Australian War Memorial

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TRANSCRIPT
OF
ORAL HISTORY RECORDING

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Vice Admiral Sir Richard Innes Peek KBE CB DSC (Rtd) as Commanding Officer HMAS Tobruk, Malaya 1956-1958, interviewed by Lieutenant Commander Tony Hughes RANR

Recorded
at: Canberra, ACT
on: 2 April 2003
by: Bill Brassell, AWM Staff

Description
Peek speaks of his training and operational experience (Second World War and Korean War) prior to his involvement in the Malayan Emergency; taking command of HMAS Tobruk for the British Commonwealth Far East Strategic Reserve (BCFESR) and Malayan Emergency deployment; primary and secondary roles for these deployments, amplification of these roles and associated commitments; army and airforce personnel being accompanied in Malaya by families; command and control of RAN ships; the accidental death of a sailor during a FESR exercise; HMAS Tobruk's engagement of a communist terrorist (CT) camp in southern Johore; ship visits during the FESR deployment; the relationship between FESR and the South East Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO); caring for families of RAN personnel embarked on FESR deployments; some unusual disciplinary cases and the new 'uniform disciplinary code'; the award of medals for FESR and Malayan Emergency service; aspects of operational entitlements and administration of repatriation benefits for RAN personnel; unusual incidents at sea during his service; experiences in command, staff and training appointments including encounters with the Naval Board; general reflections on changes in the RAN and his unique experiences as a senior RAN officer.

Transcribed by: C.L. Soames, January 2004

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Transcript methodology

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It is strongly recommended that readers listen to the sound recording whilst reading the transcript, at least in part, or for critical sections.

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 Vice Admiral Sir Richard Innes Peek KBE CB DSC RN (Rtd); it is conducted by Lieutenant Commander Tony Hughes RANR on Wednesday 2 April 2003 at the Australian War Memorial. The topics covered are mainly the views and experience of Vice Admiral Peek as Commanding Officer of *HMAS Tobruk* in the Malayan Emergency during 1956.

Vice Admiral Sir Richard Peek had a distinguished career which included service during the Second World War in *HMS Revenge*, *HMAS Hobart*, and *HMAS Australia*. He was awarded the OBE and the DSC for operations in Philippine waters. During the Korea War he was Commanding Officer of *HMAS Tobruk* and was awarded the US Legion of Merit, and during the Malayan Emergency he again commanded *HMAS Tobruk*. His later appointments included Commanding Officer of *HMAS Sydney* and of the aircraft carrier *HMAS Melbourne*, and as a Flag Officer, the 4th Naval Member of the Australian Naval Board, the Deputy Chief of Naval Staff (DCNS) Flag Officer Commanding the Australian Fleet (FOCAF) Second Naval Member of the Australian Naval Board, and finally, Chief of Naval Staff (CNS). He retired in 1973.

Welcome, Sir Richard.

Thank you very much.

We can start off this interview leading up to your experiences in Malaya. If we can start off in Topic 1 discussing your general service background and experience, as well as training, which were preparation for your time with the British Commonwealth Far East Strategic Reserve and the Malayan Emergency commitments.

I don't think there was any specific preparation for the Strategic Reserve; I certainly don't recall being briefed by anybody before I went up to join Brooke in Hong Kong. But looking back at it, much of my previous service career gave me the background that I needed, and if I could list some of them perhaps.

The Staff College course; I did the first of the Joint Services Staff Colleges, so I got a feeling for the other two services. I was Staff Officer Operations to FOCAF; various appointments at Navy Office, including Director of Plans; I was Executive Officer *Cerberus* where I got a feel for the young sailors coming along; and I was Deputy Chief of Naval Personnel where I got some sort of feeling for what needed to be done to improve the conditions of service life. I think this affected me probably more than anything, the dreadful way that people were treated in the 'good old days'.

You have a distinguished career in both the Second World War and Korea. Would you care to just briefly cover those experiences in warfare?

What can one say about the Second World War? You went to sea and more or less stayed at sea for the duration of the war - I think I had four years at sea during the war - Atlantic stuff for six months, and the *Revenge* was interesting. We had a wild captain, though he didn't look wild. We happened to be taking a third of the gold reserve of Britain across the Atlantic, and he talked to the ship's company and he said something of the order that we've got this stuff on board and we've got to get it through, and if we run into a pocket battleship we can't keep up with her. He said, 'The only thing I can do is to ram her. If we do ram her I'll arrange for the engineer to have

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superheated steam on the shelter deck, and boiling oil, and I've got a number of pikes that have been made and we'll board them' - this is 1939 - an exciting man and really fun.

Then a spell for about a year FND trade and gunnery people, and then to the *Hobart* where we again had an outstanding character in Captain Howden. Apart from threatening to have me shot once, he really did some incredible things. When Java was about to fall we'd run out of fuel and we had to go back to harbour to get fuel while *Perth* and *Houston*, and the Dutch ships, were fighting the Japanese - and we'd actually gone through the Sundra Strait the night before the Battle of Sundra Strait. But Harry Howden, of his own volition, while we were getting fuel, got in a motorboat and drove round the shipping anchored off Batavia Harbour - and there must have been fifty or sixty merchant ships - and he just went alongside their gangways and called for the captain - 'Sail' - 'Where do I go, captain?' - 'Go where you like, but keep out of the way of the Japanese' - and fifty or sixty ships, when shipping was so short, hundreds of thousands of tons of shipping, just by his own - nobody had told him to do this.

Then we got back to Fremantle, and for some unknown reason he decided to go into Fremantle Harbour stern first - again. This caused rumours round Western Australia that we'd had our bows blown off. But he was a wonderful character. I managed to wound him in the Battle of the Coral Sea - it was only a splinter that got him, but it was my fault. Instead of cursing me he said, 'Oh, now I can put up a Purple Star' - Purple Star?

Purple Heart.

Purple Heart. So Harry Howden took us through all that. Then I went to the *Australia*, went up the north New Guinea coast, bombarding here and there.

