, what he had, to his customers and he used to make sausages and sell them to little locals at the corner store and he used to sell 'em to them for fourpence ha'penny a pound and they used used to sell 'em to their customers for sixpence. I used to fill this basket with sausages on this delivery carrier bike and I used to go round and one shop would take two pound, another shop would take four pound and eventually I knew where all the shops were and that made me very quick on the figures.

(15.00) I used to rapidly say, 'Four pound at fourpence ha'penny, eighteen pence, one and six, two bob, sixpence change and thank you', and I'm on my way and I become very quick on figures. And then he couldn't make it go and he had to shut down. So I stayed out of work for weeks then and I went down the unemployment centre and there's a big photograph on the wall and it said, 'Join the army and see the world' and it showed you the soldiers kickin' a football and I thought that'd be all right, you know, a game of football and a few bob. But the other picture showed a man sitting on a big 6-inch gun polishin' it, he was laughing his hat off, he said, 'Join the navy and see the world'. I thought that'd be better, sittin' on that gun would do me. My mother would love to see me on one of them guns so I went to the man and I said, 'May I join the navy?' 'No', he said, 'Navy's all full,' he said, 'we have quota and we take so many applicants from each part of the country.' 'Well,' I said, 'I think I would like to join the army.' 'No,' he said, 'you can't join the army till you're eighteen, but you can join the Territories and do your training at night.' He said, 'You get a shilling a day.' 'Oh.' He said, 'Wait a minute, there might be something here,' he said, 'you can put in application for the Gravesend Sea School.' So he gave me the papers and I filled them in and I went to the Board of Trade for an eyesight certificate and I had to get a reference from the school I'd been attending and one from the priest. And one day the letter came back to say I'd been accepted.

The next thing, a few days later I - I went down to the railway station with my mother and sisters. It was a big day to see me off. Nothing so exciting had happened you see, and, uh, I boarded the train and I went to London and when I arrived I met this officer who was standing under the big clock where I'd been told and he took me to the Sea School and the gate locked behind me and I did fourteen weeks - and pardon me - yeah, fourteen weeks Sea School and then they sent me out to a training ship called the *Triton*. She was an old ship, she was in the London River and then when I completed my seamanship there I passed the test, I came back to the school and I waited a few days and they sent me off on my first job, which was on a voyage to - to south and east Africa and my wages were two pounds fifteen a month.

What was that ship like? What was the ship?

It was a big coal burning ship. She carried passengers to south and east Africa. She used to go out through the Mediterranean - sometimes France - Dunkirk and Marseilles to Genoa. Sometimes she might go to Venice, she'd call at Gibraltar and Malta and then we'd go along maybe to Alexandria but usually to - to Port Said. Then through the Suez Canal and through the Red Sea and then go up to Aden - tip of Africa - then work the African coast down. Then come back across the Atlantic and we'd call at an island St Helena and you used to come to the Canary Islands, uh, Las Palmas and I have to think of the other one and then we come back to London and the voyage would take three months, about - about three months voyage.

When you paid off after a three months voyage, by the time they'd deducted that you'd bought a few cigarettes or you'd had a ten bob draw in some port, you used to pay up with out about four quid - four and a half quid and you're on your own till the ship sails again.

How did you find seaman?

(Coughs) Well they have admirable points about them in retrospect, um, in the modern age we're living. The boys and ordinary seaman had quarters and no able-bodied seaman - oh no, no older man was ever allowed in their room. They had to stand in the door. Perhaps the bosun could step in the room and make sure it was clean and tidy or the officers and so on.

(20.00) But you must never have an adult man seen in the boy's room and we had two bosun's mates - she was pretty big ship - and they were very strict and they were very strict with the discipline and I was given a job as a bridge boy and I was on the bridge with the - with the two quartermasters, the officer of the watch and I did bridge duties such as whatever they wanted to do. A bit of paintwork, say washing paints, scrubbing the deck, polishing brass, running messages. And then they took me in hand and started to change my speech for me because it was not acceptable. Would you like an example of it?

Um, they wished to send a message to the chief engineer from the bridge. So he would give you this small note and he would say, 'Boy, chief engineer. Compliments from the officer of the watch', and he would read the note and he would say - the engineer would read the note and he would say to you, 'And my compliments to the officer of the watch and thank you.' But when that was over I would turn to the quartermaster and I'd say to him, 'What does he want to be complimentin' 'im for? What's 'he done?' 'You can't speak like that,' and so we 'ave to change our way of speech and that was just an example. Um, in my language I would say, 'Go aft and read the log and bring it back in a hurry,' as simple as that. But they would say, 'Record the log. Hurry back', and so you have the same words put in the other way.

And so you may pass a little island and one man would come along and you would say, 'Eh, what's that bloody island over there?' 'Oh, I don't know what it is?' 'I wonder does anybody live on there?' But the other man he would come along and say, 'Ah ha, small island, I wonder does anyone live there?' and he sounded different. And yet it was the same. And without knowing what we are about we'd begin to differentiate between men and then we'd begin to grow up and we'd begin to hear a few words of a man's speech and we can deduct him and I slowly began to learn the secret of how men can hear you speak and they can unclothe you after one sentence. They can - okay.

So the ship came back (coughs) and it was in a December before Christmas and they paid us off and she was goin' to do some dry-dockin' or something and the crew were dispersed. And I had about four pound. And I had a room in this sailors' hostel. It used to be four shillings a week for boys and I didn't know much about spending pounds and ... I'd buy meat pies and fish and chips and cups of coffee and I'd go to the pictures and I'd take the bus up to London and I'd have a look at what I could see and I began to know my way around. But pretty soon I was down to a few shillings and I had nowhere to - no

means of getting any more and I came down one morning for my breakfast and the man said to me, 'Your rent is due,' he said, 'you have to pay your rent,' he said, 'you'll have to go out.' And I said, 'I ain't go no money.' 'Aye, well,' he said, 'that's your bloody fault. You shouldn't spend it when you do have it.' And I walked to the front [inaudible] and I was very dismayed, it was bitterly cold and a man come along and - in a peaked cap and big duffel coat and he - he had a face like a bottle, a big powerful man, and he says to me, 'Are you out of a ship?' I said, 'Yes.' 'Are ya sailor?' 'Yes.' 'I'm lookin' for a good lad,' and I jumped at the chance. So I run up and took me bags and my things and I followed him and went down to a little ship. I thought it was a tugboat when we got there. I was shocked having been on a liner and it was a little 600 ton ship that used to sail between London and Germany.

(25.00) So I joined her and there we got thirty shillings a week, but you have to feed yourself. So I sailed off on the thing and we had the eighty-four week, two watches, four on and four off, carried a bloody small crew, and the bosun was the third mate. The bosun, he was the AP, he was everything and that's where my life began. So we went to Germany, we went to Bremen, and then we came back to Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and then to London and across the continent back to Germany and I kept it up and I saved a few pounds and I used to send my mother twenty-five shilling, thirty-shilling postal order, because she was having nothing from me and I used to be so proud when I sent my mother three dollars - like thirty bob.

And as time went by, we, uh, began to learn things. The afore peak and it's like a hatch you lift up and you went down there and there was the chain locker and it was only divided from the two anchor chains by a bulkhead and he had a big coil of wire on it. One day I saw him liftin' this coil of wire up and next thing I saw it was back again. And I began to wonder why they want to lift this coil of wire off the hatch lid and put it back again.

And one day I come up on the deck and there's four strange men standing on the fore deck and I said to the bosun, 'Where did they come from?' I thought they dropped out of the sky, 'Aye,' he said, 'keep your bloody gob shut and your eyes shut an' all.' So I never found out, but we came to London, at Millwall, the men weren't there. The ship came in and the pilot went and we tied up and I had nowhere to go. I had no home so I stayed aboard the bloody thing and late that night a car drove up at the dock and a man come aboard with the bosun, from the shore. They lifted up this wire and four men come out. They went ashore and stepped into the car and disappeared. The bosun said, 'Yorky, gob shut.' 'Aye.' [inaudible] This went on until I was eventually in the thing and already the Jewish people in Germany were fully aware because, you see, after 1934 they knew what it was all about. And there were certain people in Germany who used to go round these Jewish people - those who had a quid - but mostly an old brooch, an old cameo, gold chains, and they'd take this jewellery from them and tell 'em that they could arrange things and they could get 'em out of Germany. And when these men come aboard we had what we called here a Gladstone bag - or a port, a little port, like a doctor's little leather port - and these men'd come down with all this collected jewellery and whatever and they'd pay

so much and they'd get it to shore in England. But now it has to be cleaned and like in the modern day, they called it 'laundered'. So these Jewish gentlemen and some of them are bonza people. They opened these little tatty shops in districts where nobody had a bloody penny, let alone old gold and they plastered the window, 'Sell your old gold here. Highest prices paid' and on the front window and on the board, they'd put a white sheet and they'd tip all this jewellery on and people used to walk past and have a look at it, and 'Help Britain buy British, sell your old gold.' But I suppose a few people might have sold them a gold ring but after a time, so they take the precious stones and stuff out and when they're ready, they flog it off to the British government as old gold that's been collected and it was put into cash of course and so they were on the feet in Britain now. So with every - every shipload comin' back - I say every one, those that did, and we brought four Jewish refugees and one bag of loot.

Now on the high seas in those days ....

END TAPE 1, SIDE A.

BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE B.

Identification: side two, tape one, the interview with Ken Leonard.

Sorry just go back a little bit, on the op... you were saying on the open sea.

Well on the open sea in the 'thirties a AB would be - would never earn more than between nine to ten pound a month. You can say eight and a half quid to ten pound. The union was hardly established, nobody took any notice of it and they couldn't afford a shilling a week anyway, or a shilling a month. But these - when you take a month's pay at a maximum earning of ten pound, only thirty hours from Germany you could pick up twenty pound. It was big money in those days, but the twenty pound has to be split. So each trip the bosun had 'is - had 'is whack, the three AB's had a few bob and they used to give me thirty bob. So you can say approximately a fort... it was actually a weekly, but by the time you unload and then come back and unload and say - you can actually say you make ... you can really say by the time you leave London and get back to London, you can say - you can say seven or eight days have passed. Eight-nine days. So you can say every couple of weeks I had thirty bob and the bosun said, 'When you get your thirty bob,' he said, 'you get it out to your Mum. Don't you have money on board this ship.'

Well then there was the other one then. Hitler had introduced a kind of mark. To introduce money into the country, what we call today foreign currency, he made what they call... we'd call a tourist mark for those visitors to see Germany and to make it attractive, you get twenty marks to the pound. But the normal rate was about twelve marks, so the blokes would take over there, say, twenty pounds, and they'd put it into marks and when they get back to London they - that's twelve marks to the pound and when they come back to London they get twenty marks to the pound, so you see there's a fiddle there. As time went by I began to want to stand up. The Customs must have

known the men were down there but things happen and this is where I got off the ship, I was quite sick. We came back - we left [Africahoff?] - no before I tell you of my last trip I'll tell you about the crew. Good blokes because you had to be good to live in a depression in Britain. You had to be hard stuff - give nothing, take nothing, but still camaraderie was there - comradeship - they were good to me as a lad, and out of the three ABs the three of them were all members of what we used to call the Royal Naval Voluntary Reserve. Now they used to do that so they get the normal wages when they're workin' - bits of trainin' every year at Chatham - and they used to get their - a few bob from the navy for being a member of the reserve. But being in the navy they could get their hands on a bit of clobber so they could get hold of a good - a few good thick singlets at about sixpence a piece and a couple of good big thick jerseys for about two bob and two or three good pairs of heavy pants, so you see, once you're in the navy you can get your clobber cheap. And even your Sunlight soap, it was only fourpence a pound - only fourpence a box and there's three big tab in the box.

(5.00) So you see by being in the naval reserve you had your hand on a few perks. But if you take three pairs of number twos and you flog 'em off to the crew of a ship you make a few bob there. So everyone's lookin' to make a bob because you need a bob to live - you need a bob to live. And when you're down, nobody takes any notice of you because they're so many down so you just join the mob. All these men were naval reserve and they were stickin' on this job and they begun to learn German. So now the strange things for a young lad, a young Yorkshireman, when you come alongside a ship in Bremer... Bremerhaven and a boat comes alongside and the man shouts up - he calls up, [speaks in German], and this one shouts, [speaks in German]. And they talk bloody German and I thought, oh well this is a funny old world isn't it. And then of course the inner recesses of the mind begin to open. You see, my grandmother was German, I'd never thought about that, it come like a little pinprick in the bum, a sort of a shock. Yes, it was quite funny that and I began to remember a lot of - when I lived with my grandmother - I lived with her for on and off, for several years. She was a bit old and she used to take to me in that German/English way. 'Ken [e ven?] you're goin' out. 'When you're goin' out Ken.' And so I began to listen. I soon became attuned and I'd hear them speaking in the next room and I picked up words and I decided I'd learn this bloody language and I found it easy. So we had the quaint position of three royal naval men speakin' German and when they greet the comrades in Germany, they said, 'Heil Hitler' and they raised their right hand, and all this is too much to digest when you're so of an age, but this is the world.

And so I began to pick up my German and later on a man said to me, '[speaks in German]'. So I bought one and it had all the English/German words and I was as happy as Larry. So I had a few shillings now and I sent my mother a few bob and I had better clothes, I had woolly clothes and socks and shoes and I was buying sausages and eggs. I thought I was, you know, King George, going well.

