



# Australian War Memorial

## Sound Collection

### TRANSCRIPT OF ORAL HISTORY RECORDING

**S01794**

**F3781 Terry, Francis Stanley**

**Recorded**

**at:** City Beach, WA

**on:** 27 July 1995

**by:** John Roberts

**Description**

F3781 Francis Stanley Terry as a cook; minesweeper HMAS *Mercedes* and corvette HMAS *Warrnambool*; Australian western approaches and northern and eastern waters; 1941–1946; interviewed by John Roberts

Frank Terry speaks about his childhood and education; his recruitment into the RAN; reception, kitting out and basic training at the Flinders Naval Depot; training a cook; life aboard HMAS *Mercedes*; minesweeping operations in the western approaches to Fremantle; his working routine as a cook when at sea; the voyage to Darwin; compassionate leave after the death of his son; transfer to the Boom Depot at Fremantle; his marriage and the premature birth and eventual death of his first child; the Boom Depot routine; being drafted to Darwin to join the *Warrnambool* in May 1945; refit at Fremantle and return to Darwin; the surrender of the Japanese in Timor at Koepang and other operations around Timor; transit of the *Warrnambool* to Sydney to join the 20th Minesweeping Fleet; operations out of Sydney and Wollongong; Christmas 1946 aboard the *Warrnambool*; demobilization in Fremantle in June 1946; post war employment as a cook, trolley bus conductor and in the liquor trade; his final twenty years employment at the Hollywood Repatriation Hospital, ending up as head chef; health problems; housing, and award of the British Empire Medal.

**Transcribed by:** Chris Soames, February 2002

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Readers of this transcript of interview should bear in mind that it is a verbatim transcript of the spoken word and reflects the informal conversational style that is inherent in oral records.

Unless indicated, the names of places and people are as spoken, regardless of whether this is formally correct or not – e.g. ‘World War Two’ (as spoken) would not be changed in transcription to ‘Second World War’ (the official conflict term).

A few changes or additions may be made by the transcriber or proof-reader. Such changes are usually indicated by square brackets, thus: [ ] to clearly indicate a difference between the sound record and the transcript. A double dash ( - - ) indicates an unfinished sentence.

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Identification: This is an interview with Francis Stanley Terry and forms part of the Oral History Project of the Royal Australian Navy Corvettes Association, WA. Frank is a member of the Royal Australian Navy Corvettes Association, and this interview relates to his personal experiences in corvettes.

Frank was born on 25 September 1920 at Cookernup in the south-west of Western Australia. He joined the Navy in September 1941 as an assistant cook and his official number was F3781. He served on the *Mercedes* and on the *HMAS Warrnambool* J202.

Sixty of these small ships, officially Bathurst Class minesweepers, commonly known as corvettes, were built during World War II in Australian shipyards as part of the Commonwealth Government's wartime shipbuilding program. Twenty were built on Admiralty order for the Royal Navy and were commissioned and manned by members of the Royal Australian Navy. These ships were named after Australian towns – Ballarat, Bathurst, Bendigo, Broome, Burnie, Cairns, Cessnock, Gawler, Geraldton, Goulburn, Ipswich, Kalgoorlie, Launceston, Lismore, Maryborough, Pirie, Tamworth, Toowoomba, Whyalla and Wollongong. Also, of the sixty built four were for the Royal Indian Navy and named HMIS Bengal, Bombay, Madras and Punjab, and they all left for their home base independently in 1942. The remaining thirty-six were built for the Royal Australian Navy and also named after Australian towns. They were Ararat, Armidale, Benalla, Bowen, Bunbury, Bundaberg, Castlemaine, Colac, Cootamundra, Cowra, Deloraine, Dubbo, Echuca, Fremantle, Geelong, Gladstone, Glenelg, Gympie, Horsham, Inverell, Junee, Kapunda, Katoomba, Kiama, Latrobe, Lithgow, Mildura, Parkes, Rockhampton, Shepparton, Stawell, Strahan, Townsville, Wagga, Warrnambool and Wallaroo. Of course, some of these towns are now cities.

The interview was conducted by John Roberts on 27 July 1995 at City Beach.

Frank, what is your full name?

Francis Stanley Terry.

And could you tell me something about when and where you were born?

I was born in a little farmhouse cottage, Rose Cottage, at Cookernup. It belonged to my grandmother, grandfather.

That Rose Cottage, has that got a significance? Roses were some of the early families there, weren't they?

Not that I know of. My grandparent's name was Jackson, my grandfather and his brother were pioneers of that area. Jacksons, of my grandfather's brother, are still around Cookernup.

Could you tell us something of your early life in that area to the time you went to school, and where you went to school, and something of your schooling?