I suppose that possibly the bravest thing I ever did; we were running out of high explosive 8-inch shells - of course, we were using a lot for bombardment - and the Americans were running out of semi-armour-piercing shells for their 8-inch guns. So we measured the guns and we thought they'd fit. So I got the captain's permission to fire a couple of American HC - high-capacity shells they were - they went alright, we fired them - didn't have any range tables or anything like that, so we didn't know the muzzle velocity, we were flying blind. However, we had to work that out.

We had another, a very distinguished, captain called Dechaineux who was killed later in the *Australia*. He'd been giving me a pretty rough time for a while, but we settled down after a time. The first time we used the American shells for bombarding we finished up at zero hour - well, you had to stop fire with all the guns loaded, and they were hot. I said to the captain, 'What do you want me to do with them?' He looked around at Hollandia, and he said, 'There's a large native hut up on the hill there, it is certainly - probably - a Japanese headquarters. Destroy it for me.' I said, 'Aye-aye, sir. Should I used a salvo or a broadside?' and he said, 'Whatever you think.' I thought a soft salvo. We added a bit here, and took a bit off there, and fired our four shells in the cold light of dawn. They had ... what's the word? ... a light in the tail of them.

A sort of tracer effect - the cordite?

No, this was the shell itself, there's a name for it.

They call it tracer.

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Yes, tracer would be good enough. These four shells went up and they went over the top, and they landed on this building and there was no building. This is at a range of about 15,000 yards. So I turned to Dechaineux and said, 'What shall I do with the other four, sir?' and he said, 'Do what you bloody well like.'

Then we had the Philippines campaign.

> It was a busy war for you. You then went on to Korea, and that was a fairly busy time for you, in Korea, as well, different to the Pacific.

Yes, it was cold as opposed to heat, in fact, it got bloody cold. Oh, I suppose, from a personal point of view, two things stood out. The *Sydney* was up there at the same time, and Captain Harries - who was a senior captain and I was a junior commander - but because we were both in command he seemed to regard us as buddies, and he was telling me things that he wasn't telling his executive officer in the *Sydney*, about his officers and what was going on. So we got on very well.

For Christmas - whatever the year was - we had a minister for the Army, I think he was, who was sent up by the Prime Minister to cheer the troops in Korea. This character went on board the *Sydney* - we were lying alongside the pontoon in Kure Harbour - went on board the *Sydney* first. I had my spies there to see what he said, and what he said, he started off by saying, 'Chaps, I just want you to know what a sacrifice I've made by being up here. The Prime Minister sent for me and said ...' - whatever his name was - "'I want you to go up and cheer up the boys in Korea." "Oh, but I've got family arrangements for Christmas." "Oh, but you've got to go.'" Imagine how this went down.

Well, he came on board *Tobruk*, and we hadn't fallen in the ship's company because it was so cold. I said, 'Come up and have a cup of coffee while we get the troops going.' He had a cup of coffee and I said, 'I understand you said something like this on board the *Sydney*.' He said, 'Yes' - didn't say, 'So what?' And I said, 'Well, they are a very disciplined crew on board the *Sydney* and if you say something like that to my sailors they'll throw you in the bloody harbour - and they would have.

The other interesting thing at the time, and still is, that the American admiral, and the British admiral, were fighting - that's the best word. The Americans were saying, 'These goddamn limeys (British) think they rule the oceans, and they're the only ones that know anything.' And the British were saying, 'These bloody Yanks, they think they own the world.' Every time we were in harbour I was the ham in the sandwich. One would send for me, and then the other would send for me, and I couldn't tell either what the other was saying, but I managed to keep them from blows.

> That was Scott Moncrief and Dwyer, was it?

That's right, they're the two.

> So this leads into what we'll discuss, your exposure to early military politics, I suppose, as a young commanding officer of *Tobruk*, being involved with the senior officers as a confidant.

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Yes.

That was a good experience for you.

Very true, and I think it's partly because we were all on the same sort of wavelength having been involved in World War II. Looking back it's quite incredible, the responsibility that one was given - perhaps it was the same always. I said I was Staff Officer Operations in Intelligence to the Fleet Commander - as a lieutenant commander, - went as Director of Plans, as a brand-new commander - now it's a commodore.

Exactly.

Perhaps I shouldn't say it, but the ranks, I think, have been prostituted over the years, no only in the Navy, in the Army as well. I mean, brigadiers are office boys and commodores are similar.

There was an explosion, wasn't there, particularly of commodores?

Yes, partly to get proper pay for the sailors, and you had to have some sort of margin between the officers, and the junior officer and senior officers, and it was just status. I mean, when one considers what went on with the *Tampa* and the 'Babies Overboard', and it is probably still going on in the (Persian) Gulf, of politicians interfering in operational matters without, so far as the public is concerned, any service protest. To me it's unbelievable that ... to some of us it's actually quite shocking ... but oh, I'm rambling on.

I discovered a technique while CNS (Chief of Naval Staff), and I thought of it all by myself - I think. When I had an occasion when I was told to do something that was against my professional judgement, and having thought about it I went back - it was the Minister for the Navy actually - and I said, 'I wonder, Minister ...' - I asked him if he really wanted me, and he said yes, he did, and I said, 'Well, I wonder if you'd mind putting it in writing?' - 'You wouldn't disobey me, CNS?' - 'Oh, no, Minister, I wouldn't, but I would like to have it in writing.' So I won that one - I used it twice - I used it with Arthur Tange - that was very brave of me - he respected me for it, and agreed - and with the Minister for Defence too. But all three - three in three years isn't many - but thereafter I told every one of my successors, till about the 1990s, of this technique. But whether they ever used it - but they certainly didn't use it recently. I mean, imagine if Barry, [inaudible] the Chief of the Navy, hadn't got the responsibility operational, but if Barry had said to the minister, Mr Reith, 'Would you put it in writing, minister?', Reith would have run a bloody mile - so would Howard, so would all the public servants. The advisers to the minister, in my time you treated like dirt, you didn't accept what they said - you said, 'I'll go and see the minister' - there were only a few of them anyhow - these days never... I'm rambling on.