Then we - we leave Hamburg and I suppose the normal had gone on. We dropped the pilot ... and when we come up the London River we usually drop the port chain. I don't know why, but they always dropped the port anchor. So this time we left Germany and

we had the battle - it used to be dreadfully rough weather. She used to stand on 'er head and the propeller used to go up to the air and she used to roll, I used to be as sick as a dog but I used to think of them meat pies and them stores in London and I used to manage to make another trip and we came back and we come to the London River. And there used to be barges there what used to carry all the, uh, from the sewerage we have here today but we used to - the sewerage used to be pumped down to the dock and it used to be pumped into these big ships and they used to take the ship out to the English Channel and drop the bottom and all this stuff would be dumped. And the Poms used to call them the 'Bovril Boats' and comin' up the Thames Estuary, the Bovril Boat loomed up ahead. Oh, sort of a brown khaki colour, and she blew the hooter and the old man, she blew the hooter, 'Hard to starboard'. And she came on and we gonna hit the bastard and we swung about and she just missed it, because swingin' like that we headed straight for the shore.

(10.00) The old man said, 'Stop a full stern, and drop the starboard anchor', and the starboard anchor went out and four Jews went out with it. They were down in the chain locker. And to let the anchor go, the anchor chain comes up round what we call - we'll call it a winch. It's proper name is a windlass but today they're all steam you see and the chain comes round and this windlass brings the links up, but when you let it go, you just let her go and she runs out and the anchor hits bottom, then you check it. Of course, the men were down there with the little bags ... and nobody knew this was going to happen. Of course, they're all down there crouchin' on the anchor chain and the anchor chain went out, and as it comes up across the deck and out through the holes the pieces of men came up with it and there were bits of shirt sleeves, faces, glasses, oh I was so sick. And the bosun gets the hose pipe and he hoses the lot off and he's panic stricken. 'Don't stand there you daft lookin' bastard, get the bloody hose, get a broom, scrub it off, scrub it off.' The pilot was comin' up now, pick him up at the Thames Estuary, but they didn't want any ... not that the pilot would have gone up the bow to look at it, but still the fear is on. When a man has fear, that's what he has to fear. And so I had this broom and he's scrubbin' the links of the anchor chain with the hose and I'm scrubbin' them with a broom, he's hosin' it off and all the [inaudible] .... Anyway we came right up the river and we anchored off near Tower Bridge and they let all that anchor out onto the seabed and we went down the chain locker and we hosed and rinsed and washed it all out and the last of the chain was on the last shuttle down you see. The last shackle never goes - the last link never goes out, he's shackled to the deck of the ship. And then we brought the anchor in slowly again and as it come in we scrubbed and wiped it to make sure there was no snot and blood on it. But the bits and pieces, there was a lot of them we found. Apparently when the little port they had down there with them, he possibly kept bouncing and link to link from link to link as the chain came out and course they found little bits of cameos and brooches and bangles and everything and so Yorky had to go with the bucket and I picked up all these and then they went ashore in the bag and the business was done and it was business just the same, and Britains never shall be slaves. I mean after all that's the name of the game. And the bosun said, 'I want to give you some advice.' He said, 'I want you to go through your life and talk your bloody head off but never say anything. Do you understand? You saw nothing. You don't know anything.' He said, 'Have you ever seen Oswald Mosely's Black Shirts?' I says, 'Of course I have.' I said, 'I've seen what they do.'

He said, 'You wouldn't like a knuckle-duster pushed down your neck, would you Yorky?' 'No.' 'You wouldn't like that nice little young boy's face of yours done up nicely, would ya?' 'No.' 'You wouldn't like to find yourself on a muddy bottom?' 'No.' 'Keep your bloody gob shut.' Anyway I was a bit frightened of course and I went ashore from Millwall and I met a young lad, [Donald Jubb?], and we were at the Sea School together and he said he was on a tanker and he said, 'One of our lads is leavin,' he said, 'you might get a job.' I said, 'Where is this tanker?' 'Oh,' he said, 'it's at a place called Grays, up the London River.' So he gave me the directions and how to get there and I thought well it's a straw in the wind so anyway I went to the captain and I said, 'My Mum's sick, and she wants me to come 'ome, and I want to go 'ome.'

(15.00) So he paid me off the few bob I had comin', which normally you get paid anyhow in London and when the bosun was ashore, and I was frightened of 'im, I took me bag ashore and I - first time in my life I took a taxi and it took me to Fenchurch Street in London and I sat up there. The next train was in the morning so I sat on the platform all night and I was - every now and again I'd go up to this machine, I put a penny in and you'd get a bar of Nestles chocolate and I filled up on choc....

Anyway I arrived next morning, and I asked directions and I went down to this tanker and it was a lovely big thing. He smelt like terrible smell and I met Donald Jubb and he said, 'I told the first mate I'd met an old mate,' he said, 'and I'll take you to 'im,' he said, 'there's a job for ordinary seaman.' 'Oh,' I said, 'that was good.' Like a promotion you see and the wages were four pound sixteen a month. And I got the job and he signed me on and we sailed. And so I stayed three voyages in that ship, it was a British tanker. So you see I came back and we came back to London again and men of the crew, a lot of them lived there. There were some bonza blokes in those days with me, blokes in the south of England were pretty good blokes, but in the north and oh, they were dreadful men to live with, bloody animals, pigs, they were. But the southern men were nicely spoken and better breed altogether and I intended I was going to be as nice as they were.

I had a few days ashore in Tilbury and I had my little girlfriend there and I used to take her to the pictures and the local dance and go for walks and life was wonderful. And one day this ship came up, it was called the [*San Ameliano*?]. She was brand new. I didn't know then and they want an ordinary seaman so I put my papers in and three trips on the British tanker as an ordinary seaman I was on the top of the list. But this was a tanker. The chief officer and the shipping office said, 'I see you been three trips in tankers?' 'Yes sir.' 'Well,' he said, 'this - you can have this job,' he said, 'I'll sign you on.' So I - oh she was a bonza. Two in a cabin, nice bunks, good bedding, lovely food, nice big mess room, oh, it was a dream. The gamut, oh, you threw everything in one room and it was a dream and they only had a fifty-six hour week - only a fifty-six not a sixty ... a sixty-four and not a eighty-four - and ....

Uh, they - they had fifty-six or a sixty-four?

They had a sixty-four week. Now the seven eighths - the seven days of eight - made fifty-six. Well now, you're eight hours short so two days a week you go out for four hours a day to pick up the eight. But this captain 'ere, he might only have you out once in a while, one of them good blokes - good blokes. And he was a good bloke because he'd been years with the Anglo-American Oil Company and now he was with the Eagle Oil but I was to learn that the Eagle Oil was the oil from Mexico and the British had a big finger in the Mexican Oil fields. And so they called it Mexican oil. But the shippin' part of it was called the Eagle Oil Company and they had a big eagle on the funnel. But this was a voluntary ship and she was brand new.

And away we go and we go to Trinidad and Jamaica and we went across to some American port, I have to think a bit now but, uh, it - Houston, Texas and we brought back to Britain - oh she was a goody. And I mate and I signed up for another voyage. And again, we - we went across to Trinidad and Jamaica and then we were sent out to - then we were sent out to ... South America - just in a minute the word will come - we went to - the first port we went to was ... I have to think of the name, it'll be here in a second. Um, and then we went from there to Rio de Janeiro and by now it was well into '39.

(20.00) On a Sunday mornin' as we were just comin' into Rio de Janeiro we had word from the bridge that Britain and Germany was at war. Me old Scots mate he said, 'Oh,' he said, 'you - you're a canny lad,' he said, 'if you'd been on the wee boat ye not a been in the prisoners tha noo.' Oh I was rather glad I had left the galleys after all but still time has elapsed. And we came into port and the dock, like a long wharf on the port side and lying there was rather a big French ship. As we came up the French flag over the side and a few Frenchman over the ship seeing the British ship come in, give us a cheerful wave. There's a big space on the wharf and then there's a German ship and we moored between the two.

Which port?

Rio de Janeiro. And my mate was a Scotsman, [MacPhee?], he was from the Shetland Islands. A kind of bloke who had everything a man should have includin' a good sense of humour and he played the chanter - the bagpipes without the bag - and we arrived and we have one French ship astern of us now and a German ship was at the bow and he says to me, 'Aye, well,' he said, 'we'll go ashore for a walk, stretch the legs a bit.' So we walked ashore and we walked along and as we went along we came to the German ship and of course, when you seek the analogy - it takes a long time - so when we came abreast of the German ship there was a young German sailor lookin' over side amongst others, and he shouted down, 'Hallo, how are you?' and Jock said, 'Go ahead, Ken,' he said, 'answer 'im.' I said, 'Will we have a bit of fun?' 'Aye,' he said, 'go ahead, have a bit of fun,' so I shouted, he'd said to us, 'How are you?' So I said: '[speaks in German],' and his face changed. And he said - I forget which - which [inaudible] but he shouted some... he shouted down, '[speaks in German]?' 'What's he saying?' I said, 'He's invited us on board.' 'Oh,' he said, 'let's go, we can get a beer.' A good Scotsman never knock a drink back. So we went up the gangway and there's a cook there or someone and he shook

hands with us and we went down the mess room and oh, I thought this is - if this is Hitler's this is bloody good. They had two men in a cabin, carpet on the floor, a washbasin in the corner, hot and cold water, shaving mirror, plenty of books and literature on the walls and went in the mess room, big 'frigerator with cold meats and everything in there - this was Sunday mind, nobody was workin'. And '[Speaks in German].' 'No don't have to work Sunday.' And they chatted and they started off said, 'Look, you are seemann?' which is the same word in English, you know, seaman, and we are seamen and when we're comin' out, well, but now the other bloke brought in a few bottles of Carlsberg Lager and Jock and I settled down. 'Course bein' at sea and none of us were drinkers, a couple made us giggle you know, and one German bloke comes out and he had a big piano accordion. He also looked the biggest man I ever saw, and he could play it too. (Sings a tune) oh, his fingers were going and Jock was stampin' his foot and it all ended up a great old party.

And we came back to the ship which was just astern and there Jock was quite happy and as we were comin' along he's probably signing, *I have a lassie, a wee Scottie lassie* ... We came to the gangway and the second mate was on the gangway, on the deck and we staggered up the gangway and he said, 'Where do you think you've been?'

(25.00)I said, 'I've been to visit a ship with good accommodation and good food and good wages and that's where I've been.' He said, 'You're a smart little bastard, aren't you. You, MacPhee, have you been on that German ship?' 'Aye I have.' 'Why you're a bloody traitor.' 'You call me a traitor, why you Welsh bastard, you step on the dock and I'll give you something,' and so we were traitors. But it was an experience. They had everything, they had the best of food, clean sheets, clean - we had straw beds and brown blankets, the meals used to come down in tins and you had enamel plate and fork and a mug, but they had a messman who served the table. She was like a French restaurant. They told us they only had a sixty-hour week and after that it was so many marks per hour overtime and they had overtime for this and over... and we began to wonder which side, you know ... (laughs). But you don't really wonder, you ....

So we left Rio de Janeiro and we came - empty now - to Trinidad and they filled 'er up, and then we came to Jamaica and we took one of the big convoys of that time back to Britain and when we arrived they paid us off. And I think we were given ten days, we had to report and they paid us off in .... (Dear would you bring that discharge of 1939, when you are ready love?) So the *San Ameliano* - so I went back to Tilbury where I joined the ship and it was much the same, there was no war on, [inaudible] blackout at night, but it was nice and I stayed there. I ran out of money, I used to like a few beers now. Just lay it there, I show it when ... it's the two parts there at the top and that's all right. So ... I ran a bit out of money.

Now there's an Aussie boat there, bonza boat, young and it come to Britain in one of the - one of the ships bringin' troops or something, I don't know how he got there but he was there anyway and we made good friends and he used to tell me all about Australia, land of plenty. Plenty of work there. The man's willing to work he'll make a quid, always fiddle

the quid. I used to like the way he talked, you know, 'dinky-di's, 'razoo's, and we've become very close friends. 'Course he was broke too so between us we spent what we had between us and we had a room at the mission ....

This is the Seaman's Mission?

The Seaman's Mission, the 'Flying Angel' and 'course what we had to do when we're going broke, he tossed in his room and I kept mine and he used to come in my room and sleep. He used to put blankets on the floor you see and a couple of nights and a couple of empty rooms when no-one was about, 'Aus' used to go in the empty rooms and gather up a couple of spare pillows and blankets, bring 'em in my room and we saw another night through. And we went over to the docks one day, havin' a look at things and there's an old tramp steamer lying there. It was owned by the Bottlebank Steamship Company, a hungry lot of bastards, and she was lying at the dock. And there's a mate there and Aus said to him, 'Is there any jobs aboard of 'ere?' 'Well,' he said, 'workin' [baggaries?].' 'Tis workin' by the ship till we sail. So we got a job on her and we moved our gear aboard and slept aboard and there was a galley goin', got a bit of tucker and we battled on. And he said, 'We're signin' on tomorrow, so what you have comin,' he said, 'we - we pay you up like,' and we'd been earning about ten shillings a day, which was all right you see. And the bosun was a nice enough man. He was - he were European, there was, they were all foreigners. I mean, we used to be foreign. You felt foreign if you weren't foreign and we joined her, all our gear aboard and she sailed from the Tilbury dock, went up the river. That night we went up the English Channel and about two o'clock in the mornin' all I heard was some pretty big bangs, you know I thought somebody had dropped the bundle and there was a lot of scampering and panicking going on and of course, lack of seamanship lost the ship because where the trained seaman were, they were all trained in - in swingin' a boat and handlin' it in such a way it's a trained job ...

END TAPE 1, SIDE B.

BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE A.

Identification: tape two, side one, Ken Leonard.

We'll just wait for the sound ....