Well, my dad was a returned serviceman from the First World War and he took up the land settlement or farming areas – group settlement they use to call them – right down the south-

west. But he took one up at Harvey but it did not work too well and after a while he went really broke – they didn't give him much assistance – and he walked off, left all his cows and everything there. He shifted to Wokalup where he took up a job on the timber mill which is where they brought this sawn timber down from Mornington Mill, and stacked it and stored it, till it dried out, before it was sold for the building industries.

What was your first involvement with the RAN? Living down there would you have had any connection with anybody who'd previously served in the Navy?

Well, my parents split up when I was fourteen and I stayed with my dad, and I got a job delivering groceries to the depression camps where they were digging drains and that out the back of Waroona and Yarloop.

And from that now?

One of the...there was always travelling salesmen that used to call in at different times, and one gentleman that came through – and he often used to call in around tea time and have a cup of tea and have some tea with us – and his name was Davidson. Now, it was a strange thing that when war broke out he was the recruiting officer, Lieutenant Davidson, in the Fremantle–Perth area when he was stationed in Forrest Place in Perth.

Now, he was responsible for your interest in the Navy, but obviously, by this time, the war had commenced. Was that your real motive for joining the Navy?

No, not really, it goes back, way back, on my grandmother's side I should imagine it did. I'm not too sure whether my grandmother's brother, or grandmother's cousin, that was commander of the – I think they used to call it the China Sea Station in Hong Kong – he was in the Navy. So that part of it goes back a little way in the family.

And had you met anybody in the area who'd joined the Navy prior to you enlisting, or not, to whet your enthusiasm?

Oh, yes, there was one of the boys I went – I did twelve months at Harvey School at one stage – and one of the boys I went to school with there, Ted Kealy, he had joined the Navy, he was on the *Perth*, went over to England to get to pick up the *Perth* and then he was transferred. Later on, when I was in the Navy and I was on the *Warrnambool*, we were setting up the 21st – oh, no, 20th Minesweeping Fleet, I think it was called – and Ted came on board as the coxswain. One of the other fellows that I went to school with, or knew of in Harvey, was Bob Stammers who was, unfortunately, one of the boys that went down on the *Sydney*.

Now, you made up your mind to join the Navy and no doubt your father gave you permission but was it difficult to get into the Navy at this time – 1941?

Well, I tried when I was seventeen – I was seventeen, just turning eighteen – and I passed my medical and everything, as a stoker, and they had me on the list for quite a while and then they wrote to me a letter and said recruiting had ceased, there's no money, and unfortunately you are no longer required.

I hung around for quite a while then, didn't bother to do anything until the conscription business came in and everyone was called up for the Army – and I'd made up my mind, no way was I ever going to be in the Army, I wasn't going to march anywhere, I'd get carried or driven around

if I possibly could.

Anyway, I had to pass the medical – still no answer from the Navy – and I had applied again. After I had done my medical for the Army I applied again and I did a medical for the Navy, which I passed, and they put me on the waiting list.

In the meantime the Army had sent me a letter to say that I had to report to Bunbury to go into the 'chocos' – we used to call them the 'chocos', I think. Anyhow, this is where my relationship, or my friendship, came up very handy. I rang Lieutenant Davidson and I said, 'What can I do?' He said, 'Don't worry, Frank, you will get a telegram this afternoon; the Navy's got you on their list and you forget all about the Army.' Which is exactly what happened, I joined the Navy.

So you joined the Navy as a cook, but when you first went in the Navy, did you expect to come in as a cook, or what rating did you expect to come?

No, I still tried to get in as a stoker; they said there's no vacancies for stokers, no vacancies for seamen. I said, 'Well, what have you got?' They said, 'Well, you can go in as an assistant cook.' I said, 'Right, That'll do me.' So I joined as an assistant cook.

Where were you signed up in the Navy and then could you tell us something of your trip? I assume you went to Flinders for your early training.

I signed up in Cliff Street, Fremantle, and the next morning we were on the train – or the next afternoon, I think it might have been – we were on the train heading for Flinders.

Now, you weren't kitted up in any way, you were just in your ordinary civilian clothes. How did you travel, in troop train conditions or not?

Oh, no, we were very fortunate; we travelled in the passenger train. We had sit-down meals and everything like that. It was quite a mixed bunch of us went with us; there was cooks – or trainee cooks – stewards, supply assistants, stokers, seamen. Some of the seamen were already in uniform, they'd done their training at Flinders and they were on their way to finish whatever gunnery courses, whatever they had to do in Flinders.

And so you arrived in Flinders, probably in rather miserable conditions because it was raining.

Raining like billyo

Can you tell us something of your first few days at Flinders, your memories of that?

We arrived down at Crib Point; it was about six-thirty or seven o'clock in the evening. There was a transport truck there; all the civvy-clad boys, they piled onto it, they were told that they were going to get a ride down but all the ones in uniform had to march. Then we were detailed off and shot into one of the transportable homes which they had there then, that was to be our living quarters, eating quarters, everything else. And we weren't allowed to meet to find anybody; there was quite a few chaps that I knew who had gone ahead of me, were in Flinders, but we were not allowed to contact them at all, we were told we just had to behave ourselves and be quiet.