Well, yes, but it's interesting to hear about the comparison, in your experience, to what is perceived today - or what's obvious today. I was actually slightly involved with the *Tampa* myself, from another point of view.

But now leading on to Malaya, and the British Commonwealth Far East Strategic Reserve, which you were taking your ship into. You joined *Tobruk* in Hong Kong?

Yes.

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Who did you take over from incidentally? Who was the captain of *Tobruk*? Who did you relieve?

Rodney Rhodes, again, five or six years older than I was, but he had a very gallant war record and a splendid bloke. He'd had his time up there.

'Dusty' Rhodes.

Oh, they are all dusty - did you know him at all?

No, sir.

To start with *Tobruk*, as I've already said, I really think somewhere it ought to be recorded officially - and I suppose my comments are official ...

Yes.

... what the primary and secondary roles were. I don't want to read them out, but I suggest you might like to have them copied out from this book, which comes from an (sic) Australian archives and which I discovered years ago now - five or six years ago. But there is no doubt that there were other instructions besides these, but these were the formal instructions from the ANZAM (Australia, New Zealand and Malaya) governments.

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If you care to read them, because this interview is where it will be embedded. Would you care to read them?

Yes - or else you can type them out.

We are capturing your wise words of wisdom, sir.

'After much discussion the following primary and secondary roles for the Far East Strategic Reserve, which were common, not only to the ADF component of the Far East Strategic Reserve (FESR), but to British and New Zealand components as well, were agreed.

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'Primary role. The primary role of the Strategic Reserve, in accordance with the purposes of the South-East Asia Collective Defence Treaty, is to provide a deterrent to, and to be available at short notice, to assist in countering further communist aggression in South-East Asia. Further, the role it will take is to form part of the force for the external defence of Malaya and Singapore.

'The Strategic Reserve may, at the direction of the Commander-in-Chief Far East, be employed in defence operations in the event of armed attack against Malaya or Singapore. The Strategic Reserve, or units thereof, will not be otherwise committed for the use of force in its primary role without reference to the ANZAM Defence Committee, except as specified.

'Secondary role. The secondary role of the Strategic Reserve is to assist in the maintenance of the security of Malaya by participating in operations against communist terrorists. Units of the Strategic Reserve may be employed in its secondary role to the extent such employment does not prejudice the readiness of the Strategic Reserve to perform its primary role.

'In the course of the Prime Minister's speech to Parliament he repeated the contribution Australia would make to the FESR. He went on the mention the possibility of Australian forces in the FESR being used in anti-bandit operations, but left the question open pending further discussion.' End of quote.

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That's taken from ... the title of the book, sir?

This is Mr Justice Moore's Review of Service Entitlements and Anomalies in Respect to South-East Asian Service, 1955-1975, and the quote is taken directly from secret Australian archives, as they were then.

That clears my mind.

Taking it a bit further - and although I knew that direction, that was the direction we had, there were other supplementary directions that I haven't got recorded, but they do exist. ANZAM Committee we talked about. They (sic) rules that there should always be two escorts in the Singapore-Malaya area, no matter where else they were. This was to prevent infiltration from the sea, which was part of the primary role, and which we carried out successfully. There was no infiltration from the sea. It could be argued that the communists didn't try, but we don't know, and anyhow, whether they didn't try or not, if they didn't try it was because we were there.

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The deterrent.

We were a deterrent, yes.

The second amplification I can remember - and it seemed strange at the time, and it seems even stranger now - was that we had to protect British shipping in the Taiwan Strait from any attack by Communist China. For that purpose we had painted on the top of our turrets a Union Jack.

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I didn't know that. Was that a real threat?

Well, you know, it was thought to be a threat, but nothing happened. But when we went through the Taiwan Strait we went through at action stations.

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And similarly we had an annual requirement - and I think this was an Australian Government requirement - to go to Korea and support the United Nations forces there. As it transpired later, we went. But it seems important to me the fact that the primary role of the Navy, or the maritime forces, if you like - because the Air Force did its SEATO exercises and produced some LRMP (Long Range Maritime Patrol) aircraft. So far as I'm aware, certainly in my time, you never saw a soldier outside Malaysia or Singapore, but possibly they went up to Hong Kong, I don't know.

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Hong Kong was normally the British Ghurkhas, weren't they?

Oh, it was ... if you couldn't get back to Australia, yes.

The other thing that I always thought odd was that the Army and Air Force should be accompanied by their families. How you can, in a foreign country where the communist

terrorists were acting, and we're in their primary role, if things blew up, you had to be prepared to fight anywhere and leave your wives and families behind in a foreign country, it was beyond my comprehension. I know the arguments they used because I came across them when I was researching the thing, and the arguments were that a lot of them were Korea and World War II people and they couldn't bear to be separated from their families again. You can imagine that went down like a lead balloon with us.

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> If you are taking your family to the edge of a war zone, it was an interesting thing, wasn't it?

Yes, it was quite a fierce debate in the cabinet about it, but the Army came good and said, 'We can't send them without their wives and families.' It would have been nice to get back to Nelsonian days wouldn't it?

> What were the command and control arrangements for naval units? Who did you answer to?

That's interesting in the light of the official story which only gives the command and control for the land, and possibly Air Force - I didn't look at that - but certainly from FARELF point of view.

Now, we were under the operational command of Commander-in-Chief Far East, and he delegated it to the Commander-in-Chief Far East Fleet, so he was our (inaudible) administratively (inaudible) well, there were two ships, they were both under my administrative command because I was Captain [D tense] Destroyer Flotilla, was another of my jobs. And then to FOCAF - Flag Officer Commanding Australian Fleet - and then to the Naval Board. In an emergency, or important event that was going to raise the press, I went direct to Navy Office, copy to FOCAF. For example, when we had a man killed, it was obviously an important thing from the Navy's point of view to get the next of kin told, it was important to get the Naval Board's organisation to tell the next of kin what had happened.