What had happened?

Well nothing had happened. We worked by the ship and we got approximately about half a quid a day.

I mean, you hit a mine or what?

And we left the London River and we - we headed north. We wouldn't know where we goin', they don't tell you that. Anyway we come back, 'alf awake, 'alf asleep - when you're

young you sleep solid and when you're young you have no fear - I woke up with this bang and Joe's grabbed me out of bed and I stuck on me life belt and we raced up on the afterdeck. And on account of the seamen now they had few and they'd all kinds it's another story, but we were takin' on stewards and poofters and bastards just to get the ships away, they never knew .... And so the lifeboat wouldn't move and they tried to lower one down and the falls were all away and gone at one end and they were still taut at the other end and there's no-one in the finishes - she's hangin' arse down in the water and she went down in a few minutes and Joe and I just battled on. And I wasn't a good swimmer and the water was freezin' of course, and by now it was - it was, um - it was already December 1939. It was cold. I never knew it was cold, I didn't know what was going on, we were just in the water with this life belt on and the life belt, it was an old one. It was two pieces of cork - a block of cork sewed in the canvas at the front and it come over two pieces at the back and when you're in the water the cork jumps up and pretty near breaks your neck. And I heard this big yell and this - it was a sloop, but I didn't know what it was, and I could hardly see, it was pitch, pitch dark and this small ship went past and this big Pom sailor, he threw this rope and I grabbed the rope and of course as I pulled it I went down, but he pulled the other end apparently and I held onto to that rope. There was no way would I let go, never. And he pulled me up and dragged me aboard ... and I sort of fell on my knees on the deck and I vomited gallons of water. I was shivering like anything and then I passed out.

[Long pause.] So we never knew what hit it. It might have been a - it might have been a mine, it might have been a torpedo. You can have your pick - take your pick. Might have been somebody throwing stones, I don't know. The bastard was gone, I didn't know what was goin' on because it was all over and we knew nothing about it. And I woke up and this fellow was shakin' me and I was in a bed with all these thick blankets on. There was a - once again they all seemed to be big men, big powerful bastard there with a big mug of cocoa in his hand and he was a Yorkshireman and he said, "Ere ya chum, get this down ya neck,' and he give me this boiling cup of cocoa and I'm swallowing it and I laid down and I went to sleep again and when I woke up I didn't know what day it was, where the hell I was. And I walked out on the deck and he said I'd had a blanket on, that's all, and he said, this big fellow lookin' after us, he said, 'I put your clobber on the steam pipe,' he said, 'it'll be nice and dry now. It'll be a bit stiff but it'll be all right.' And I said, 'Where are we then?' He said, 'We're just off the Scottish coast,' he said, 'we're comin' into Methil.' 'Oh,' I said, 'that's the convoy port.' 'We're goin' to drop you off there and then we're goin' south.' 'Oh.'

(5.00) I stood on the deck and that cold wind and a pale pissy sunshine, you know, that European sun is like warm milk, and I took me blanket off and I put me singlet and dungarees on and me worn out shoes and we stood there, me and Joe, shivering like dogs in winter. And she steamed into Methil, they're very smart them, especially the old pre-war men, they were very clever and without any pilots, tugs or anything she just came in and touched the wharf. 'Away you lads, good luck.'

We climbed onto shore and you - their sirens they go 'woo woo' it sounded - whoop whoop - a couple of woos and she was gone again. And Joe called out - much like me, you know, you always say thank you, you don't ... and he shouted out, 'God bless ya.' 'You're right mate.' And that's how we started. We went up town, found a policeman, directed us to the Shipping Office and if you keep goin' we'll be here for the rest of the week. That's how the war started for me, so we couldn't go to London, in rags in those passenger trains with all those ladies and gentlemen drinking tea. We didn't have a penny piece and the Shipping Master said, 'Well there's a job out there for you,' he said, 'I can't do anything for you much.' And he said, 'There's a ship out there, she needs two men and she's waitin' and it might have to come up from London for her, but,' he said, 'I can get you aboard.' I said, 'Well we 'aven't - we 'aven't any clothes.' 'Oh well,' he said, 'I'll take care of it,' he said, 'I'll give you a letter to go aboard and give the captain and,' he said, 'he'll take care of everything he's possibly, a fine man.'

So he walked us out a distance to this little jetty and he called out, '[Rob McPherson?], are ya there?' and a voice come out, 'Aye I'm here.' 'Will you take these two lads out to the so and so.' 'I will.' So the next thing we're sitting in the back of this little rockin' motor boat, and chug, chug, chug - it was bitter cold, freezin'. We come alongside this dirty great boat and she had a Jacob's ladder hangin' over the side, so we climbed aboard and the boat went.

One of the crew there said, 'Where you buggers come from? From up south, down south?' 'Nah,' I said, 'we come from bloody nowhere.' 'I'll take you up to the saloon,' so he took us up to the saloon and the master came out and he said, 'Where are you from?' I says, 'From Hull.' He knew he had identification of me by the - by the gate. 'Where in Hull?' 'Oh, it was Springbank.' 'Oh, why you'll be right.' We gave him the letter that the Shipping Master had given us and we signed on. 'Aye well,' he said, 'go below,' he said, 'we're going at nine', he said 'There's a little convoy leavin', we can make it now.' So Aussie said to him, 'Excuse me,' he said, 'the Scots bloke ashore there, he told us you'd fit us up with a bit of gear.' And the captain said, 'There's nothin' here that says I gotta clothe my crew, so bugger off.' We came out of there and steward said, "Ere you fellows, sign this chit.' That was there to say you've had it. He give us one enamel mug, one enamel plate, and a company knife and fork and spoon and he said in rhyming form, he said, 'One mug, one knife, one plate, that's all the gear you'll get 'ere mate.' So we went down the fo'c'sle holding our plates and I said, 'I'll jump over, I'll swim ashore.' 'Well there's nothing there and you've signed on. You'd be a deserter.' The other bloke said, 'How come you fellas ain't got no clothes,' and I said, 'Because we haven't got any bloody gear, that's why you stupid bastard.' And so we weren't popular from the start. So there's one other bloke there, he started to talk and he said, 'Oh, you was in the [*Splendour*?] were you?' I said, 'Yes.' 'Did you not ...' 'Oh yes'. So I made a little friend and he said, 'I'll lend you a couple of things.' So the ship sailed. And she crossed the Atlantic with a singlet and dungarees.

(10.00) [Long pause.] Winter gales and it took us around twenty days. We went north about - up in the ice. Thirty degrees below zero, we were frozen stiff. We were wearing

clothes that anybody'd lend us and the shame and disgrace of it all. It was dreadful. Do you know why it was dreadful? Because when - when a German ship was sunk, they brought the prisoners back to England, the newspapers used to put big pictures in the paper, meetin' the crew, givin' them blankets, cigarettes, showin' 'em how good we were, but with your own people, nothing. And one fireman, good old bloke, he give me a big pair of socks and a balaclava. He said, 'I know what it's like Yorky,' he said, 'an old Scotch lady knitted these things up,' he said, 'a big pair of woollen socks and a balaclava and,' he said, 'she give it to me in a parcel with a few little lollies.' He said, 'Well I'm down the engine room,' he said, 'you can use it,' and I'm gettin' round with the balaclava, big Scotch knitted socks and I was grateful to the Scot, a pair of old shoes, a pair of pants borrowed from 'im, a jacket borrowed from 'im, and some nights, Joe and I'd go on and we'd take the blanket off the bed. Now Joe would come in and he'd get the blanket and he'd wrap round here and he'd wrap it round and round me and put rope lines round and put me coat on to go up on the lookout and we froze our way there. And at last we came to Canada. Oh it was bitter cold, unbelievable, and we sailed up the St Lawrence River and there's pieces of ice bigger than this house driftin' down. And as you look ashore as you come up the upper reaches of the river there's miles and miles of frozen waste and there the wind blows and your face is - it's red and burning with cold and you know, if you took your bare hand and you put it on a bit of steel and count two and take your hand off you left the skin behind, you know. [inaudible] just the same, you know, we got the gear up and topped the derricks, make ready the hatches and came into the dock and we had put in a list for what we they call a 'draw' and we were then informed that the English pound wasn't worth anything. You wouldn't get twenty cents for it. England is finished, the money's worthless. Therefore the generous captain said, 'We'll wait until we get back to Britain and you can have your money then,' which in any case we only had about twenty days pay comin'. And a few words in the mess room and Joe - he's the same now - he said, 'I've had a gutful of you, fuckin' Pommy bastard. You can stick your bloody ship,' he cursed, 'no money, no gear, why, unbelievable.' He said, 'On the Aussie coast,' he said, 'they'd shoot you bastards.' He said, 'I'm clearin' out.' 'Yes, Joe and I'm comin' with ya.' So the bosun said, 'Come on you blokes, we've got work to do.' 'Go and get stuffed, you Pommy bastard.' He said something to 'im, a few words and he said, 'You come on the dock,' he said, 'I'll give you a go, you big bastard,' and we walked ashore and we asked directions and we walked up town with the shirt and dungarees. And all their nice young girls were goin' to work with - with the fur coats and the nice legs with stockin's and short socks and furlined shoes, cars and taxis in the street, and men with great big heavy coats and here's us with a bloody shirt on. Everybody stared at us.

(15.00) But we was too deep now, and we found our way to the Shipping Office - to the agent's office. We told him what had happened and he said, 'I'm sorry,' he said, 'there's not much we can do,' he said, 'we can look after the ship and cargo, but,' he said, 'we can't issue clothes to the crew.' So Joe wants to join. He said, 'Frig 'em,' he said, 'we'll join the Canadian Navy,' he says, 'at least we get a pair of pants.' And we went up and he was a nice gentleman - Canadian bloke. He called us limeys and he said, 'Oh, I can let you talk to the officer of the watch but,' he said, 'we're the Canadian Navy and not a benevolent society.' But out of sheer kindness and sympathy and we spoke to the officer of the watch

in his room and he said, 'Well,' he said, 'I guess we're in this Goddamn war just as much as you Brits. You might as well tell us all about it.' And we told him all we knew. We didn't want to hurt anyone or shoot anyone or kill anyone, we just want some trousers to put on. 'Look,' he said, 'you take all of the week,' he said, 'but you guys can join the Canadian Navy and,' he said, 'if your ship is at port over here,' he said, 'you'd have to desert.' He said, 'Do you know what we do in Canada with deserters?' 'Yeah I guess, I guess you do a lot of things all right.' 'Yeah,' he said, 'we shoot 'em.' 'Yes.' 'Now,' he said, 'You wouldn't want to be shot would you?' 'No, I'm beginnin' to wonder, I'm not so bloody sure about that. Which is the worse, shot to death or freeze to death.' 'Yeah, this is a moot point.' So he gave us some things and my shame and my bringin' up and my childhood. He gave us a singlet and some socks. He gave us a couple of Babe Ruth candy bars and he gave us a dollar and he said, 'Good luck,' and he ushered us out of there. Now Joe was a determined bastard, I think - I think his ancestors must have battled in the bush - didn't give in, old Joe wouldn't give in and we get along the road into town and felt dreadful. Oh there's a restaurant and cafe and bar and grill and out of there come a heap of blokes. And Joe said, 'Hang on a minute,' and he heard this bloke shootin' his mouth off and he went to 'im and he said, 'Where are you from?' He said, 'Sydney.' Joe said, 'I'm from Brisbane.' 'Cor, look great mate.' They shook hands, patted shoulders, bought us a feed. That wasn't enough, we sat in that cafe and the people they eat with the knives and forks, with the scarves on and hats and chattin' and we were sittin' there, us at the table like two bloody bums. 'Course that's what we were anyway. And one of the mob said - he was tellin' about this Norwegian ship, they'd been drinkin' with them and two of the blokes had gone a bit berserk in the trunk and it got 'em in the blue with a Canadian copper and they finished up in gaol, the bastards stuck up for two of ABs - the two seamen. And Joe said, 'Hey we'll give the bastard a bell.' 'Yeah, anything,' said, 'Go Joe.' So we found directions again and we walk - always walk - and we came to the dock and I said to the man - the crew member, 'Ah that'd be all right, Pommy crew member for that Pommy ship.'

So instead of goin' on our ship we went up there to Norwegian ship and we come aboard. I was in luck. The captain had nothing to go on, we didn't have a piece of paper. We couldn't tell 'im we were on that ship, he wouldn't wear that one, so we told him we'd lost our ship and had been picked up as survivors and landed in Canada and we were tryin' to find a ship home. 'Oh,' and he spoke German and he said, and he wants to trick me, he wanted to find out, you know, and there's nothing like, if you want to trick a bloke from Brisbane you usually say to him something about Coorparoo or if you want to trick a bloke with above north Sydney you mention Darlinghurst or Coogee Beach but you trick 'im. If he isn't a Sydney bloke you'll pick him you see this captain was no different.