Now, what about uniform issue and early days at Flinders? Can you recall anything in

connection with this?

Next day we did all our line-up for our uniforms, got a little wooden block with your name cut out on it. Your hammocks and all that were already stamped with your name on but your uniforms – your shirts, your ties, and everything – had to be stamped in this black ink, stamped your name on your clothing.

And coming in as a cook; can you give us some indication of what your uniform and other issues were?

Yes. We had two uniforms; square riggers they were called – collar and tie job – six shirts, twelve collars, those collars were separate in those days.

Now, regarding your cook gear; you were just given what?

Oh, four white uniforms – trousers, coat, caps, six aprons, and you had to look after them and keep them, and repair them. That's where you got your clothing allowance.

Now, what about in your early days at Flinders? I mean, obviously you wouldn't have been dropped straight into leaning to be a cook; how did you start your early days in Flinders?

Well, first off was six weeks on the parade ground learning how to be an Army soldier – Army sailor, or whatever you call it – how to salute, how to carry your rifle, present arms and all that. That went on for six weeks and then you passed out. If you passed that okay well, you became ship's company, which meant that you moved from the transportable homes into the brick buildings, which was ship's company, and you were allowed to go into the wet canteen.

And what about your early... after that, after you passed out from that course, tell us some of your experiences of learning to be a cook in the Navy.

Well, first off you had your training, the general training, of what was in the main galley. You were detailed off at different galleys; there was the main galley, the ship's, the chief's galley. The police – no, what did they call it?

Regulation officers.

It was down near the police gate, there was a galley down there with the blokes that guarded the place. Then the officers' galley, if you were an officer – you did a little test – I think it was three or four weeks you had to be in the School of Cookery. The better ones that could make fancy things were detailed off as officers' cooks and the rest of us ... You had a choice and everyone did it. Of course, the real chief cooks that we had don't become an officer's cook; you've got to be a cook, a ship's cook, they are the best.

And did you have any background of cooking before you went in the Navy?

Only what I did at home, cooking my own meals.

With the course, I mean, I suppose you started on peeling spuds and other things like that, and then gradually learned to cook a variety of meals; or did they give you stock

meals to learn to cook?

No – of course, you always had other cooks, trained cooks, there with you. I was very fortunate; one chief cook took a fancy to me and he taught me everything that he possibly could, which upset some of the boys, they'd say, 'You want to watch him; he's got tickets on you'. But no, he was very, very good, but I could never, ever think what his name was, but he really taught me things that I still remember today, was the way he showed me how to do things.

So you felt that the course that you did was a valuable course for your later life?

It was, definitely.

And it's something that, on ships and that, you found that you were kind of a welcome crew member, being the best cook they ever had, or something like that?

Quite often it was said to me, yes.

Now, you are in the Navy, you have almost finished your course; what were your feelings, or your reactions from your folks at home, or people you knew, or your own reaction to being in the Navy? Do you think it was a wise choice you made?

Yes, I think so. As I said before, my parents had split up and there was only really my dad – and my dad was back in the Army – and me. We didn't see one another; we didn't correspond very often; so really, the only family I had was my mates that were in the service with me.

That's quite interesting. Now, how long did this cooking course take before you were available for draft?

We did – there was twelve months all told. There was this six-weeks training on the parade ground, then I did quite a long time in the main galley before, and then I went, did about three months in the bake house – you had to learn to bake bread and all that sort of thing – and then I was put to the chief's galley for another three or four months. The last part of the time I was there I was in charge of all the stores arriving, had to check them all in, make sure they weighed, they were correct; and anything that was dished out to be cooked for that day, I was the one that had to deliver it out. So I had quite a responsible little job, I thought.

Now, after twelve months you were available for draft? How did this happen? Or what was your first draft?

They sorted this all out and we were drafted back on to the *Mercedes*. The other part of the class were going to *Medea*.

Now, a little story of the *Mercedes* and *Medea*. The *Mercedes* was actually called the *Medusa*; her name was printed on the back in big letters but the Navy decided that they'd call her *Mercedes*.

And what were they? Or how did they come into the Navy, those ships?

Well, we used to call them banana boats but they looked to me, they had wooden sides with big – to let the light in you swung this half the side back and hooked it up – be about five foot by

five foot; that was the second deck. They were minesweepers; they had the electric minesweeping gear on board as well as the Oropesa gear, which is the normal minesweeping thing, with the Carley floats – not the Carley floats, the torpedo-looking things [paravanes] that you pull along out the side of you. And they were the only electrical minesweeping ships in the southern hemisphere, from what we were told.

And they'd been, what, built... they weren't built originally as minesweepers, were they?<sup>1</sup>

No, no, no, they were built about 1918, they were really old.

And what was their [original] purpose?