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So compared again, if I might, with Operational Command of Tampa and 'Children Overboard', which was all done by voice, in days when we have got almost instantaneous formal written (inaudible) this you know, this went from a commander to a brigadier, to a rear admiral, to another rear admiral, to an admiral - not to Chief of the Navy - to the admiral or his deputy, and to Jane Holt and God knows who. You'd think they'd never been to school. I'm sure you used to do the trick of starting off with 'George has black hair', and by the time it gets to the fifth one it's 'Georgina has blonde hair'.

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> That's right.

As I say, this is unbelievable, they seem to have forgotten any lessons they learnt from the past.

> They do, don't they?

> Can you briefly discuss the death? Was that the young gunnery sailor who was killed?

Who?

The death on board *Tobruk*; was that the gunnery sailor who was killed with the star shell incident? Was that at that time?

Well, you've got me. We were practising night encounter exercises where you illuminate a target you've seen by radar with star shells by putting star shells behind it and you can see who it is. And because of the possibility of infiltration by junks, and anything else from the Chinese trying to resupply, this was an exercise we were doing with other naval ships – there were the 'goodies' and the 'baddies' - whether we were the 'goodies' or the 'baddies' didn't matter, but they were firing star shells at us, or over us, and we were firing star shells back at them, over them. Well, one of the shells didn't go over, after the star shell had been blown out the back the shell casing of it hit *Tobruk*, and it went through the upper deck and it killed Able Seaman Williams and very badly wounded another sailor. And we argued for years that it was an operational matter, and we still - no, we are not still arguing at the War Memorial; the trustees agreed, after this report, that he and another sailor were war casualties and should be on the Roll of Honour. This document was February 2000, the trustees have approved it well over a year ago and it still hasn't happened. The man's sister is getting old and will probably never live to see her brother's name on the (Roll of Honour), and she wants to. I gather there are reasons why it hasn't happened, but it's pretty sad really.

The other man who was very badly wounded was in hospitals on and off for twelve months. He is a very honest man and when he was interviewed by the Service doctors, could he mow his lawn? Oh, yes, he could mow his lawn. They didn't tell the people it took him a whole working day to mow it - he got nothing, no repat. He eventually did, of course.

It's important, to my mind, that it's brought out because it shows that you were preparing, your ship was ...

No doubt about it.

... in a war zone.

This is accepted by (inaudible) and, you know, to go on a bit - I think it fits in here - when we came to sail away the first time, after I'd been up there for seven or eight months, I wrote a report - a monthly report, the end of it, coming back - and I said that people were fairly happy, but they were most distressed that Army and Air Force were getting the world and they were getting nothing. When I say the world, I didn't specify, (inaudible) but they got freedom from income tax, they got special allowances, they got their wives and families there, the married ones - not the girlfriends in those days - they got educational allowance, they got servants, they got cheap rent. The sailors were upset about this in that they weren't getting anything. I wrote it and imagined that it would be taken up. I think it was, but when I finished my second tour of duty I came back again to the Deputy Chief of Naval Personnel for about six months and didn't follow it up - and I should have. I've got all sorts of excuses why I didn't, but I should have followed it up.

But then I forgot all about it until 1992 when an ex-sailor wrote to me and said, 'I've found this report of yours dated December 1946. Do you still feel the same way?' I wrote back - I didn't know the bloke - and I said, 'Of course I do, but that's all been fixed.' But he wrote back and said, 'No, it hasn't', and this started a long and sordid battle. We finally, because of the intervention of the Naval Association and others, (managed) to get this man an ex-Army judge

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advocate and a civilian judge who went through it very carefully, and it all came out right in the end.

But when you know something - and I don't know much of the human despair that it caused - when we first started, a widow in Western Australia had written to me and said, 'I understand something is happening; could you keep me in touch?' - this is in 1992 or 1993. And nothing had happened. I happened to remember the date because when we got this report I wrote and said that the Government has accepted this report, and you will be entitled to a pension. She had three or four small children, and the husband had died - he hadn't been killed, he actually died of war-related injuries. She wrote a thank-you letter and how nice Legacy had been when she went to them, and thanked me, and it looked a pretty blotchy sort of letter, and she finished up with a PS: 'I'm sorry this is such a mess but I've been crying while I wrote it.' And I thought, you know, what bastards people are. This is just one example that happened to come to light, made me feel sick.

Of course there are now conflicts that are going on - the DVA, of course, now runs this, I guess they have a tough job, there's a lot of people out there who ...

I don't think it's DVA's - they only go into rules, admittedly they have some input into the rules. But ... oh, I won't go into names, but at one stage we'd got where DVA was on side – Con Sciacca it was - and the minister assisting the Minister for Defence was a no-hoper. However, he said - it was his response - and he said, 'If Con Sciacca agrees, I'll agree.' Con Sciacca got on to it, he said, 'Oh, no, I won't agree' - nice people! But I mustn't give you the wrong impression, it wasn't just politicians, or bureaucrats, it was our own cloth, naval cloth, and this, as you can imagine, distressed me. It wasn't all the naval cloth.

There was a man in a position of responsibility who nobody checked what he said was true, and he was telling lies to people, he was telling lies - I shouldn't say lies, untruths, he was twisting the truth. I came across one only the other day, about ... oh, what was it? ... oh, God, I forget. Oh, I am with you now.

The *Shoalhaven* was up in Shanghai when the Battle of the Yangtze was going on - are you old enough to remember that?

HMS Amethyst

That's right. And the *London* went up the river and got holed. Now, *Shoalhaven* was in Shanghai and was going up to rescue the *Amethyst*, but it was taken over by an RN ship called *Concord*, I think. The crew of the *Amethyst* have been trying since then to get accepted. I think all they want, because they are too old for repat now anyhow, and none of them were hurt - they might have had diseases and so on - but they want a medal. They are getting now where this creature that I'm talking about, they sent me a copy of a letter he wrote, and he misquotes an earlier thing, leaves out a critical word – which as he sent it to these people - sent it four or five years ago - but it's open and shut, the Naval Board won't support it, and they won't support it because of this report. Well, when you put the extra word in, the report is left a window of opportunity. This sort of thing - however.