(20.00) Good bloke as a matter of fact and he said, '[Speaks in German],' and Joe looked, I thought it was somebody in the room. Quick as a flash I said, 'Leonhardt,' instead of Leonard. [inaudible] 'Leonhardt, oh Leonhardt. [Speaks in German] They brought the bosun. 'Oh well, some call it Pommy luck, some of us call it Catholic luck. You can have your pick.' He called it bad luck but the bosun on that ship was a Norwegian and he had sailed on English ships for a number of years. He picked us in two minutes and he

says to me puttin' on his best Swede language, he said, 'Bloody all, I know all. I used to come - do you know my fleet.' 'Oh.' I was almost in and we got the job. But our ship is there and if they spot us - the fear, the fear of the unknown. We told him the truth - the bosun. 'I know, I know, I sailed the bloody English ship, they give 'em nothing, they work all the time, your bloody work a work - I know. I get you clothes. Ken, Ken - Ken, Kan, Kon, what's the bloody difference.' He took us up, saw the steward, see. Patriotism comes in there now. The steward had a little bit of English well he was quite good and when the bosun told 'im we were his best speakin' Norsca the steward went, 'Cor, cor.' He took us in, and in a very short time, singlets, underpants, jersey - big jersey, thick pants, woollen socks, good pair of shoes, duffel jacket, stockin' hat. He said, 'You look like Norwegian already,' and the bosun said, 'Now we are not joke more. From now, everyday, your is da wages.' 'Yeah.' 'Then to work.' 'Ah, yah, oh.' Never did you want to work so well because you felt so good. The only thing is the Poms on that ship just [inaudible] our spot yet and the only thing is to .... But she's ready to sail. Oh Mary .... Two derricks to come down, a few ice covers to spread, a few wedges to go in, a single up fore and aft. Now you are - there's something there, your ropes are frozen and you just can't bend 'em. They're solid you know, and you had to - hard work. So we had to mittens, you know, the Norsca mittens, we get the ship ready, they palm us aboard a couple of toots and away we go up the St Lawrence.

As we sailed up and we passed the Pom ship, we'd come on and she's lyin' there, empty, you know unloaded, all the derricks up. A couple of the crew hangin' over the side and we tried to keep our backs to them. Oh, we stayed down and away we go. We're still afraid in case anybody spotted us, in case any word, maybe the pilot - maybe the pilot. 'Yes you won't be safe until the pilot's gone mate.' Anyway we dropped the pilot and we were away into the night - into the cold night. The compass was difficult for Joe. It was all in, like German you know. [Speaks in German] instead of northern-east and [Speaks in German] and a little bit was [Speaks in German]. So I said to Joe (laughs) I'll have the wheel at night. 'Cause we were lit up. Oh yeah, all the decks were lit. The Poms were all blacked out.

So we sail along, when we came to Boston and we had a bit of time in Boston, nothing happened. We went round to New York and over to - to the pier, I think it a Bushell's pier in Manhattan and we loaded up there. Mind you she was pretty full loaded when we left. It was only toppin' up the bits now and went from New York we come up round .... Oh we called for a few hours at Philadelphia, we came into Baltimore and already it was warmer. Oh yes, it was warmer already.

(25.00) We leave Baltimore and we go up to ... oh I'll think of the places. It's not far - Savannah - Savannah and it was warm already. Leave there, straight up now bearing south - Panama Canal. Oh I thought this'll - this'll be the thing. I know the British and the Americans were pretty closely linked and I know that the lanugage and the telephone and the cable - we're not mugs you know, but nothing happened. We came through the Canal, the inspection of the crew - everything - American soldiers you know, they wouldn't know what time it was let alone where you come from. But they had too many

ships and we were through and we stayed overnight at [Kuan?]. And in the morning from the dock .... Oh I sent my Mum a cable from there and the old man gave me about, I think, ten Panama dollars - and it was silver dollars you know, the Panama dollar. I kept them for years - and I went to the cable office and it was called [Via Imperial?] and I spoke to the girl and she had Spanish, nice American English and she was very friendly and I sent my Mum a cable. 'Dear Mum, I'm well. Write soon, love Ken.' Oh that was a load off my mind.

The earliest mornin' - you leave the dock then and you're straight into the Pacific, you know, you're just straight in. Another sun was shinin', jeez it was warm. It was glorious, it was fucking marvellous. And we sailed away and across the Pacific. Now me room mate on there was a Dane and the other bloke was a German and he was a German seaman who had been in the hospital at Bergen in Norway and when he came out he had to go back to Germany but he found a job on a Norwegian ship and this was why he was here, and he eyed with great suspicion an Englishman (laughs) he was on board of ship with a war on. See they .... So I had to do everything to come close to him but when I told him I'd been runnin' into Germany and speak a bit of German, oh he changed, I told him my grandmother was Ger... I think I threw my grandfather in too, but anyway we got on good.

And then I learned the sharing, you see, the growin' up, the learnin' - you share with him and he shares with you and we're now in the Pacific. I've settled down now with the Dane and I didn't mention King Canute to the Dane because they take offence of having anybody who is mentally not right - you remember King Canute - and that's when I thought I must put it down, this glorious Pacific, this wonderful place, that lovely sea, that warm empty thing. It was like sailing from Europe. You come through the Canal and when you come out the other side you've sailed from hell's inferno, ridiculous, monstrous, disgusting, dirty, filthy world and you come through the Canal and now it's clean and pure - it's wonderful. That's when I first started to write. Sentiment you see.

And we came then ... to Brisbane through to Moreton Bay, along the river to the Hamilton Wharf. We spent a night there. We went up the Seaman's Mission in Petrie Bight. We had to dance with the girls, it was nice and we sailed into Sydney and then the axe fell. Officialdom. Of course we was called up before the Immigr... the Customs like and the - well we'll call it Immigration, whatever it is and they said, 'You have no papers?' I said, 'No, I don't have anything, I said, 'They're all at the bottom.' And Joe told them to get stuffed. He said, 'I'm a bloody Aussie,' he said, 'I come from Sydney and up you.' He ignored 'em, he didn't give a damn whether Immigration, Custom or anything else, he said, 'Go and get stuffed.' 'Course he could do that and they took his fifteen quid which the old man had got us, you know, a few quid like - a few hours after bein' in port the money comes aboard and Joe drew fifteen quid and he said, 'I'm off 'ome.' He said, 'I'll be back tonight.' He said, 'I'm goin' to see Mum and Dad, my sister and so on, but,' he said, 'don't you go ashore,' he said, 'I'll be back tonight and,' he said, 'you're comin' home with me.' And the Customs and Immigration said, 'You have to ...'. 'Go where? Go and get stuffed.' He said, 'This is my town.' (Laughs)

END TAPE 2, SIDE A.

BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE B.

Tape two, side two, Ken Leonard. End of identification.

Anyway, Joe told 'em what to do. He said, 'This is my bloody town and I don't want you bastards tellin' me what to do.' So I had to go up to the - to the saloon with the crew and the Dane was all right, he had his papers and they just want to check people coming into the country. They don't want to do any harm and they came to me and he said, 'You have your ...'. And I said, 'No they're at the bottom,' and I became angry and I felt like tellin' 'em what to do and it was just the circumstances, that after all this I've gotta go through this bloody lot. And he said, 'You stay there a moment,' and the other man came. 'Oh,' he said, 'you're a German?' But he didn't have much English, why should he. A German on a Norwegian ship, doesn't have to speak bloody English. Les picked up a bit from me like on the way over, and he ... 'cause the Aussie bloke he had less - I mean less German - so I would have to tell you what went on between the sound you see and he said to him, 'Oh so you're a German? Well we are to war with Germany.' And the German nodded. I think he'd gathered that. 'Um, but we'll see your captain to put up a bond and you'll be confined to the vessel until she leaves Australian waters.' So I told him and he said to me to tell them, so, he said, 'What does he want?' And I said, 'Well, he said, [Speaks in German], thank you very much. I understand what you say, [Speaks in German]. And I must on the ship's dock. [Speaks in German].' 'All right, now sir, back to you,' he said, 'you seem a cocky sort of a bloke, eh. Real bloody Pom.' 'No sir, I'm not cocky,' I said, 'I've had a gutful, a real gutful.' I said, 'I've been dragged from one end of the bloody world to the other. I been treated like a piece of bloody dirt, I've sort of tried to get on me feet a bit, I've worked hard, I've been faithful to every cause, and every time I turned, the bloody axe falls. Now you're on to me.' 'Yeah, well,' he said, 'Um, we don't know who you are.' 'No, but,' I said, 'this is a town of Australia,' I said, 'there must be someone here who can speak English and if he ever knew anyone came from Yorkshire, put a question or two to me, I'll let you know. What do you want to know?' 'No,' he said, 'we - we cannot run our - our officialdom in such a way,' he said, 'you'll have to stay on board with the German.' I said, 'Well I can only say to you what the German told me, thank you very much for your kindness and I hope the bloody stop in the ship does you all a lot of good. I'll stay on it all right. And as from this bloody moment I'm changin' sides. I'm goin' over the other bloody side, they treat you better.' And they possibly thought that, you know, the best thing of all by making me stay aboard, this bloke obviously should be caged up, an obvious nut case. Put 'im in the basket.

So the German and I couldn't go ashore and Joe came back that night. He'd had a couple of beers like and anybody what's had a drop of Resch's or Tooheys they - 'G'day, g'day, how are your goin'?' 'Oh,' I said, 'not too bad.' I said, 'we can't go on shore.' 'Be buggered you can't.' 'No.' 'My Mum's cookin' a dinner up. Comin' 'ome with me? Meet my old

man.' 'No,' I said, I can't do it. Can't go ashore. The captain had to put up 5,000 pounds bond.'

(5.00) 'The dirty bastards,' he said, 'bugger 'em, come on off.' 'No,' I said, 'it would only mean more trouble,' I said, 'better.' 'Ah well,' he said, 'I was payin' off here Ken.' 'Yeah,' I said, 'you pay off and you go to Redfern and get yourself a bit of a swim down that Coogee Beach you were tellin' me about. That man you used to talk about and 'ave your trip over to Luna Park. Enjoy it George, good bye.' 'Pigs arse, goodbye. I'm not payin' off,' he said, 'I'm stayin' with you.' 'Well,' I said, 'what - what is there in it?' 'Well,' he said, 'you've stayed with me.'
'Yeah.' 'Nah,' he said, 'we're bloody cobbers. See ... and cobbers stick together.'

Anyway in a few days we sailed from Sydney and Joe was on 'er and we came to Melbourne and we're up near Station Pier and then we went to Geelong. But when we were at Station Pier a detective came aboard and sent for me and by now the old man and the officers and the bosun were sick and tired of this bloke, you know, he's causin' more trouble than he's worth and all this was addin' to my worry. And they felt they were stuck with me and the detective questioned me. He said, 'Where in England?' and this and that and how this and where that and I said, 'Well, I can't really tell you,' I said, 'I hardly know the name of the bastard,' I said, she went to the bottom and I don't know the Scotsman's name.' He said, 'Oh it's a likely story like.' 'Well,' I said, 'I didn't swim 'here through the Suez Canal doin' the bloody breaststroke did I?' I said, 'I'm 'ere, ain't I.' I came back later in the afternoon and they said, 'The other fellow,' he said, 'he'll have to - he can't go ashore, but,' he said, 'you're as sweet as a lolly.' 'Am I?' 'Yeah. Sweet as a lolly,' he said, 'you can go ashore.' 'Oh.' 'Between the hours of eight and four.' 'Eight and bloody four,' I said, 'we start at seven in the mornin' 'ere and we finish at four.' 'I'm sorry mate,' he said, 'it's the best we can do.' 'Well you better stick your Melbourne you know, as far ...'. 'Yeah, we know, we know. We know mate, we been told that before,' and he's gone.

We go to Adelaide. Nobody said anything so the German and I had a little walk, went as the gate and had a look out and nobody said anything and we went a little bit further, had a walk. And saw a policeman, he didn't say a word. We came back to the ship, we'd been very daring, and we'd ashore and nobody knew. How childish can a man get. But there it is the fact of life. Two men caged upon a ship and the German said to Joe, goin' ashore in Adelaide, he said to him, 'Joe,' he said, 'when (in German he said) when you go ashore,' he said, '[Speaks in German] - go to the church for me - and tell the priest his lamb is penned on board and needs the blessings of the Lord.' But he said it in the nice German way and we were at Adelaide and nobody said anything and we were there for a couple of days and so it came a Saturday and the bosun was a good bloke and he said, 'The old man said everybody is working pretty well and workin' hard and Saturday you don't have to work.' 'Oh, Saturday off, that'll be joy. Won't it be nice we can read comics all day. We'll be better off workin'.' 'Well if you want to work I'll find the work but you know ...'. So we had a walk ashore Saturday. We went right up town. We got very cheeky, oh bold as brass, we walked in the shop and bought something and he was thrilled as pink. I told him what to ask for. He went in the shop and he said, 'What you call 'em - the [Speaks in

German] A box of matches.' 'A box of matches.' He went in the shop and he said, 'A box matches,' and she give him a box of Bryant and May's and he came out and he was thrilled as pink. He said, 'It's easy, isn't it?' (Laughs) And he said, 'What's this.' 'Oh yes, a casket agency.' 'What's a casket?' 'Oh, it's when they have to bury underground and to put the casket in - when you're dead - when you're tot.'

(10.00) So I thought the casket shop was an agents for coffins, you see, and he said, 'He didn't want to live here too long,' he said, 'there are so many shops sellin' coffins,' (laughs) he said, 'it can't be very healthy people.' I was to find out that it was a different casket you see. So we go on and we became very cheeky and we had a ride on a tram and I said, 'You try it.' So the German said - I said, 'Two threes.' 'Two trees [sic],' and the man gave him two thrupenny tickets, 'Yeah,' he said, 'I could live here all right.' He said, 'I could quit and find out.' So we had our little fun and we bought a newspaper and some comics and some chocolate bars and we came back to the ship and we sailed.

But we were in the job now, when this bloody ship sails we know she's goin' to Germany and we all knew that when you hit Germany you go into prison camp - prisoner of war. And I knew that my sailor friend wouldn't have much influence with the - with the Fuhrer. It was a problem. So I went up and spoke to Captain Steinhardt and he said, 'Well look ... frankly you're a bloody nuisance, you and your Aussie mate. You're more strife ...' [inaudible] obvious but this is what it amounts to.' He said, 'What do you expect me to do?' 'Well,' I said, 'is there any way we can do something?' So at Port Pirie we anchored - at Port Pirie [inaudible] from the wharf. There was one of the BHP boats in there loading ore and at the anchorage he paid us off and discharged us and gave us our money and we signed the discharge and I finished with the ship.