That, I don't know.

Were they Australian ships or were they ships...

No, they were taken over from the Royal Navy by the Australian Navy.

Now, after your training and, I suppose, the luxury of Flinders, and the various galleys and the work you had to do, it must have been quite a shock to arrive in the *Mercedes* and, no doubt, the galley there certainly wasn't the galley you'd been accustomed to.

That's for sure, it was a coal burner. The old stove and that that they had, they finished up taking them out; they said, no, they were useless, they were not good – I think they were better than the ones they put in. They put two Metters, one either side of the – one port, one starboard, two galleys – and the galley was about six foot by four foot wide, that was all, a little coal box in the corner, a little bench on the other side, and these Metter stoves. And we had to cook for sixty-five to seventy people with these things.

How many were in the cooking staff?

Two.

And you were...

First off, it was so strange because two assistant cooks were drafted to the *Mercedes*, and to the *Medea*. We'd never been to sea; we didn't know the first thing about what was happening. Fortunately, on the *Mercedes* we had a very good coxswain, Bunny Hunt, and he had done his time in the reserves, and he'd just come back from Colombo, I think, and he was a butcher up in Fremantle. And he used to really make it so much easier for us, he knew what to do, what meat to go and buy – we had to do all that ourselves because you had no supply system or anything. It was really Rafferty's rules; how on earth we didn't poison anybody I don't know, but we never did.

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<sup>1</sup> *Circe* was built in Hong Kong in 1912 for use on feeder services around Singapore. It was requisitioned by the Royal Navy (RN) in 1939 and converted to a minesweeper, HMS *Circe*. The ship was transferred to the RAN in 1942 and renamed HMAS *Medea*. Sister ship *Medusa* was built in 1913, for the same purpose. It also was requisitioned in 1939; converted to a minesweeper HMS *Medusa*; transferred to the RAN in 1942 and renamed HMAS *Mercedes*.

And what facilities? Did you have refrigeration on board?

No refrigeration.

How did you get on for keeping your meat and other things if you were periods at sea?

Well, until we left to go to Darwin we were only ever out to sea for about three days, and then we would come back into harbour again. Normally it was just the minesweeping from [Bell Buoy] to about forty, fifty, miles past Rottnest, backwards and forwards, day after day, week in, week out. I often wondered why on earth were we doing this and it wasn't until years and years later that I woke up after reading some of the history books and that. The Royal Navy had their submarine base, home base, there, and when the Americans came into the war, so did the Americans have their submarine base there. And that's what we were doing, keeping the lanes clear for them, and also the troop ships which came in at different times, and the transports and that. And that's what we did, up and down.

Could you give us some indication of your own living conditions on board, and your days of work – the days and the hours you worked, and your duties during that time?

Well, we were very lucky we had bunks to sleep in, we didn't have to sling our hammocks, we all had bunks. There was two cooks – I'd lost the other assistant cook, he fell over on the railway line one night and he broke his leg – and I got a ship's cook, a trained ship's cook. He came and he was the mainstay and I was his offsider. We worked two shifts – or at sea we worked together, but in harbour it was one on, one off. If we came we'd get a night off and the other one would stay on and do tea, but during the day we worked together.

What time would you commence work in the morning?

We'd get called oh, one would be an early call – called the early call – he'd get up at five o'clock. Of course, the fires were always going, the stokers used to look after stoking the fire because they'd make their coffee, or tea, or their cocoa, pie and that, and there was always a fire going. So we'd start, normally about six, breakfast would be seven, and then the other cook would come on about half past seven, quarter to eight. We worked together very, very well.

I don't know whether, when you were at Flinders, whether you went to sea for days as an experience, working on the ship, but no doubt you didn't.

No.

But could you give us some ideas of how you felt on your first few days at sea? Because being a cook, I mean, you couldn't afford to look a little bit seasick, I shouldn't imagine.

That's strange because, as you mentioned there, I'd never been to sea, did not know what the sea routine was at all, and when we'd finished cleaning old *Mercedes* up and getting all the crew on board, we went to sea. No-one had ever told us about watch keeping; we didn't know what they were talking about. And, of course, midday, or the watch came on, down at eleven o'clock to get their dinner; of course, dinner wasn't ready the first day. That caused a bit of strife. And then Bunny Hunt, he come down and he sorted it out pretty quick. He said, 'Have you boys ever been to sea?' we said, 'No'. But that was only one of the funny little ones that happened, after that it was alright.

How long were you based in Fremantle, based in Fremantle with *Mercedes*, before you went off to Darwin?

Must have been two and a half years, I think, we were stationed there.

And you were sent to Darwin, what, to continue your minesweeping activities?

Yes. The war had...of course, the Japanese had been well and truly in it now, and the war had shifted. The Americans had shifted their base further north; the Prime Minister had gone up there, so we were shifted to Darwin to carry on doing the things out from Darwin.