So that was the *Shoalhaven* boys wanted recognition?

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Well, they didn't go up the Yangtze, but they were senior naval officers, a lieutenant commander, a man called Keith [Chapp], was running the naval affairs from Shanghai. However, I don't think they'll get it.

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> Well, as an aside, I was told the other day that the Government is looking at producing a Volunteer Medal. You may be aware of this. This, apparently, is in response to the National Service Medal being produced; the Volunteer Medal will be for those personnel who volunteered to join the military, like you and I, but weren't in long enough to see action, or engagement, or something. So that's politically nice to do, I think, this is the motivation, something real and genuine.

The start date, if they do have it, will be before you volunteered - I mean, after you volunteered. There's a Long Service Good Conduct Medal which I think the date was six months after I retired. But oh, they are out of control the medals now.

> They are, it's quite silly really. I must say our troops over in the desert at the moment will certainly be deserving of their medals when they come home from this current engagement.

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But will the airmen? I don't want to denigrate the Air Force, but they can't be fired at. It's like a turkey shoot to me, the whole bloody bombing campaign. I suppose we do the same when we bombard targets ashore too.

> Oh, yes, absolutely.

When you think of it, if you are being logical.

> Talking about bombing targets ashore, there was a period when you did have a bit of engagement up there, off the east coast of Johore. Do you recall that?

I do, yes.

> In company with *Anzac*.

I think *Anzac* did it separately, but I'm not sure, I can't be sure of that. The Army reported a communist camp in south Johore and we were detailed to go and take it out. We sat about 10,000 or 12,000 yards off shore, the Army, in a little aeroplane, spotted our gunfire onto the alleged communist tank - we never saw it - but he said our fire was effective and that was it. I think we did it twice, but certainly did it once.

> I read - you might care to repeat it - you were at a submission where you asked for a warrant to be issued for your arrest because on that particular encounter you could potentially or may have murdered people if it wasn't a war operation.

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It wasn't a warrant for my arrest, he was going to shoot me. Oh, no, that's *Hobart*, and what happened, we'd arrived in Suez and we had to wait to go through. There was an air raid on, and I'd organised the fighting part of the ship to be on two watches for air raids. Oh, about ten o'clock at night I persuaded the captain to go to the two watches instead of having everybody closed up. I was watch below. I went down to my cabin and just lay on my bunk and went to

sleep.

Unknown to me a merchant ship was hit, and we were firing the 4-inch guns, which were right over where I was sleeping. I was woken up by a sailor saying, 'The captain wants you on the bridge' - there was a great glare of the fire on this ship. I went up and people are looking at me a bit oddly, wondering what I'd done. I got up to the bridge, the captain wanted me there - 'Yes, you bloody coward, where have you been skulking? Down in the bilges?' and I said, 'No, sir, I've been asleep.' He said, 'Nobody could have slept through that.' I said, 'Well, I was asleep when So and So (inaudible) found me, I was fast asleep.'

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I can understand it, I slept underneath the after gun of *HMAS Brisbane* for six months, and I used to sleep through it.

But he was, he was a weary fighter when he got back to Sydney. I knew he was anxious to get ashore because one of his boys had fallen and had a cracked skull. He made me the Forecastle Officer, quite improperly - normally it's the job for the first lieutenant to anchor (inaudible).

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However, coming around Bradleys Head he said, 'Cap the port anchor', and half-way to the buoy he said, 'No, change it to the starboard anchor' so we could use the cable to the starboard anchor. Well, so we were half-way through and it took a bit of untangling. We hooked on the wire to the buoy at Garden Island and he started shouting at me from the bridge - 'What's the delay? (You are going to) fuck us all up' - oh, we'd had a pretty rough old time up in Java. However, I was ill disciplined and I took it for a while. Then I got right up in the bows and, using my Gunnery Officer's voice, said, 'If you think you can do it better, sir, come and do the bloody thing yourself' - this was a lieutenant. Again, there was hushed silence. However, we secured.

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I knew he'd been hiding it ashore, and I knew that the *Hobart* had a cabin, it was on the quarterdeck level, and he had a day cabin, a sleeping cabin, and a bathroom, and I felt sure he'd go and have a shower before he went ashore. So I waited until he was in the bathroom, went into his sleeping cabin and stood there. I don't know how I knew this, but I knew he came out starkers from the bathroom - the captain came out starkers - and I said, 'Sir, I'll resign my commission, it's a dreadful thing, I can't think what came into my mind. I've got no excuse whatsoever and I do apologise.' He put his wet arm around my neck and said, 'Don't give it a thought, old boy, I've done much worse in my time.' As I say, he was a man of character.

Royal Navy wasn't he?

No, he was RAN, or what used to be called the 'Hungry Hundred' or the 'Famishing Fifties'. After World War I they accepted a lot of ex-RN and ex-Merchant Navy people, and he was one of them. In the late 1920s he decided that Japan was going to be the next enemy and asked the Naval Board for leave on half pay to go and learn Japanese, and the Naval Board said no. It was in the days when he had no money, but he went on leave for twelve months and learnt Japanese - in Japan.

Excellent. Did he finish up in Intelligence?

You wonder about these things. It's got nothing to do with it but I read a book the other day called ... by someone called Mordike something like that, called, 'We Must Keep it Quiet'. It's about the British War Office persuading the Australian Minister for Defence, in 1911, to start

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organising a force which he persuaded the Australian Minister for Defence would be his defence against Japan invading us in World War I, because the Army would be needed in Europe and they couldn't defend it. Initially they wouldn't have been able to defend us from the Japanese fleet. The two of them agreed that it should be kept quiet - Mordike is the man's name - publishes out at RAAF Fairbairn for some unknown reason - fascinating. But they kept it quiet for sixty, seventy years. But it was tied in with the politicians' view, and the Army's view, of it.

Right, I'm going way off.

That's alright, it's such an interesting topic, you can recall your experiences.

Let's get back to your being commander of *Tobruk*. Your area of operation, basically, was our of Singapore, was it - mostly eastern coast?