Now ... we are no longer members of the crew. Now he's signed us on again, port of engagement, Pirie. 'Wait Bernard, when these people think we be a fool they can wait. We're no such fool.'

So we left Pirie and went to Fremantle - we steamed into Fremantle. It was early mornin' - well by now we'd unloaded the outward bound cargo we'd picked up in Melbourne and laid 'em and in Pirie we filled up with bulk stuff, concentrates, all kinds of minerals in bulk and of course she was down in the water - down the Plimsoll - we come to Fremantle now, and we only put the wool on top of the bulk ore - the bulk which had been spread. And we come into Fremantle to the wharf and Joe said to him, 'I can get orf 'ere.' You know, was tellin' him to get off could he, he had to pay him off. Bein' Australian he can't take 'im up country if he didn't want to go. Ah, taxation comes in there too. So he said, 'About me cobber,' and he said, 'He do what he like. You see he was engaged in Port Pirie on the Australian coast and he has a right to discharge on the Australian coast under the Australian navigation laws. Really now he can do what want.' You see he put the food in our mouth and we took the chance. So once we hit the dock of Fremantle, no Immigration come aboard, no wicked Customs, nobody. So we shoot away to Perth and we let the hair down.

We come back, you know, we had a skinful but we were well behaved. 'Cause I never was a drinker. You know, it only takes a couple of pots to make me giggle but we come back in good mood. In the mornin' we went ashore and Joe looked up the local union delegate and in the waterfront pub there in Fremantle, he met a couple of blokes he knew on the coast, you know, and long time no see, a big talk, where you been, what you doin', how're you goin', what's on? And he told the delegate, he said, 'This fella 'ere,' he said, 'that's the story.' He said, 'If he can paid off 'ere,' he said, 'the old man makes one stipulation. You pay 'im off if there's a suitable replacement.' Anyway the delegate found a replacement. A coastal AB willing to go over there and of course you had to have your taxes paid before you leave Australia.

(15.00) So you had to have - you used to have a sheet of tax stamps and the Shipping Master had to see 'em. Anyway the Aussie bloke signed on, I signed off and had a discharge of Australia. It said, 'Place of engagement Port Pirie, place of discharge Fremantle' and I was there.

I was home but I wasn't hosed. Joe said, 'Now, the next step son, you and your blokes sign me up,' and it used to be a year's probationary membership. But he said, 'There's a lot of Poms on the coast,' he said, 'all good union men,' he said, you'll be right.' So he said, 'You can sail on the coast, unionwise, you have your thing' and I paid my ... and I'll show it to you, I have it here.

So there's a bit of trouble on in Sydney and Melbourne and the boats on the coast aren't movin'. They didn't have the crews, all the crews had gone onto Pommy boats and a lot of 'em were lost. Oh there was a string of ships lost on the coast here and they couldn't find crews for the ships, so the crews wouldn't sail. There's nothin' comin' into Fremantle and the drum was if you can get to Sydney you can get a better chance of shippin' out there even if it's only on the *Dee Why* or the *Curl Curl*, you'll get - you'll make a quid. Well you can make nothing here. There's nothing in Fremantle.

'Course I'd never tattled the wool or that sort of thing yet, the grain, the wheat. And he said, 'Let's go down to the bloody wharf and see what's goin'.' We go down the wharf and there was quite a few people down there. The *Mary* was out there, the *Queen Mary*, come 'ere for troops. 'Yeah,' he said, 'might get a job on the *Mary*.' I thought, 'no, no, I couldn't face that lot again, no they can have that'. And the bloke along the wharf said, 'Ah this be them now,' and we look up now and we see this great Port Line ship, and that's it ... headin' in and we stayed on the wharf and she tied up. The gangway down, the ambulance came and the police car came. Well this is a pleasant sort of a - and they took a bloke out with handcuffs, 'oldin' 'im [inaudible] nice sort of a turn. Carried the other bloke out on a stretcher. They must have been havin' a party you see and Joe said, 'She's a big sort of a bastard ain't she.' I said, 'Yeah, they're 6-inch guns.' 'Yeah, see it's an armed raider - armed cruiser.' 'Let's go aboard and have a look at her.' So we go aboard. She's short-handed for a start, she's burnin' ninety ton a day, there's raiders in the ocean out there, there's panic. Oh it was dreadful and Joe said, 'Well at least she's a ride to "steak and kid"',' and there's two blokes just goin' off and she's short-handed. So the old man in

the end, he said, 'I'll - I'll engage you - you men,' he said, 'all right and I'll discharge you in Sydney as soon as two suitable replacements come.' Oh Ken the English language, don't you trust it again. Legalities, laws, judges, barristers, put your foot on the lot, the swill of the earth, and we agreed to this.

And so we sailed. Talk about work, you never stop. You do four hours wheel, you have a cup of tea and a bun and then you're back on the deck w... after unloadin' in Fremantle she had all this tonnage, you know, big stacks of timber between the paper rolls. We had to go down there and stack it all up and sling it over the side and so we're puttin' about fourteen hours a bloody day in. But Joe said, 'Well we battle on until we get to steak.' We pull into Sydney and Joe's right up there. He said, 'We want payin' off now,' and he said, 'Well you can pay off', he said, 'you're an Australian, you see, you can get your money,' he said, 'but this bloke here's English.' He said, 'What's the bloody difference?' 'Well,' he said, 'it's a bloody big difference,' he said, 'we don't have to pay him off.' 'Well that's not a goer,' he said, 'you told ...'. 'No', he said, 'what we said was we'd replace you when a suitable replacement comes along. We'll discharge you with a suitable replacement.' 'Well,' he said, 'we haven't had a suitable replacement so he doesn't go.' 'The dirty lot of ba...'. We put on an act, we went ashore, we - a skinful of beer and went over to Luna Park and we had a bottle of rum and we used to go the milkshake place and buy a milkshake and flog the rum into there and we had a ball and we come back and cursed everybody, and got into a fight and Joe called everybody he saw was a no-good, rotten Pom bastard and 'course there was such an atmosphere with so much booze, I was doin' the same thing.

(20.00) I was callin' them all (laughs) ... I don't think most of them had heard the word before but still, there was some liked it I think. 'Cause they used to think it was a beret with a little woolly thing on the top and there's nothing wrong with being a 'beret'. He wouldn't pay us off - and the union man said, 'Well whatever you do, don't jump ship - don't jump ship. Whatever you do,' he said, 'you'll be in the Bay - Long Bay. It's just outside 'ere.' He said, 'She's full of seamen.' 'Is it really?' 'Yeah, yeah. They've got hundreds of 'em down there, they're collectin' them.' 'Oh, collecting seamen.' 'Yeah.'

He said, 'I'll tell you about it one day, take too long a story,' he said, 'the union can't do anything about it.' He said, 'and when we complain about it,' he said, 'there was just a bunch of bloody traitors and Bolsheviks and were holding up the war and were destroying the country,' he said. 'It's terrible,' he said, 'there's a fair bit of work around now this disputes just about settled.' He said, 'the Howard Smith are comin' to the party,' he said, 'and our blokes are comin' off and they're goin' to put the navy on.' And he said, 'One thing leads to the other,' he said, 'don't jump ship.' He said, 'here's your best bet,' he said, 'if she's going Brisbane you got a much better chance there,' he said, 'it's a quite place,' he said, 'people are more civilised, he said, 'you know, they're not such as ours on the coast. Yes, yes, good place Brisbane.' He said see the Shipping Master, he said, 'You'll do better there.'

So we sailed to Brisbane on her. But the Shipping Master was a good man, Mr Birch, and we went see the union up at Trades Hall and we spent days - every time we took a day off to run round town, the old man used to forfeit us one day's pay and fine us, you know, for bein' off the ship. And it got worse and worse. We couldn't get off. Went to Tassie, went across to New Zealand and Eden, Christchurch, Wellington. Now she leaves Wellington loaded to the guts and she has to have enough coal to take her home because they went through the Panama Canal, but we weren't sure because the Germans and the Americans and the British were - was inseparable and there's no reason why the Yanks can't go on the side of the Germans, you can't be sure. And Panama was not sacrosanct, so they put enough coal on the bastard to take her around the Cape Horn, which means they filled - when she left Wellington, she had big timbers up the side of the ship and they bunged all the coal in, all over the hatch, all the derricks were topped to the table, all the guys and falls were hauled tight, big timbers up the side and they put in, ah, about 3,000 ton of coal. Well we were livin' forward and when we come out to go to the bridge, you had to climb over this load. Oh it was too much to talk about.

So we set off from windy Wellington and I said, 'Joe it's gone far enough old mate.' I said, 'You can get a job in the Union line between - across the Tassie, take what few quid you got comin'. Go ashore here.' I say, 'You can sail on New Zealand ships, but you'll get back to State. I won't go back.' [Long pause.] 'No,' he said, 'I told you that before and ain't bringin' it up any bloody more,' he said, 'we're cobbers, we stick together. We'll work the bastard, swim or drowned.' So we sailed from Wellington for a five week voyage to Britain. Loaded below the bloody Plimsoll with about 3,000 ton of coal on deck, four men short and short in the engine room, like in the stokehold. We left windy Wellington, it was late in the afternoon and we worked till about midnight. We got all the ropes stowed away, lifeboats swung out, made her shipshape. Then come the twelve to four watch and I had to do four hours wheel because now, with such a short ones and the stand-by the guns, one man did four hours wheel and one man stood four hours at the gun. The third man was stand-by and he relieved the wheel so he could have a cup of tea and he'd relieve the gun man.

(25.00) Come off watch at four in the morning, I'd had it now, all day yesterday workin', work up to late at night and then the twelve to four watch, I was knackered - burned out. A tatty straw bread [sic] to sleep on. But at nine o'clock in the morning I was woken and Joe and I were summons to the bridge and the captain, he was a typical rotten old bastard and he said, 'I'm not goin' to mince words with you men,' he said, 'you've caused me more trouble on the Australian coast and Tassie and New Zealand than anybody I ever knew.' He said, 'You joined the ship as a crew and you make the voyage,' he said, 'you blokes have given me nothing but flamin' trouble. But,' he said, 'it's all over now.' He said, 'Joe you are an ordinary seaman from today,' and he demoted him from an AB to a seaman. 'As for you,' he said, 'I think you're the ring leader,' he said, 'I think you're leadin' this bloke on. I think this bloke would be all right without your influence. However,' he said, 'you've caused me nothin' but trouble. As from today you're a deck boy on three pound a month. Now get out of 'ere.' And so as a deck boy I had to do four hours wheel, I had - I had a gunner's ticket - a gunnery ticket - sixpence a day and I had to do my, um, duties

either a lifeboat certificate. There weren't too many had them, but I had one a Board of Trade lifeboat certificate, a qualified seaman on, you know, I served my time. Now I was a deck boy and I had to do four hours wheel, and my gunnery duties and lifeboat duties and between watches we had to work on deck. Well now, there's the bunkers under the decks, as the firemen cleaned the bunkers out, the - you had to stoke the coal into the furnaces - into the boilers - but the trimmer keeps bringin' the coal to the firemen you see. But as the ship days go on the coal gets further back and it's takes longer for them to bring the barrel of coal. So the trimmer never had a stop. But now the wing was down all this coal on the deck, they unscrew a big round plate on the deck - a big brass-rimmed plate and they move that and now the coal on the deck you shovel down that hole and it falls down into the bunkers below. So now you do your four hours wheel, you have a cup of tea and then - that's twelve to four, you come off at four am, you have a cup of tea and you go on the coal till eight o'clock. From eight to twelve you have your rest and your sleep, have a bit of lunch and you're back on the wheel at twelve to four and they agreed to pay us all the hours over eight-four were fivepence ....

So I found myself ... shovelling coal in the pitch dark 'cause [inaudible], we were semi - that's what we called a brown-out - we used to call it a brown-out in Sydney, it wasn't fully blacked, but we had dim cluster lights, you know, a big metal frame with a little low light. Now once again this great hole in the deck - this great manhole - as you had the coal in you went further back, further back, further back, so at the end you had to fill the barrow and run it to the manhole and tip it, and fill the barrow and run it back. While you're workin' down the foredeck, the bloke on the bridge there, he's lookin' down to see if you're bludgin'. Christ I - I was the most - I could've been a weight lifter when I finished with them. I was as strong as a bloody ox. I had muscles in my stomach. And we went on, deck boy - I took her through the Panama Canal 'cause they knew that if - if anything went wrong they'd just say I wasn't - I didn't really mean deck boy, he was still a seaman. They're not clever. The clever man is not the shrewd, cunnin', snide little bastard - the clever man is a good honest man. So they kept me goin' the same duties as the AB and we came through the Canal to Cristobal and they wouldn't let us ashore - me and Joe couldn't go ashore. They thought we'd skin out, I don't know. But the guard on the gangway was to ....

END TAPE 2, SIDE B.

BEGIN TAPE 3, SIDE A.

Identification: This is third tape, first side, interview with Ken Leonard.