Now, that would have been a fairly – as it was a coal-burner – that would have been a fairly lengthy trip, regarding supplies of coal. What range did they make for that?

We didn't pull in anywhere to re-coal; we made the trip from Fremantle to Darwin without re-coaling. The only thing that we'd run out of was bread because we had no baker's oven, and as I said, we only had these two Metters ordinary household stoves with double doors on. So we used to get by with making scone loaves and things like that.

And how long did that trip take, from Fremantle to Darwin?

I'm not too sure; it must have been about five days – five, six, days.

I thought it may have taken longer than that.

No, five or six days.

Now, Frank, going to Darwin, I mean, on the way up, I mean, the weather; well, did you have any spare time for any amusement on board? Or were you head-down all the time working, and then getting your head down to make up for hours you were working?

Not really, pretty lazy sort of way, I mean, Bill Doyle, the other cook, and I, we had it pretty well worked out what we would... a good team; we never had any arguments or anything like that. And we used to just do our job, have our rest in the afternoon if we did that. No, we had no problem.

And what about on the mess deck? What form of recreation? Any recreation or amusement in the mess deck when you were at sea?

Oh, there was always ludo –uckers as they called it – tombola [at] night-time. Of course, you were always blacked out, there's no lights allowed.

With your minesweeping out of Fremantle, did you sweep many mines?

No, we never struck one, not that I can recall anyway.

And now, what about when you arrived in Darwin, were you engaged in minesweeping duties there?

Yes, that's what their main job was, minesweeping out from Darwin. But that's when our eldest boy died and I was sent home from there on compassionate leave till ... and while I was down at Fremantle – they were waiting to return to Darwin – a draft came through and the chief cook said, 'Look, they want a relief down at the Boom Depot, there's a job for you; take it and get out of the place, I don't want you here.'

So you left the *Mercedes* in Darwin because of family misfortune.

Yeah.

And by this time you were married, and now you are back in Fremantle at a depot. This would have been roughly... what year would this have been?

In 1945.

And what, had the war finished then?

No, no – late '44, early '45 that would have been.

Frank, you mentioned you came back to Fremantle because of a loss in your family, but you didn't mention something of when you were married and if you could give us some information on that; then go on to your life in the Boom Depot at Fremantle.

Yes, well, after I came back from Flinders, doing training, I met a lass, Myrtle Durrant, and eventually, after courtship, we decided we'd get married, which we did do. We had one little boy – he was a little miracle boy, I should imagine you'd call it. He was three months premature, he was born with two teeth and they had nothing at St John of God Hospital like they do today. To keep him alive he was wrapped up in cotton wool and put near an oil-burning heater and they kept him for three months in there. And he survived well until he was seven months old and then unfortunately he got pneumonia – when I was away in Darwin at the time – and we couldn't get any doctors, or the wife couldn't get any doctors. There was none available, or they were in the Army, or away and unfortunately he passed on.

So you received a compassionate draft and you came back to Fremantle to be with your family?

Compassionate leave, actually, I only had fourteen days compassionate leave. The skipper of the *Mercedes* was very decent; he applied to the commanding officer of Melville Barracks and they said yes, you could come down by plane and ... It was while I was down here that this draft came through, they wanted someone in a hurry at the Boom Depot and that's ... Fremantle, being evidently the depot for where everyone, if they were short of staff, or short of crew, that's where they came from to fill up.

What was the work at the Boom Depot, would you explain that? Not your work but the reason of the Boom Depot.

Well, from what I can gather the main reason for it being Cockburn Sound was big enough to take the full British Fleet, if they could get the sand bar that was between Carnac Island and the North Mole and the South Mole, there was a big sand blockage there. Well, they had a dredge trying to – which they have already done now – there's only one little passage goes through to

Kwinana at the present day and that's where they've dug the sandbar out, and they keep that open.

Now, the boom – now, big round loops of steel wire that were joined together and they were made in the part warehouse thing, or workshop, at the end of the South Mole. Then they were taken out and we had the *Karangi*, which was a boom ship, with two big horns went out, and the divers went down and joined these wire loops up together to make a complete net that run right across the opening of this that they were doing. They had tripod sort of things sunken in the ground and the wires were swung between them.

By this time, Frank, what would your rank have been by this time?

Oh, just mainly ship's cook.

Ship's cook – not a leading hand?

No.

At this depot, were you just cooking for the fellows in the depot or for the ones on the boom ships as well?

No, the boom ship had a cook of itself – on itself – they always anchored at night at Rockingham and they came out every morning. And the divers and that were stationed at the Boom Depot, they weren't on the ship, and they used to go out every morning and meet them, out wherever they were working.

So this was, from your aspect, a fairly comfortable posting at the galley there. Were there problems associated with this depot as far as your work was concerned?