By no means. After all, coming back to our primary task, we spent a tremendous amount of time going to foreign parts, this much maligned showing the flag. I jotted down, for interest, some of the ones I remember going to. Kuching, Seria, Labuan, Jesselton, Manila, Bangkok, Saigon, Inchon, Seoul, Tokyo, Singapore, [Pulo Tieamen], Swettenham, Langkawi and Penang. Well, you can see why I went broke. Of course, there we had to travel with no expense accounts then, you had to entertain.

That was a very busy program.

Well, that was our job, and the reactions you got – I'll stick to the only ones I can remember, amongst the diplomats was Ralph Harry in Saigon, and we were the second Australian ship - *Anzac* had been up before us, but we went up - and he arranged for us to have tea with President Diem, who the Americans had murdered because they didn't like him. Me and the first lieutenant went and had afternoon tea with him - candied cockroaches –they were supposed to be grasshoppers. However, the president then insisted we spent the next day flying around Vietnam in his own DC-3, which was pretty brave. Who else did we have?

Was there evident Viet Cong activity when you were visiting Saigon?

No, it hadn't really started in '46 - the French were still there - but it was still ...

This is '56?

... on edge, it was teetering, the communists were in half of the country. I can't remember when Dien Bien Phu was, the French might have pulled out by then.

Around that era, around that time.

Yes. But we got from the diplomats, or I got from the diplomats, what was going on in the various areas, and how pleased they were to see us, and so on. We had David McNicol in Singapore who kept us up to date, and we had - what was his name? - I'll tell you in a moment, if I can find it - oh, Tom Critchley in Kuala Lumpur who was very close with the Tunku, Abdul Rahman. He persuaded him to come down on board *Tobruk* for a cocktail party, which was a forty mile drive, through bandit country, and so on. So we were kept up to date on what was going on, and the diplomats were using us - very properly using us - to indicate Australia's

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interest in the region, that's what we were doing - and Manila was another one, of course.

> And SEATO, of course, was coming into that area, wasn't it. This was another part of the jigsaw of responsibilities and commitments - SEATO - South-East Asian Treaty Organisation.

Oh, very much so, yes.

> So whilst you were being deployed with the Far East Strategic Reserve, you were ...

We were part of SEATO all the time, there was an annual SEATO exercise.

> Was there ever any conflict between responsibilities to the Reserve and to SEATO?

Oh, no, SEATO was part of the Reserve, it was wider, of course, than the Reserve.

I had a couple of moments at the end of a SEATO exercise with a party at the Australian Embassy. An Australian politician had too much to drink and was making passes at one of the young embassy wives, and the ambassador asked me to get rid of him. I said, 'Minister, that's your business', and he said, 'No it's not, it's yours, it's your minister.' So I had to escort this bloke out.

The other one was quite shocking really, it shows the decisions one had to take. We were alongside a wharf in Manila Harbour and ahead of us was an American destroyer with what they call a [Com DESRON], and we were buddies together, you know, and we'd been fighting the SEATO war. He was very proud of two things about his ship. He said the security was absolutely watertight and he'd made sure it was; and his second thing was, he had been round the Pacific and Asia and he'd collected palms in pots, and he had about twenty of them which his man used to water each day - they were at the back of the bridge.

In Manila at the time they were pinching stuff, thieves, and they'd actually pinched one of the hawsers of supply of a tanker that was there. This American, he was chiacking about having no security on RAN ships, you know, it was awful. He sailed away first about a quarter of an hour before me. I'd just gone up to the bridge to get under way and I was handed a dirty bit of paper. I opened it up and it said, 'Have a look behind you, sir - the Black Hand Gang.' I didn't take any notice for a while, then I went to the back of the bridge and here were the thirty palm trees.

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A very difficult ethical problem, he was about five or six miles ahead, steaming happily along. He was probably wondering where his palms were, if he'd noticed. Did I tell him that I had his palm trees and destroy his faith in human nature, or what else did I do? I debated for a while and then, for security, I threw them over the side. I've often wondered if he discovered ... I hope he thought that the Filipinos had pinched them.

> Who was the senior officer between the two of you?

Oh, I couldn't tell you - he was probably senior to me, we didn't get into that detail.

> Keeping two ships on station in the Reserve, and during the Malaya Emergency, was that a difficult commitment for the Australian Navy to do?

It was from the point of view of personnel, I don't think the ships were over stressed - after all, you can keep ships going anyhow - but it certainly was from a personnel generally, and particularly the senior ones, the people who'd been in World War II, and that would be all the senior petty officers and chiefs, and a lot of the officers, and even more had been in Korea. And they, like the Army and Air Force, didn't like being separated from their families. I was by no means the worst, but I had nineteen months out of twenty-four up there, leaving behind a wife and three children, the youngest of whom when I left was six weeks. You know, you don't think about it at the time, but it took me, oh, years - five or six years - to get really back to taws with that baby. She woke up one morning after six or eight months of my being away, and there was a man in bed with mum. Again, nine months later there was a strange man came back. I could do things with the other two children that she wouldn't tolerate, for years.

They were difficult, they still are difficult.

Oh, it's not difficult now.

The other thing, there was a help organisation - I think they are overboard with help organisations now, the young wives that ring up or complain if they haven't heard from their husbands in Timor for three nights or something - and it was a big organisation and a very proper organisation for looking after families. And not only families, looking after the elderly parents, and this sort of thing, or the emergencies that happen in families. There might have been a social worker, there certainly was in Sydney - one and I think there was one at Navy Office in Melbourne, but for the rest the naval wives got together. They had a good line to naval authorities and if anybody was in trouble they helped. It's a fairly dramatic change over the years though.

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Oh, yes. I don't know, I think it grew out of our desire to retain the people we train, at great expense, these days. That's probably one of the reasons. But I don't think how much love, and caring, and sharing, will help prevent some people leaving after that, after their time.

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That's right. Oh, the whole of society has changed with wives working, and women at sea.

Were there any significant events that may have affected the raising or lowering of morale during that time away, over and above missing their families?