Um, from Cristobal we left there and we went onto, um, Jamaica and we stayed there for a few days and then they collected a convoy. It was a pretty big one. She was 105 ships and we set off for - for Britain and once we came near the British coast they - a few would peel off and then a few would go another way and eventually we - we came upon the top end and we were diverted on our own through the Irish Sea to the Mersey and to Liverpool. And we arrived back in Liverpool and we hadn't been ashore now since windy

Wellington in New Zealand, we'd worked day and night and our hours added up to something - with the shortage of crew and the - and the extra watch, the early part with a call to shift, so all in all the extra hours brought us up to something about 100 hours a week. And then we found out that a lot of those hours they didn't have to pay - the extra hours - because the captain had put it down that this work performed was for the safety of the ship and therefore you don't have to pay for it. So we finished up, Joe and I, in Liverpool and we were paid off with a few paltry pounds and ... We - we spent the night there and the next day we had a train to London and the train was full of all kinds of soldiers and sailors from France and Belgium and Holland and so on and we felt quite - quite odd with all this crowd and blokes sayin', 'How come you don't have a uniform on?' Eventually the train comes to - to London and we left the train and, ah, we met an 'Aus' bloke there - navy bloke, bonza bloke, a bit rough - and he said, 'You blokes come over with me to the NAAFI - that was the Navy, Army, Air Force Institute,' he said, 'we'll have a cup o' tea and a bit of a natter.' Well Joe was thrilled to be with a - you know, you can imagine in London, and it suited me, so we had a big yarn and we strolled off .... We came into the NAAFI and we stood at the counter and the girl said to the navy bloke, 'Yeah, what are you havin'.' He said, 'I'm havin' three teas and three - three of those buns and cakes, whatever you got there,' and she brought back one bun and one cake and he said, 'What - eh I said three, these are me mates.' 'No,' she said, 'I can't serve them.' 'What do you mean,' he said, 'they've just come in from the - from bloody Australia. They just come here from the sea. They're merchant navy.' 'Just a moment.' So she went up and saw the manager bloke - a cockney bloke - and he come back, he said, 'We don't serve merchant navy here.' So we couldn't buy a cup o' tea in our own country. [Long pause.]

We came out through the door, me bag on me back, and I said to the girl, 'A man oughta drop a bomb on you bunch of bastards all right.' He said, 'I ought to take this urn and dump it over your bloody 'ead.' He did his block. But while we were standing there - wouldn't be served like, couldn't be served - there was Frenchmen and Poles and Dutch, all nationalities, all drinkin' and enjoyin' themselves, havin' a great time, but they wouldn't serve us. They were in uniform. That's why I call 'em the refugees.

(5.00) So we came outside and there was a bit of sun, we didn't know where to go. How do you know where to go in a strange place. How would you be if somebody dropped you on a bloody pyramid or something, you know, you wouldn't know which ladder to take, would ya? And there's a group of Indians - lasar seaman - British seaman with the same qualifications and papers as the Australian, New Zealand, or the Englishman or Scotsman and I nodded to them and one bloke looked up brightly and he came over to me and he put his hand on my arm, he said, 'Why we not welcome in dis land?' 'Oh', I said, 'well what do you mean?' He said, 'You are seaman?' I said, 'Yes, yes.' He said, 'We came from India, we bring in guns, food, everything for England and we comin' on shore and we want buy cup o' tea and he serve us not. A cup of tea.' And he was almost cryin' and I said, 'Well they don't serve us one, either.' 'They not give you cup tea?' 'No, not give merchant seaman cups tea.' 'I'm goin' back in der, I tell the Indians not come more. Not come more.' And I felt rotten about this, and Joe and I - the big Aus come out and he said, 'I show you blokes,' he said, 'where did you want to go?' And I said, 'The best thing

we can do is go to Tilbury and hide down there and I think I know me way round there a bit. I could manage down there.' So he took us to Fenchurch Street and we bought tickets and we went on the train to Tilbury, Joe and I, and we got out and we bought a ticket in the - in the, uh, - in the .... Well I suppose, we booked a room in the mission, they had a few little rooms and they had a billiard table and a piano and a little place where you could buy a cup of tea and you could have a room there - it was eight shillings a week - and so Joe and I stayed there for a while because we were running low on money and then come the disaster you see. You don't have to go away to have the boot in, you know. You can have the boot in by your father. So I went to the Shipping Office with Joe and he said to the Shipping Master, 'Here's my discharge,' he said, 'the paper discharge from the one in Australia,' he said [inaudible] told him the story. And he said, 'Oh well,' he said, 'you should be all right,' he said, 'I'll get the rest of your papers from Lednall Street.' 'He said, 'How about you?' I said, 'Here's my discharge,' I said, 'from Liverpool, from Australia with my mate here.' He said, 'Deck boy.' 'Yes,' I said, 'he demoted me.' 'Oh well,' he said, 'the only thing you can look for is a deck boy's job isn't it.' 'Yeah, but,' I said, 'I've served my time. I've discharges on British ships as a qualified man.' I said, 'I have lifeboat ticket ...'. 'Yeah well look,' he said, 'where's your book?' 'Oh well,' I said, 'They - they kept it behind.' 'Where's the other things.' I said, 'Up the Scottish coast,' I said, 'if you're ever up there and you do a bit of fishin', will you let us know.' 'Smart little bastard.' 'Well,' I said, 'what have I got to say,' I said, 'my papers are gone but,' I said, 'you can know about me in London,' I said, 'I was born in bloody England, I brought up here. You ought to think I'm a foreigner,' I said, 'you give these bloody foreign bastards everything they want and you ...'. 'Well,' he said, 'there is a job here for you two, but,' he said, 'what kind of job the master lets you have' he said, 'is a matter for you and him.' And old [Mary?] flew over and so the next day we went down and we met this man. A tall hard-bitten man, immaculately dressed. He looked what he was, he was a master and I thought, he'll do me - better than all the others, and the Shipping Master told him I want to have a word with him and he was nice enough to call me over.

'You have troubles to tell me.' I said, 'No sir.' I told him quickly about the discharge, that's the only paper I have, a dishcarge as a deck boy. 'Yeah, well', he said, 'we're not lookin' for deck boys.'

(10.00) And I told him of the other ships and he said, 'You say you were in the British *Splendour*?' 'Yes sir.' 'What was the masters name?' Told him. 'The chief officer's name?' I told him. 'You were in the British [*Commander*?]' 'Yes sir.' 'How many voyages?' 'Three in the first, two in the second.' You were on the [*Cadillac*?]' 'Yes.' 'And you were in the *San Ameliano*?' 'Yes.' 'Then you are a tanker man?' 'Yes sir.' He said, 'This is a tanker.' 'Yes.' 'And it is a British tanker. The ones you've told me you've sailed on. I believe you. I believe you Leonard.' He said, 'I'll take you as an AB on your word and what you've told me, I believe you. Don't let me down.' 'No sir, I never will.' And I restored my rating through the kindness of a man.

So I joined the ship with Joe, and within days, so we left the London River and we steamed out in the English Channel and we just got into the Channel and she was

bombed. We didn't do any damage, come just alongside and there was the man, he was a man, he was a master, he stood like a rock, no panic, no excitement. He was a leader - good man - and we sailed on and the seven ships became five. We got up around Scotland, just three of us left, we go into the Atalantic and tonight the three of us and in the mornin' there was only us. Two went in the night.

What had happened to the others?

They'd gone where all good ships go, to the bottom. You can only take my word for that. I mean, I can't pull 'em up to show ya, I'm just tellin' ya what .... So we set off for Cape Town of course, and it was rough and bad and she was an empty ship, only a bit of water ballast and when she came up the old propeller was out of the water, you know, she used to thrash and she used to roll on her beam ends and the wind. But that man, night and day, night and day, he stood on the wing of that bridge. We go down from the brief watch, down watch below, come up again he was still there, still there, always there, always there. I don't know how he ever did it. Went to Cape Town. From Cape Town we went up to Aden and the Persian Gulf, Abadan, and we took a load of oil back to Cape Town for the troop ships used to fuel there. And back to - to Gulf again, and from the Gulf we went to Singapore, from Singapore to Borneo, back to the Gulf, back to Africa and it went on. Months and months, we hardly went ashore.

And then we - we left the Persian Gulf on this voyage and we went to Mozambique and from there they sent us into the Indian Ocean to the Seychelles Islands. We became a little naval base with the - we set up as a signals - signals to India, to Bombay, Karachi, and signals to Durban, Mombasa and the war ships on patrol in the Indian Ocean - Australian and New Zealand - as they need fuel they used to come in and we'd used - or if they couldn't come that far we used to go out to sea and we used to fuel them at sea when they were steamin' and we become very highly proficient at pickin' up ships in the ocean and givin' them fuel. And it went on and on and time went by. 'Course in the time being now, the Japanese come in the war, so many ships lost around the Bay of Bengal, Indian Ocean and it was gettin' impossible. Then the Japs held the whole of the Pacific, there was nowhere to go.

The Philippines gone, Indonesia gone, the Malay Peninsula, Singapore was gone - if it hadn't gone it was goin' to go. So one day we had instructions to go to Ceylon, so we came to Ceylon, to Colombo, and when we were in Colombo they took us all off the ship and put us ashore. And they had waitin' there an Indian crew from Bombay. They were lascar seaman and the ship took on a crew of lascars and without warnin' she sailed, leavin' us behind in Colombo and the Japs were comin' in. It was to be bombed now and we had nowhere to go ....

(15.00) Well why did they do that?

Oh why does a lovebird end it's song? So we - one ship came in and a few of the men were told there was accommodation on her. She was one of the Empress liners, like the

Empress of Asia, Empress of Britain, Empress of India - big ship - and she came in and there was no room and she was full of people who had raced out of the fallen places in the Pacific and she was full of - of Malaysian bankers and Singapore businessmen - all the rich people. She was full, crowded, and all walkin' round with the - with their oriental dress, but they found room at the bottom of hatch number three to put a few of us. And when we arrived at hatch number three it was full of bunks and all wounded soldiers down there and the place stunk. It was like dried blood and dead bodies and once down there they closed the hatches and each day you can come up for some air. And instead we're goin' back as a repatriated passenger, we're goin' back in a prison ship. But one bloke .... Joe and I - well Joe said, 'they can - they can stick it'. I said, 'I'm with it too,' so we walked off the bastard and went ashore. But now we were cut off. We voluntary had refused repatriation so we were left on our own.

We went round the Shipping Office and the Naval Office, they can't do anything. They'd ... and then I got a message from a bloke who brought it to the hotel we were stayin' at. We were half drunk at the time. A British tanker had come into port and six of her crew had been taken ashore with cholera. Three of 'em died, three of 'em were seriously into hospital and she's on her way to Australia and the water in the tanks were poisoned and she was a Scottish tanker and since world war - since the depression 'thirties she'd been tied up as a hulk and they'd put her back into commission and sent her out here. And the water tanks were rotten and bad and the crew all suffered the poisoning. So in Colombo they emptied the tanks and pumped them out and hosed them out and filled with fresh water and they asked us would we like to take her to Australia. And the man said, 'One ship in four could reach there now. I have to tell you this.' Joe said, 'What's she got in there?' 'She's loaded with benzene,' and Joe said, 'Ah, well, I'll give it a go. Yes sir, I'll give it a go.' So we signed on and we came and we made the trip. We finished up in Sydney and the undertaking was that the master would discharge these men if they volunteered to take the ship from Ceylon to Sydney. This was in April 1942. You can imagine. When we came to Sydney, we went through the same old thing again. Work all day, we come to the dock at night over at Gore Bay, across the other side. It used to be the Shell wharf then, and Joe was ashore [inaudible], he went home, end of the game for him, he's had a gutful. And I was a bit slow in gettin' ready and the mate come down, he said, 'We got to have a bloke on the gangway twenty-four hours a day,' he said, 'twelve hour watches,' he said, 'you'll take the first one. Start now.' I said, 'I've already put in all the'. 'Don't argue.' So I had to stand on the gangway now until six in the morning. I could hardly keep my eyes open. Eleven o'clock a taxi drew up and a bloke comes runnin' aboard and the taxi's still there. It's Joe. 'Come on, ya bastard,' he said, 'what're ya doing.' I said, 'I can't go ashore.' 'What. Not got that bloody lot again.'

(20.00)'No,' I said, 'he stuck me on the gangway just after you went ashore. He come down the mess room, he wants a bloke on the gangway till six in the mornin',' I said, 'he stuck me on.' 'Why the rotten dirty bastard.' His name was Thoroughgood, what a name, and Joe said, 'Tell 'im to get stuffed,' he said, 'we're in - in Sydney now.' So I threw - I bunged a few clothes on. By now it was about eight o'clock at night and I hopped in the cab with Joe. We had a quid and away we go. We went up King Street, the pubs used to

shut at six on King Street, there's a pub around the back and we got a few bottles of Tooth's. He was full of the bottle but we bought it, we had a few beers. We went to Trocadero and we had a few dances there and we picked up two sorts and we finished up over at - towards the Cross there. And we went up to this little - little flat they had and we took a couple of bottles of Tooths and there used to be a Chinese place up the way there, we bought - we used to call them dim sims - and we had a feed of dim sims and a few more beers and a couple of sheilas and we fell asleep. I woke up, it was about two in the mornin' and I said to Joe, 'Oh God, I don't want any trouble in Australia, I had a gutful the last time away from the gangway.' So Joe wouldn't wake up. He said, 'Ah get stuffed,' he said, 'I'm sleepin' in.' He said, 'I'm goin' to sleep here for a week.'