No, no, no problems whatsoever, it was very easygoing, they were a good mob of fellows. We had a lot – there was a mixture – a lot of civvies worked there as well as Navy, they were the ones that we had to be a bit wary of because if you left anything laying around, it was gone, it was in their bag and it was on the way home.

But you weren't responsible for catering for them?

No, no, no, we had nothing to do with them.

Well, how long did this last, Frank, this posting?

Well, I was there for about eight months altogether, and then a draft came through that I was to go back to Darwin, or go to Darwin, and wait till the *Warrnambool* came in and I'd join her.

But you weren't to go to join the *Mercedes*, you were to...

No, no, no.

... you were to get a fresh draft to the *Warrnambool*?

Yeah. The *Mercedes* was still there but I wasn't drafted there.

And this would have been, what, towards the end of 1945 or thereabouts?

Yes – I don't know, it was May '45, I think.

So you were in Darwin still, so obviously, what are your memories of Darwin? No doubt you've got something to tell us about Timor.

Well, it was strange; I had to wait in Darwin for the *Warrnambool* because the *Warrnambool* was away on an escort trip or something and it wasn't until I was reading some of the books recently that I found out where she was. She was towing a big concrete sort of thing to Manus Island, so I had to wait for six weeks for her to come back there. Then we went back into the independent command; we were doing escort duty, submarine patrol, minesweeping, anything that was going.

The *Warrnambool* wasn't attached to the hydrographic fleet in Darwin then?

No.

That was independent?

She was independent command and whatever was going, we had to do it.

Could you recall anything at the end of the war of the trip to Timor?

Oh, yes, yes. We got called in; we had to come down to Fremantle to do a refit. The refit, evidently from what the buzz was, all corvettes had to be refitted prior to being...

Mobilised?

No, no, no – to meet again in Hong Kong for the final push into Japan, but they all had to do a refit before they could get there. And we were home, in Fremantle doing the refit, when they dropped the bomb. We thought that was it, that was great, the war was over, we was there. No, we didn't. Back to Darwin we had to go and our job then was independent command again, doing any dirty job that was wanted; dumping off ammunition out in the sea and things like that. The skipper got a call-up; we've got to go to Timor.

They'd forgotten to take a jarrah table from the wardroom supposedly that they were going to sign the Japanese surrender of the Timor and that East India area. So we had to put the table on it, strap it on the quarterdeck, and chase this motley looking crew of corvettes, and Army barges, and tugs. I think the Japs must have fallen over laughing when they saw the sort of thing that came in because they were so bedraggled. There was only about three warships in amongst the whole lot.

I was on the *Horsham* at the time and we took part in this, and we couldn't – because we were towing only two barges – we couldn't make proper way and our skipper – I think it was Lieutenant Commander Newby – got them to rig a sail on the forecastle so that we could slow down to about the two or three knots that we were making.

You know what I am talking about then.

Frank, talking to some of the other fellows that served on corvettes, if they were at sea,

all they knew, a bomb had been dropped. Now, I think you said you were in...

Fremantle.

...Fremantle. What knowledge did you have? Did you have any prior knowledge about the bomb or what it did?

Not really. There was talk about that they had split the atom, and then there was always conjecture as to what they were going to do now that they had split the atom. What were they going to do? Was it going to shorten the war? From what we gathered, we had to go to Fremantle to be refitted so that we could go to... or meet up again at Hong Kong before we went into Japan to clean them up. So no, the bomb didn't mean a thing.

After you left Timor I think the *Warrnambool* went south then, did it? And what, for the remainder of your time on the *Warrnambool*, what happened then?

There were funny little incidents that happened at Timor. We'd picked ... when we had this ... take this table across – and by the way, my name's underneath there somewhere, wherever that table is. The supply assistant and I got out there one day and we wrote our names in pencil underneath it. I don't think I'll get court martialled for that.

Anyhow, we'd just picked up a brand-new midshipman; it was his first time at sea. After the second day, I think, they closed down everything at night-time, apart from enough electrical power to have certain lights going, but that was all. So if you used ... you couldn't ... they turned the taps on or anything, you couldn't get water; if you used the heads, well, you had to flush them the best way you could, which was a bucket on the end of a rope.

About half past two in the morning the quartermaster was going around, he had his gaiters, and rifle, and revolver and everything – and you realise, it's only two days after we'd been there – nobody had a clue what was on the island, on Timor, at all, whether the Japs were quiet, whether they were sociable, or whether they wanted to blow us up. Anyway, he's walking around the quarterdeck and he sees a hand come over the side of the gunwale, then another hand, and then a head followed. And he pointed the rifle down and a voice said, 'What the hell are you looking at?' He said, 'Well, I'm blown if I know' – 'What the hell are you doing there?' And what had happened, a poor little middie [midshipman] had got up in the night, used the heads, and went to get a bucket of water to flush it out, threw the bucket in, and followed the bucket and rope in and gone into the drink.