Oh, I think they were very cross with me one day when I wouldn't go into a typhoon because it was between us and Hong Kong, (inaudible) browned off. They were glad when we got into the tail end of the typhoon and they realised what they'd avoided. For a moment there was muttering.

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No, I don't think ... I think what they put up with was tremendous because ... I was the only one that had comfortable living quarters. My cabin was on the upper deck and any wind there was ... so their living conditions were dreadful. It was one of the humbling experiences to realise what life and death powers you had in those days. My sleeping cabin was on the upper deck, and the ship was quiet, even though they were scrubbing the decks, washing the decks down, until I'd had my cup of tea and the steward said it was alright, the old man was awake, and then the ship came (inaudible). Not that I was worried about the ship's company being upset because they

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could quite easily could have been upset, and may well have been, but we had a very difficult disciplinary decision to make.

A very good young man came back full of the joys of spring, not picked up by the officer of the day, which he should have been. He got a kitchen knife and went into a two-berth cabin where his divisional officer was. He was a great admirer of his divisional officer, but fortunately the other man, other officer in the cabin, woke up and disarmed him. What do you do? The disciplinary code was quite different then, but you probably remember, he had a warrant punishment which the captain got approval (for) from the senior officer. I took the view that you couldn't run a ship if you couldn't sleep happily at night, whether you are the captain, or an officer, or a sailor, so I recommended to the admiral that he be dismissed, disgraced. This was approved. It's pretty dreadful because you can't have commonwealth employment, you are going to be cast ashore in Singapore to find his way back to Australia if he wanted to go back. Before I read the warrant I talked to him. I said how dreadful it was, it was a decision I didn't want to take, but I couldn't tolerate having somebody who did this, whether he was drunk or sober.

I worried about it until we got back to Sydney when the very first person on board was this ex-able seaman. He wanted to see me - I wasn't scared, but I wondered what was going to happen. He came in and he said, 'I just wanted to thank you, sir, you gave me a different sort of life. I've signed the Pledge and I'm a good Salvation Army bloke, and it's made a tremendous (inaudible).' That took the weight off my shoulders.

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> I've certainly had cases on ships where people have cracked under the stress and strain and done silly things. Medically you could get them off the ship and that's probably an easier way to do it - in later times.

The other disciplinary one was in Sydney where a very good two-badge able seaman went bad; and he went bad, he just refused to obey any order, no matter who gave it to him. They'd been trying for a couple of days, when he appeared before me, for wilful disobedience. I heard the evidence and he didn't disagree with the evidence. I said, '(inaudible) punishment', and he said, 'Before you do that, sir, could I have a word in private with you?' I thought, God, he's going to knock me - this was on Thursday, I think - and he said, I want to ask you, sir, could I have a weekend's leave.' I said, 'Oh, for God's sake, if you are disobeying orders left, right and centre, why?' and he said, 'Well, I was going with the nurse from Prince Alfred Hospital and she disappeared some months ago, and I've just discovered that she's with her family and she's having my baby within a fortnight, and I want to go and marry her. She's in Albury too.' I said, 'If I give you a weekend's leave you won't come back' - it would have been a bit of a relief anyhow - but he said, 'I promise you I will.' 'Well, I'll let you know, you are going on to ninety days' detention, you are having a wife and a baby, and she won't have anybody. Are you serious about this?' He said, 'I promise you I'll come back, sir.'

So I called up, to the horror of the coxswain, and I said, 'He starts weekend leave as from today' - this was Thursday - nobody knew but me what had happened. And the bugger came back! So we had to find mitigating circumstances. However, I am reminiscing.

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> Yes, it's interesting, it's a great privilege and an honour serving on board a naval warship, and that interaction with the troops. It is the commanding officer of the vessel who has a great deal of responsibility which not many people get - they may aspire to, but never achieve that. You had several commands.

Six altogether.

Six altogether. You'll probably write a book on man management.

I couldn't. The other thing - I know I may go on about the modern Navy - but what they've done to the disciplinary powers of captains, for want of a better word, or executive officers ... You may recall - oh, I've forgotten the ship - but off Christmas Island there was a boozing party going on and somebody disappeared, believed drowned. This must be nine or ten months ago now. As I understand it, the case hasn't appeared before the independent people who deal with it - the captain hasn't got any power any longer. What it must be like in the Gulf, if you really get an emergency, and the captain hasn't got any control, I just can't imagine it. Again, some of my successors have agreed to this, it was bubbling while I was still serving. The Army were saying - it was a magistrate really, it got down to that - and you heard not sworn evidence but you had evidence from the accused and the accusers. I think we obviously had our faults, but on the whole I think justice prevailed. Army was saying, 'We can't have that sort of thing, people in foxholes in Vietnam, you can't have that.' And I argued, and I said, 'Yes, it's bloody nonsense, you deal with it when they get back to barracks, or wherever they are going.'

After I left, somehow they got this uniform disciplinary code and, oh, it's a different society, but it's still the same society in a ship. You've got to have the boss, I think - but they haven't. I rave on.

You are entitled to, sir, you've had a lot of experience.

As we draw to a close ...

I've got a couple of more things.

That's why I want to now invite you to talk about - free flow, if you like.

I mentioned that we had a business to go once a year to Korea. Well, the RNB arranged one year for us to go up as a British Empire Fleet, or a Royal Navies Fleet, if you like. There was a British admiral, a New Zealander, with probably a British captain, and *Tobruk* - I think they had *Anzac* there as well, I'm not sure about that. However, we went to Tokyo first, and the cruisers were down in Osaka - *Tobruk* anyhow was up in Tokyo, she was a very beautiful ship and she was kept beautifully. We got the press coverage, not by design, but you know, the girls came to kiss the sailors.

However, the RN admiral, who I didn't care for anyhow, was very cross with me about this. However, in spite of his worst efforts, we got to Seoul and we went and had lunch with the then president again. This was showing the flag in a big way, this was the British Empire supporting South Korea. I've forgotten his name, but he was a villain anyhow, the then president.