So I gave the girl two quid, I had a mouthful of the warm beer ... hop in a cab and away I went to go back. Went aboard, put my dungarees on and there's nobody on the gangway. So I thought, oh well I might as well bung it in now until six o'clock in the morning. But the old man apparently, he'd been awake, he saw me come aboard, so I was only on the gangway half an hour and a police car drove up. Two coppers came aboard. I said, 'You better see the captain,' and the captain came to the gangway and he said, 'This is the man.' 'Hey what have I done?' He said, 'You neglected your duties,' he said, 'you weren't on the gangway.' The police arrested me and they took me to Balmain lockup and it was ... of course Friday - Friday mornin' in the early hours and they bung me in the cell and I fell asleep. I mean, there's nothing you can do, you sit and look at the wall, they weren't goin' to talk. All that long Friday passed, and Friday night a few drunks came in, Saturday mornin' all day Saturday. They let me out for a bit of a walk, had a couple of sausages on a tin plate with a bit of bread, didn't have a smoke, but I had my dungarees on, you see. I told you I - I put them on, and they locked me up with a t-shirt, a pair of dungarees and a dungaree jacket. Dunagarees are the - the most disgusting thing a man would wear ashore, you know, they're for workin' in. Sunday went, Sunday night and Monday mornin' they put me in the wagon and they took me to Central Police Court. By the time I had arrived I hadn't washed properly for days and me sleepin' in these clothes. I had my beard growin', my hair wasn't combed, I looked a real bum. I probably do look one anyway, but I mean I looked worse then and I found myself in this courtroom. And the man at the bench, I had never seen a court before, I'd never stepped inside of a law court. I knew they 'ad 'em, I seen cartoons, you know. And they read the charges that I was absent without leave, from here to there, across the midnight, and the judge assessed it apparently as being absent without leave - he condensed it to make it brief - absent without leave for twenty-four hours. He gave me twenty-four days in Long Bay.

And that was my reward for doin' one year and seven months fuelling naval ships of the war. 'Course I met some bloody good blokes in this time, you know, and all the other sadness, like when we - when we left Ceylon to come 'ere, loaded with benzene, three ships left. And one was an old tramp cargo ship and she was choc-a-block with Aussie soldiers comin' back from the Middle East and when we were so far out from Ceylon on the way here, she bunkered and she turned off somewhere to Malaya. Those soldiers didn't come home, they became prisoners of the Japanese and I was to live and see the day when they were released. [Long pause.] Ah, skin and bone. I saw the day when they

came back here. No bastard wanted them either, make no mistake about that. They were an embarrassment. Stupid lot of bastards in skin and bone, that's all they were, they weren't wanted. But these people didn't know, they never know. They were too busy. The black market petrol, with the sly grog, with the brothels, down at Randwick Racecourse cleanin' the dirty money by makin' phoney bets with bookmakers which didn't exist, it was a great go. See the Yanks were there now, you don't have to worry about the war. The Yanks will go up there.

Anyway, they sent me to Boggo Road [sic] to - pardon me, to Long Bay Gaol outside of Sydney. Used to be a tramline runs from outside the gate and when I got in there the man I'd met earlier in Sydney before we left on that Pom boat, the delegate in Sydney told me, he said, 'For God's sake don't jump ship,' he said, 'you'll finish up in the Bay,' and all that time had gone past and now I'm in the Bay, and she's full of sailors. And the bloke was a Welsh born and he said to me, 'What have you done?' I said, 'I was throwin' stones at tram cars.' 'No,' he said, 'what have you done now.' 'I haven't done a thing,' I said, 'I served my country and they put in bloody prison.' 'Oh well,' he said, 'that's the price you pay for being British, you know.' 'Well thank you.' 'Now,' he said, 'what I want to know, are you a seaman?' 'Yes.' 'I mean a seaman, not a - not a stoker.' 'No I'm a seaman - and able-bodied seaman.' 'Can you make rope nets?' 'Oh yeah, I do 'em standin' on my head. You want a couple, goin' fishin' are ya?' They took me to what they called the loft and all the balsa wood, they had ropes and coils - ropes everywhere, and I began to show these other prisoners how to make a rope net. So they send 'em up to New Guinea for the soldiers to unload cargo and not bein' a wharfie they bunged the lot in a net, you know, (laughs) put it all in the mug bag and I made some different kinds of wire swings and so and they gave me sixpence a day and I got a number one dinner, you know, the best, two bits of spud. None of this little bits for me, I got the two bits. And the first night I said to this Welshman, [Llewellyn?], he said, 'And how are you goin'. How are they treatin' ya?' 'Oh,' I said, 'All right, but,' I said, 'tonight,' I said, 'last night I walked up and down all night, I stood on ma hands, I did exercises.' I said, 'You got anything I can have a read.' 'I'll get one of the men to put a nice book on ya bed.' 'Oh good, thank you, thank you then.'

So we knocked off and they gave us a bucket to wee in during the night, and when I got on the cell, oh Mary's good. There was a - a book on the bed. Oh, lo it was wonderful, and I glanced at it, *Beau Geste*. Oh, what a beauty and I settled all down and when I opened the bastard it was written in French. (Laughs) So spent the next few hours tryin' - tryin' to read French and I, ah, fell asleep. The next day changed it for me. So when it come after time he said to me, 'You arrested after midnight, so', he said, 'we'll count Friday, Saturday, Sunday, and your trial day Monday, so,' he said, 'you actually had four days in (coughs) you only have twenty days to go. Now,' he said, 'you're havin' two day's remission.' Oh that was good and we'd going to release you. Well I said, 'this is ....

END TAPE 3, SIDE A.

BEGIN TAPE 3, SIDE B.

Identification: side two, tape three, Ken Leonard.

He said, 'There's something here though,' he said, 'I don't know why you fellows play up so much with all your beer drinkin' and your carryin' on,' he said, 'no wonder you end in gaol. But,' he said, 'you can keep your bit of tobacco, half an ounce of weed and you can roll a smoke now and you're nearly ready to go but I have something to tell you.' He said, 'You seaman come 'ere and you play up and make a nuisance of yourself and get yourself into trouble, you don't do the proper right thing and you can't blame the authorities for takin' the hand they do.' He said, 'You don't seem to realise that we're involved in a war ... anyway,' he said, 'the authorities have been very generous to you.' 'Actually,' he said, 'you're gettin' away with a lot,' he said, 'you - you can as well say that you've had a little rest, you've been well looked after, you've got - how much have you earned?' I said, 'I think you gave me about four and thruppence.' 'Well there you are then,' he said, 'what more do you want. Now,' he said, 'what I have to tell you,' he said, 'In this release,' he said, 'you have to report to the city and down at Bridge Street,' he said, 'and they have something to tell you.' He said, 'It's not tied to it, but,' he said, 'it's part of your release.' So they let me out and I walk to the front gate and the man said, 'Good luck old sport.' I said, 'Thank you very much,' and I thought, what would Mum say ... sleepin' in a bloody prison. She'd be proud of me, wouldn't she? What would anybody think. In a bloody prison because I went up to the Trocadero and had a skinful of beer. By jeez, there's a lot of bastards I could think of ought to be in prison if they have a skinful.

And so I arrived in town and duty calls and I went down to Bridge Street and I saw the man. 'Yes,' he said, 'I'm despatchin' to a ship at Pyrmont.' He said, 'She's loadin' for New Guinea. And you can sign on at the Mercantile Marine Office.' He said, 'You'll find there's a discharge there from that ship you had trouble on.' 'I didn't have trouble,' I said, 'I served faithfully to the end,' I said, 'I just went ashore that's all.' So I went to the Mercantile Marine Office and there the man gave me what money the ship had in for me and I said, 'Where's the other money?' He said, 'What other money?' I said, 'When they discharged us in Colombo they only paid us a few quid to last us and they told us our monies would be paid as soon as we were repatriated to Britain.' 'Well', I said, 'we couldn't be repatriated and I volunteered to come 'ere with a load of petrol,' and said, 'I haven't had my money for a year and seven months work.' 'You know,' he said, 'that's nought to do with us,' he said, 'here's the money from the current voyage, discharge in Sydney and, uh, you're finished and,' he said, 'we don't particularly want the likes of you here anyway.' He said, 'There are no ships goin' to Britain these days,' he said, 'but, uh, you have to leave the country.' So I - he said, 'You can sign here for the *Van* [*Heemskirk*?].' I said, 'What is it?' He said, 'It's a bloody ship.' 'Yeah, but,' I said. 'Well,' he said, 'it's a Dutch vessel,' he said, 'she escaped from the Dutch East Indies - from Batavia. They have Dutch officers but they're takin' on Australian crew,' he said, 'it's an Australian articles.'

(5.00) So I went down to the *Van Heemskirk* at Pyrmont and I spoke to the captain there and I had little trouble there, and he was very pleased to have me. He said, 'You are

trained man and you have good English,' he said, 'but the pilot New Guinea Australian coast,' he said. Ah, he made me a quartermaster - a helmsman. And the other mate of mine was a Dutchman, Harry [inaudible], so we settled that in and now she's ready to sail. She filled up with all kinds of light arms and rubbish and the they filled up and most of the stuff they were puttin' on is the junk comin' back from the Middle East. Bloody old battered motor cars and old Bren guns, bloody old stuff, it should have been dumped. Anyway they put it aboard, and they put 600 soldiers on with it - Aussies - all of them return men. Men who have come back from the Middle East, hard bitten men, cream of the nation. Just before we sailed I had to report to the taxation authorities, so I - I went into town with these instructions and so on and I was interviewed with the taxation officer and he said, 'Well, you can't leave Australia without a taxation clearance,' he said, 'because you're goin' foreign. You see New Guinea is mandate territory and it's tax free and so on.' So he said, 'You'll have to pay all taxes.' 'But,' I said, 'I haven't earned any.' 'So,' he said, 'we'd better work it out.' So we - what he did - if you can believe it - well, I'll show you the proof. He taxed me from the time I'd left Fremantle on that voyage to England and nineteen months on a naval station, he computed all my wages and he said, 'You better pay it.' And next June when you put in a tax return you can make a claim for the balance. And I was shocked. I said, 'Well, that's almost as much as I've earned.' 'Well,' he said, 'you can't sail without your tax clearance,' and the shipping officer said, 'you can't stay here.' Oh what a bloody position to be in. I was wishin' I'd never been saved. I wish I'd gone to the bottom.

Anyway I went back and told the captain and he said, 'How much money do you have?' I said, 'Well, from Colombo to Sydney, it would - until I paid off,' I said, 'it took thirty-seven days to cross, 'cause she was only a slow ship.' And well, so I said, 'I have about seven pounds.' So he arranged to pay the tax for me and he'd deduct it out my pay and we sailed for New Guinea. And once the ship got away, I began to know the crew and most of them had been released from Long Bay. Although I hadn't - can't say I met them in there, in different parts. There were a couple of Irish blokes, there were a couple of Scots blokes, there was a Welsh fella, there was a Dutchman there, he was on a ship and she was torpedoed - no she wasn't torpedoed, she was shelled off - off Newcastle and they were in a boat and the bloody boat was sinkin' and he jumped off the bow and he told 'em, he said, it was comin' in faster than they could bail out - and just off Knobby's there and this bastard, he jumped in the water and he swam ashore. And when he got ashore he went to nearest pub and they had a big laugh and joke and they called the police. And he was arrested for bein' an illegal immigrant and he was in the gaol, so they let 'im out. And I reckon about - about a half the crew had been let out of prison to take this ship to New Guinea where they hadn't been before. And they picked the Dutch ship because the Dutchman used to own the Territory - it used to be called Dutch New Guinea - and of course it was adjoining Indonesia.

And so we set off and we went there and when we came they sent us up a place called Milne Bay and I don't think anybody'd been there before and there was only a few soldiers ashore at the time and there was nowhere to unload. So we had to broach to the beach and put the ropes ashore to coconut trees and these Aussie soldiers - we had life rafts on

board, old petrol drums with wooden frames tied round them - and they loaded the bits and pushed 'em ashore and once they got to the shallow water the boats came in and as you goes to shore the water gets less - less deep, you know. And poor bastards in the pouring rain - when there was an air-raid they used to shoot tracer bullets in the air.

(10.00) We were bombed about four times - we weren't hit, and machine-gunned and these Aussies they worked, but they used to have an old cape around their - around the shoulders. A lot of 'em runnin' in bare feet and they carted, manhandled this load of stuff off that ship, took it ashore, and we left the dock and we came back and we came back to Aussie and we loaded for another load, and I said to the captain, 'How about a skinful?' He said, 'You owe money for your tax.' Oh God almighty, I'm workin' for nothing and they tell me she was watchin' me. Cor blimey, she must be blind.

So anyway we went back again and we came into Townsville and Townsville had an air-raid and one bomb fell on - or two or three bombs maybe - on the mud flats. It didn't hit anybody. A couple of seagulls were injured, and the Yanks went beserk [inaudible] in the street and the Japs were comin' and ....

So we leave Townsville, and just before she sailed an Australian jeep came along - oh a little - little pickup van, like a ute thing with a canvas top and bit of wire around it, it was a hurry-up wagon - and they stopped and they come out with a soldier in handcuffs. They march 'im aboard the gangway, like up the gangway aboard the ship and they chained him to the shipside to a - to a cleat and I watched all this and when the gangway come aboard the two blokes went ashore and they stood on the dock while we sailed and I went on the bridge. I used to - they used to call 'im a 'mud pilot', the man who takes a ship in another port, you know, with the wheel, keep the same one. And I came down and this bloke was standin' there and he looked dreadful. He didn't seem to know anybody - we had about 600-700 soldiers aboard, all hard bitten men, oh, AIF men, you know the real stuff, fuckin' good blokes, best you'll ever meet anyhow. And I spoke to him, I said, 'G'day.' He said, 'G'day yourself. Eh,' he said, 'you got a smoke?' I said, 'Why too right, yeah,' and I give 'im a smoke and we had a word. He said, 'You a Pom?' I said, 'Yes.'