And I was telling this story at a little meeting we had, of *Mercedes* and *Warrnambool* boys, not so long ago, and one of the boys said, 'And that's no bull, that's a true story because I was the bloke ... I was the quartermaster, and he's coming over the side at me.'

Now, you've moved onto a corvette; what was your reaction to the galley there? Was it superior to the *Mercedes*?

Marvellous, it was home from home.

In what way?

Well, it was so easy, so clean, we had oil burners, we had a bakehouse oven, we had a big copper in the corner, we had a tea urn; it was really, well, the ant's pants, one of the best galleys I've ever seen on any ships at all – I didn't see many, I've been on the *Swan* and that, but no.

And there were what, how many cooks on board?

One officers' cook, one leading officers' cook, one leading ship's cook and the baker – he was a baker as well – and me; three.

There were three. Now, tell us something about the *Warrnambool*; what did you experience on the *Warrnambool* or what the *Warrnambool* did on the time you were on her?

Well, after we did our little job of getting the table there for them to sign on – we weren't supposed to be in that group at all, evidently, but they decided that once the surrender had been signed at Koepang [by] the Japanese, we had to take the Army up to Dili which is Portuguese Timor.

It was a beautiful trip up there; I'd love to do it again one day. The scenery, the mountains on the right of us going down, and little sort of gullies came down, and a spiral of smoke coming up, and every one of those was a native village.

When we got to Dili – there was no wharves, of course, and we just dropped the pick, took the motorboat out, and took a rope across and tied up to a gum tree on the shore.

The Portuguese were not very – well, Portuguese Timorese I suppose they were – were not very friendly. They refused to allow anybody ashore if they had a rifle. Of course, the Army said we're not going ashore without a rifle. Anyway, eventually sorted that out and they brought an unofficial ambassador – Australian ambassador – and old chappie who had been interned there, the whole of the war, and the skipper, when they brought him on board, the skipper presented him with a bottle of beer, and shook his hand, and he said, 'I've never been so pleased in all my life to see the White Ensign, I'd never thought I'd ever see it again. It was quite a touching moment.

After that we went back to Koepang and then we had a little job of going down and picking up what was left of the Indonesian prisoners of war that the Japanese had held some miles down the coast. I think we got 70 out of 220, I think that's all that was left. Two the doctors had to leave behind because they were that riddled with beriberi that they said, no, they would never make the journey.

The other ship that was with us, they were sent across to Bali or one of those other islands where the Japanese had had all these Indonesian girls and that in their brothels. So the story that the ladies are telling in recent years, it's quite true, that they were impounded in these brothels up there in the islands.

Now, carry on with the *Warrnambool* until your discharge – if you can give just a little bit about that, thank you.

Well, we went back to Darwin; they said we'd have to go to Darwin and take off all your sweeping gear. Then we pulled up at the wharf and they'd just tied it: 'No, delay that order, cancel that. You are going down to Sydney to join up with the 20th Minesweeping Fleet.' – which we did do – had quite a lovely run down across TI [Thursday Island] and down the coast. But unfortunately I missed the Barrier Reef because we went through it at night-time and I didn't see any of it – we entered at night and came out in the morning.

We picked up our new skipper by then, Commander Travers; he was second in command of the flotilla. The *Swan* was in charge and we were second in command. And we used to tie up just inside the head at Watson's Bay, leave there every day, go out sweeping.

Evidently, when war finished, everybody had to say where they'd laid their minefields – Japanese, Germans, ours, and everybody else – and we used to go out, thirteen ships, line

abreast – line astern, I should say – and it was fascinating to see them. One would go out, and its sweep would be out, and then the next one behind it, would come in beside the paravane – I think that's what they called it.

Yes.

Another one, his sweep would go out, and another one like that. And thirteen ships, one behind the other, for miles, going out, in big squares. You'd start, go so far, then you'd turn and go so far the other way, and then down again, and keep on going until you came right to the centre. Then you'd go on somewhere else – latitude and longitude – and start again. Quite an interesting...

And this was mainly out of Sydney you were going this work, was it?

Out of Wollongong and Sydney.

And you stayed on the *Warrnambool* for how long?

I left at...we did Christmas in 1946, at Christmas, in Sydney – I was the cook for Christmas dinner – because West Australians again, they didn't get any leave, they had to stay on board and Tasmanians, I think it was. We had a wonderful time that Christmas.

How did you find that, being a cook? I know you had to – well, it was a supply assistant's job to order supplies, and there were rations – oh, well, not so much rations, how did you work this? I mean, now, Christmas and other things; were there special issues made for that or was it just something you built up from mess funds?