We'll just wait for that helicopter.

He said, 'Are you a bloody Pom?' I said, 'Yeah.' He said, 'What the hell are you doin' on this bloody thing out 'ere?' I said, 'They had me in the 'boob' in Sydney.' He said, 'Yeah, they just let me out of the boob,' he said, 'what were you in for?' I said, 'Absent without leave.' 'Cor,' he said, 'you're like me.' He told me the tale. I said, 'You fancy a cup of tea old cock?' He said, 'Yeah too right.' So we had a mug of tea, well I was off duty now. He said, 'I come back from the Middle East, had the big march and all that bloody jazz and from the Exhibition ground in Brisbane,' he said, 'they put us on the train to Roma Strip for a few days leave, comin' back home to Townsville.' So he said, 'I brought me rifle but I didn't have any ammo. I romp back into Townsville and I said, no I'll get back to the missus, but we had a quick beer with me cobber. He wouldn't move once he was in the pub, so he said, 'I shot home', he said. I arrive home and,' he said, 'I nearly died.' He

said, 'My missus's right up the bun.' He said, 'I took notice and when I left Australia and a wife.' He said, 'My eldest girl now is sixteen, she's up the bun and the other lassie, fourteen, she's pregnant. The bloody Yanks.' And I said, 'Right, this'll do me.' And I went down to the pub and I said to my cobber, 'I want three bullets.' He said, 'What you goin' to do?' He said, 'Well keep you trap shut,' he said, 'my wife and two kids,' he said, 'the bloody Yanks,' he said, 'I'm goin' to fix the bastards.' 'Well,' I said, 'I don't have two now,' he said, 'Hang on I'll do something.' So he shot away and he told the MP. Wasn't long before they arrested him and he said, 'Me bloody mate dobbed me in. Me bloody cobber, he dobbed me in.'

(15.00)`So what really happened,' he said, 'me cobber knew I'd - I'd swing, so for my own good they arrested me and they took me outside of town and they kept me there and officer said, "You're under arrest," he said, "but you're not a prisoner." So,' he said, 'I had my tucker and everything but I was under close guard and they put in the wagon and brought me down 'ere.' 'So,' he said, 'that's the way I'm goin' to war.' He said, 'Once I land in New Guinea sir, I don't know this mob here, they're not my unit, but,' he said, 'I'll pick up my unit in New Guinea somewhere.' He said, 'Once I get there and I get the ammo I'm goin' to shoot every bloody American bastard,' he said, before they get me, and then,' he said, 'they can have me, because there's nothing left anyway.' He said, 'I'll live that long. I'll live as long as I can put a bullet in the head of every American bastard I can find, and how would you be.' God I thought to my - see I had four sisters and I had a very young one and I thought, yes, it would be dreadful to find your sister like that and your mum. 'Yeah, well,' he said, 'that's the way it goes sport.' So we - they let him go then. They released the - the handcuffs and he was free and when we arrived the second time at Milne Bay we did the same turn. Ropes ashore, in the water, and they took him ashore and I never heard of him again. But he was a suffering man and he used to tell me, he said he was through - Middle East, like through Jerusalem, Bardia, Tobruk, Syria - he was good bloke, nice fella. He said, 'I thought I was fightin' for my country,' he said. And we arrived there and we unload. The same old thing but we weren't hit, we were machine-gunned, weren't hit [inaudible].

And we left there and we were goin' to Thursday Island or somewhere - I'm not sure now - and we had orders there was an island further north - a Dutch island - and it was called Merauke and the Americans had landed there and they were holdin' it but the Japs came in the side and the Americans went to this side and they want to get off again, and you have to go up this long shallow creeky river. So as it's now been empty they sent us there to take the Yanks off and they must have been out of their mind. 'Cause when we got up this little row - when the river or tide went out it was just a mud bank and the natives over the years for the canoes, they built a little flimsy thing you couldn't ride a bike on it. There was the Yanks on the shore with jeeps and trucks and to ride them aboard the ship and you couldn't get aboard with a roller skate. They were stark ravin' mad. Anyway (coughs) they put aboard a number of these Oerlikan guns and they had all American gunners on board. They had about eighteen of them and we just came into - as close as we could to this little mud bank, put a rope ashore and we wait till the morning because the tide went out, we sit on the mud. But daybreak, she just startin' to come in the tide,

and the soldiers could come aboard one by one up this little rickety native bridge and a bit of manoeuvring with the derrick and a temporary gangway, we could swing something towards them to get them aboard, see. I mean to say, you gotta - if needs be put 'em aboard in a bloody net, but get 'em aboard. It's just daybreak and this plane come over, she spotted us and she dropped a bomb and the forward hatches were open but the beam was on - one of the beams - and the bomb hit it and she splayed out. And the American gunners, they ran down this little rickety way, some jumped in the water, paddled through the mud, they were gone, not one was left and they ran ashore some, I think some covered two miles before they stopped and there was a Catholic mission there with some sisters and they went there and they wouldn't move.

Anyway, in the meantime the ship started to burn. So [Paddy Daley?] and I - Irish lad - we went out on the fordeck and the Dutch engineer wasn't a bad bloke and he - he put water on deck, we got a hose pipe and Paddy started to spray the flame a bit and then one of the Dutch radio man came down, we was the only ones left on the ship, they all evacuated, and he helped me to lift the blokes, we didn't have stretchers, but the Yanks already, they had a lot of these foldin' army cot beds so we started to unfold the army cot and we put one body on each one and when we come to lift the bodies, they ... they were like bits of rubber, like a piece of liver. The blast had smashed every bone in the body, so when you put your arm under it, all the lungs come out and if you lift the foot, the foot started to come off.

(20.00) We managed to get them onto these cots and lined 'em up and Paddy got the hose into the fo'c'sle and some - the blast had gone through the fo'c'sle and there was - the bosun was hangin' out of his bunk dead and there was inside the fo'c'sle, in the quarters there was four dead in there.

What was the ship? What was the name of the ship?

Van Heemskirk. In case you make a mistake, *Van Heemskirk.* She was registered in Batavia and she was owned by the KPM in Rotterdam and she was taken over by the Australian Government to take Australian troops up there. You see, one of the bitterness - the ... to send our troops up to New Guinea we had to use a foreign ship and a foreign flag with a mercenary crew, men who had come back from the Middle East, men who'd marched with all the confetti in Pitt Street and the great march and the cheers and to come back and the best you can give them is to bung 'em up into the islands and the best we can do for them is to put 'em on a - on a foreign ship, dirty old coal burner. She used to burn coal - get the coal in Bowen in Queensland here - and they bunged 'em on a foreign ship with a foreign crew - ah, with the foreign officers and a crew of - well 'alf of them were mercenaries to me and they were sailors, but there were stewards and cooks and you didn't know what they were - ratbags, we don't know. And seein' as how I was one of 'em I was no - no way to judge was I, and that's how we took the troops up the New Guinea.

At the this time Moresby was going, you know, she was goin' like a circus and Darwin was on it's feet again but now they're sent up to - to get ahead of the Japs, you know, get ahead of 'em.

Was that the time when you got the shrapnel?

Well I don't like talk about that because my little injuries are nothing when I think of such nice blokes, some of them bonza blokes who - who were in those prison camps, they suffered the worst. They were bashed and belted and I don't like to think of them - like them young lads joined up in Sydney and went up there and never came back. I got off light, I went to live on to a good age. Some of them young lads, they were gone before they were seventeen, eighteen, so why should I tell you about what happened to me, I got off light didn't I.

But I don't make anything ... happened to me, I .... There's a lot of shrapnel when a bomb drops and if it hits the beam of hatch of course, she - she shoots outwards and that's how - it was concussion and the blast, but a piece of shrapnel went through the back of my head, but I didn't know about it till all the fires were out.

So what happened there ...?

Well that's about the end of the story. There, I mean no good romancin', it's all in the past. The ... and we sent out distress call and there was a little Australian ship - I can never remember yet - but I think it might have been the *Arunta* or the *Swan*, just a little bit of a corvette. I was glad to see 'er because we knew the Jap would be back. I mean, they're not mugs, and this little Australian ship came up and she slowly came alongside but some distance, and the officer called on the captain come on the wing and his English was bad so he asked me to - to tell 'im what he was saying and especially from a loudhailer, so the voice called, 'Are you all right?' 'Are you ...?' 'Yes.' 'Yeah, yeah.' 'Do you have many injured?' 'Seven.' 'Seven.' And so the questions were asked and I helped him a bit and den the Aussie called up - well by this time I'd realised I was saturated in blood.

(25.00) So me old mate wet a towel and he tied it round my head and the Aussie called out, 'Who is the man with the turban?' He said, 'Who is the man with the turban?' Say, 'He is a Pom.' 'He is Pom.' 'We might have know.'

Pardon?

'We might have known.' (Laughs) And so we - we managed to get her seaworthy and brought her back and she came back to Brisbane and I paid off there and then she went on to be dry docked and done up then she went back and next time she went to the bottom, it was the end of the game.

But I was in Brisbane again and I was here for about three or four days, it's a long time to remember back, but it was a few days anyway and the previous time in Brisbane I'd been to the mission and I met this girl and this time I gave her a ring and had a yarn with her and I took her out you see. So came back on the money so I rang the girl up again and she said, 'My brother's gone north to New Guinea, he's in the army, and he used to sleep on the verandah and Mum said if you have nowhere to go you could sleep on the verandah at our place.' So I said, 'Oh it's very nice indeed.' At least somewhere to put your bags. So I went out there and somebody must have reported me, so I was only there a couple of days and one morning I was sittin' up talkin' to - it was her mother - but I didn't know I was goin' to marry this girl, but still .... Two Australian MPs came to the - to the door and he asked for me, yes, and they arrested me and took me to Kelvin Grove. Oh I thought, I don't know, talk about the 'wild colonial boy', all I can see around this part of the world is arrests, prisons, gaols, Christ all .... So they put me in this waitin' room and I sat there for hours and then the man called me in. He said, ah, all the questions, and he said I'd been evadin' the army. So they want to put me in the army. [I'm tellin' 'em about Kelvin Grove and Milton Road when they took me to the army. Mmm. (Speaking to his wife.)]

So they were goin' to induct me into the army and I said, 'Well you better fix this bloody lot up then,' I said, 'Because', I said, 'I have to have treatment for it.' There was a big plaster on the back. 'Oh so you fell down did ya?' 'Yeah, yeah I fell down.' [inaudible] after about six hours they let me go and told me the best thing to do is get on a ship and leave here as soon as you can or you'll be inducted into the army. Oh blimey, I can't - I can't take a trick. So when I left the *Van Heimskirk* the captain said, 'Well you've earned so much and so much' and my wages were twelve pound a month. And he said, 'You have drawn a couple of quid in Townsville and a couple of quid in Cairns and this' he said, here's your money.' And he gave me about seventeen or eighteen bob. I said, 'that's not much for four months work captain'. 'No,' he said, 'I had to pay the taxes money for you.' So I rang the girlfriend up and - I'd written a few letters like and so when I - when sailor boy comes home from the sea to his girlfriend he had about eighteen bob, he wasn't worth a cracker. The only thing is find another ship, so I went to the workers compo. then bein' an Australian Articles and they didn't cover such things droppin' on men in Dutch New Guinea because the Australian compo covers the Australian and New Guinea is mandate territory, it foreign and I got nothing. So I - I went to the general hospital and they fixed me up a bit, they took the stitches out what the soldier put in and patched it up and I didn't tell them and I reported for duty - I didn't tell them about the bombin', I didn't tell them and I joined another ship and she went to New Guinea and so it's no good goin' on. From - from then I went right through the war up and down New Guinea, up and down - Sydney, Brisbane, Townsville, Cairns, Bowen, everywhere.

And then in the last of the war the - we were sent on from - we were up in Hollandia, that was on the borders to Indonesia and they sent us to - to Philippines. I thought, it'll be a nice old turnup here, you know, the Japs are - used to have a good hold of the Philippines still. You would be sent off to the Philippines and when we got there it was lit up like a Christmas tree.

We'll just stop and I'll just change the tape.

END TAPE 3, SIDE B.

BEGIN TAPE 4, SIDE A.

Identification: tape four, side one, Ken Leonard.

Well as I was sayin' when you stopped, she was all lit up like a tree and we went to Subic Bay and one of the sad things of the war, um, after all that time in oil tankers in the Indian Ocean and the Pacific and a few near misses and all that the war was at an end now. Now the chief officer who had been on that naval station ship with us, a nice type of bloke, good bloke - deserves to live anyway - and in the meantime he had been promoted to captain and at the time we went to the Philippines he was takin' his first vessel as master and she had 11,000 tons of benzene and she entered Philippine Harbour she hit a mine a went up - right at the end of the war. Two or three days later we heard the news that they'd dropped the bomb on Hiroshima so you see, before they dropped that bomb we had unloaded in Subic Bay and were already takin' on supplies and soldiers to return home and they dropped the bomb to end the war. The war was over long before bomb and we left Subic Bay and we went across the Pacific through the Panama and we went into the Gulf of Mexico to a little town called Galveston, Texas and they took all the soldiers - they all went home. I noticed when we came to the dock we had fifteen hundred American GIs comin' home from the Pacific. Some went mad, some went on the dock and kissed the dirty ground, there was no-one there to greet them, and they were all disappointed and they stood there and stoody there and nine o'clock at night a number of army trucks came and took some. Then the army trucks came back and took the others and the army trucks came back and took the last. They weren't even welcomed home. There wasn't a band or a trumpet, not even a Scottish fife.

END OF INTERVIEW.