No, Christmas was always a special ... Christmas in the Navy was always – Sunday was a special day in the Navy too because you always had roast pork for lunch and ham for tea – if you were lucky enough to be where the... there was no tinned ham given out very often. But Christmas dinner was great because you had a turkey, you always had... The usual thing was rum coffee in the morning – you got a bottle of rum to supply, make the rum coffee; a bottle of brandy to make the brandy sauce for the plum puddin' and a bottle of sherry to make the sherry trifle. So by the time... no-one drank too much rum coffee in the morning, it was too early in the morning, but everyone that came down to wish me a happy Christmas, I'd say, 'Oh, like a drop of rum?' By the time Christmas dinner came I think I was a bit over the...

So after that Christmas it was about time I think you should leave the *Warrnambool* by this time, or shortly after this. Now, could you tell us something about your discharge, and what you can recall of that, before you returned to civilian life?

Yep. The draft came through about middle of January 1946 to be sent home to Fremantle for demob – which I eventually arrived – had to wait. Oh, I was put in charge of a watch down there. I took over from a leading cook that had been in charge of the watch and he was on his way out, so I was put in charge of his watch and I was the acting leading hand there for the next three months, until I was discharged in June – at the end of June – in 1946.

With your discharge, were you given any information about what your benefits could be? Or did you utilise the Commonwealth Reconstruction Training in any way?

Yes, that was all explained. I didn't take any ... One chap, or one officer, said, 'What you should be doing is going into the same business you are in now.' and I said, 'Well, I'd like to be a pastry cook' – I was interested. He said, 'Your best idea would be to do your own pastry business.' And he looked around and he eventually told me, he said, 'Why don't you go and have a look at Kalamunda? There's not a pastry cook place up there and it is growing.'

Well, I went and had a look – my wife and I went up and had a look – and we said, 'Oh, boy, there's just nothing here.' which, at that particular time, there wasn't. And I'm so glad that I didn't go into that because it was years and years before Kalamunda even made any move to get any people, or population. But I did go back into the cooking game. I went to work for the Salvation Army, the People's Palace in Pier Street, which was a restaurant, and I was there for eighteen months, I think.

They were trying to – or they started up, they were taking off, putting [off] the women who had been working for the Tramways Department and returned servicemen were getting the jobs. So I applied for a job as a conductor on the tramways and got it, and I worked mainly on trolley buses, I like the trolley buses. I was there for three years.

Then a job came up – or position came up – to go back into the grocery trade, which I'd been trained for before the war, which I did. I worked for a firm called [Blemer] Brothers who had a gallon licence in those days, and eventually we became one of the main ones of doing weddings and parties, and things, with liquor licence or liquor, all sorts of liquor.

So after discharge you decide to live in the metropolitan area?

Yes.

And then you weren't going to return to the south-west, and that you then had a variety of jobs, but I think probably still underlying, you are still a cook or a pastry cook at heart. Was that correct?

That's correct.

Now, tell me something about where you lived. Did you get a war service loan for your house? Because most people found that pretty tough in the beginning, coming back and finding accommodation.

It was. It was very tough. We were living in Mount Hawthorn – by this time we had two children, a girl and a boy – but it was also...the house originally belonged to a chap that was in the Army. Well, in those days you were supposed to... a serviceman had priority of going back to his home if he wanted to. Well, we put in for a State Housing Commission place, and I was on the list for about three years before I even got any answer – I think my number was about 41 or something, it was very, very low in the list – and eventually we got a home in Mount Hawthorn. It was out in the back blocks, in those days, now it's right in the middle of town, near the old people's home in Glendalough. No roads, you had to walk through sand, pull the pram with the kids in it through the sand.

Well, then a job vacancy, I was lucky enough, I got a vacancy – position – at Repatriation Hospital at Hollywood.

What, and you stayed there for the remainder of your working life?

I started as an orderly and then I finished up staying there twenty years, but seventeen years as a cook. I was eventually their head chef, which I retired medically unfit at, in 1960. I was just

fifty-nine and a half at the time but I was that sick that they decided that I'd better... I had a heart attack and subsequently I had open-heart surgery – four bypasses – but I'm still alive.

So you certainly had a varied career after your discharge, catering and being a trolley bus driver, and all that.

Trolley bus conductor.

Conductor, I'm sorry, not driver. Now, what about your family? You mention you had two children; what did they do after they left school?

We had three children; Ted, the youngest one, was born when we had the house in Mount Hawthorn, the state rental home, which we eventually bought – not through War Service, I've never used War Service – I bought it through the RNI Bank. Since then we've sold that, bought a house at Falcon, at Mandurah, but I had a second heart attack down there and the kids said, no, come on, you can't do that. And now we live in Beckenham, we've got our own home there. I was very fortunate, in many ways, while I was still working at Hollywood – how I come to get it, I don't know – but during one of their Queen's Birthday Honours I was awarded the British Empire Medal for works and services done for the veterans and the staff of Hollywood, which I was very pleased about.

Now, would you tell us something about your retirement and some of the activities you've been engaged in?

Yes. One of the most important parts – well the most interesting thing that I can remember about – I belonged to the Young Australia League – YAL – and I played ... [Interview ends abruptly]

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