There was a fairly large Far East Fleet in those days, wasn't there, with cruisers and destroyers, and carriers?

No, carriers used to come and visit for the SEATO exercise, as ours did.

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Oh, did they? I know ours did, but I thought they had ...

Occasionally a British one. Oh, yes, and the Commander-in-Chief had his own yacht. Oh, no, they were a power in the land in those days. I like to think that the RAN reigned a bit of, should I say, democratic sense; we were more of the people than the RN, not that I haven't got great admiration for a lot of people in the RN, but some of them were inclined to be a bit snooty.

Even in my day, training in England, I could see a marked difference between the class structure.

It was funny really. I said I did the first of the Joint Services Staff College (courses). Our naval representation was, being a lieutenant commander, and we had two brigadiers, and [Candy], who had been a air vice marshal, but he was now a group captain; this was the Australian representation. I had numerous times with the RN and I was accustomed to (the attitude), you are only a poor bloody Australian, why should you know anything? and it didn't offend me, I got used to it. But if you had a good idea they said it was a good idea. But the Army and Doug Candy, they were quite different, the British services were their enemies, didn't know what they were talking about. It came as a complete shock to me.

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Any points on Malaya? I guess you were so active in recent times, of righting the wrongs of having the Navy's role in Malaya recognised for pensions, medals, that sort of thing, as they rightly deserved it, are you happy with the results as it has turned out?

Very happy, but only unhappy that a lot of people had to go without. The medals didn't count really - I took it up basically because of the man who was killed, I wanted him recognised. Because I don't know whether you know the casualties. Have you had a look at this little book of Colonel Smith's? It gives the casualties. The Army: seven out of twenty-seven killed in action; four died of injures, four died of wounds accidentally occurred - this was somebody shooting; nine died of injuries accidentally caused; one died of other causes; and one died of sickness. The Air Force: eight out of nine died of injures accidentally occurring; and one died of sickness. The one that I was fighting for had died, he was killed in action so far as I was concerned. I mustn't go on about it, but I was the operational authority, I was the captain of the ship, and I said from the beginning that it was an operational exercise, (yet they said) oh, no, it wasn't. I could argue that it wouldn't have happened in Australia because we weren't in that sort of game. However, as I say, he was the driving force behind my efforts. Most of the ex-sailors wanted, I think, probably an Order of Merit, a [Raz] badge so they could appear at Anzac Day as Anzacs, they wanted some medal recognition - the particular one they wanted was the Naval General Service Medal, but they would have been quite happy with the Australian Active Service Medal. After all, the other services pins a ribbon of the General Service Medal Malaya on their chests on the day - in fact, they would be run in the next day if they didn't have it on. According to (inaudible).

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There are some people who get away with murder with repat and other things, they are the exceptions, absolutely. The real people who deserve it ... However, I mustn't go on with it.

I must say I now wear the Australian Service Medal Clasp Malaya, and the Australian Service Medal Clasp FESR, through your efforts. So thank you very much.

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What were you in the FESR.

HMAS Yarrow in 1964.

Oh, '64, yes, that's after the GSM. The NGSM one was the hard one to get.

Yes.

Again, a bloke who - no, he was the admiral - took *Newcastle* up a creek in Malaya and fired a few rounds into the jungle, but his ship missed out because that was the rule. However, he managed to get that.

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You ask about diseases. People had tropical rashes, I think we had one or two cases of TB, again not covered by repat up till too late and VD was a constant worry, if you worried about it at all.

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Occupational hazard.

You ask about the main threat, I think the main threat was the [Alex Picton] happening, except for the odd thing, there was no unexpected happening.

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We were supplied with food and stores, mainly by the RN and local purchase, or course. They certainly supplied us with fuel. The mail was good in Singapore, but inclined to be bitty in other places - understandably. They always tried their best to get the mail to us, and of course, that was a relic of World War II where mail was the one thing you lived for.

I must mention David McNicol in Singapore - a nice bit of gossip. He was ex-World War II Air Force, and he had his son up there for school holidays, or something. We were just going back. He'd fixed up with young David to fly in a Concord, which was tremendously exciting. Anyone would give his right hand. I was saying goodbye, having a farewell drink with him and saying goodbye. I said, 'David, you don't think young David would like to come back on *Tobruk* with me?' He said, 'Don't be silly, any twelve year old faced with ...' I said, 'Well, you ask him.' He said, 'Oh, if you like.' He rang up and said he wants to go back on *Tobruk* and destroyed the father's reputation. And he was a splendid kid, we managed to make him get the shooting thing, and so on.

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Oh, you ask about if there was worry about being in a war. I don't - well, one doesn't - know how other people's wives reacted, but certainly my wife wasn't worried about my wartime experience. I think she was hearing regularly from me.

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The Malayan Emergency was probably not that well known, what was happening. I mean, you were up there in the Navy, you were in the Far East Strategic Reserve, you were subject to danger all the time, Malaya was just another thing. I presume that's how it was treated back home by the press.

I think this is right, and the fact, as I say, I obviously must have known the primary and the secondary things, but they were secret documents in those days, you put them out of your head when you didn't need them. But when I found them it was as though a great light had come to me on the road to Damascus; here was the justification for what we'd been asking for all along. We were there to do something that the other two services couldn't do, and if it came to doing

something that they could do, we were the ones that would have to get them there. From that point of view - I know there was the jungle fighting, and most unpleasant it was - it was clear from the archival stuff that by the time we got there the main part of the insurrection, or whatever you'd like to call it, was over. But certainly our troops were going into the jungle and being very gallant too, I'm not being critical about them at all, but all the hangers on - we had a battalion there of 1,200 men, I'd guess - oh, I don't know what the numbers were.

That was yet another experience for you.

With your command of *Sydney* and *Melbourne* your last seagoing commands before being Flag Officer Commanding the Australian Fleet, were they involved in the Confrontation or Malaysia at all?

Not in my time. We went up for a SEATO exercise when I was captain of *Melbourne*, then we went up for another SEATO exercise and a visit to Japan when I was FOCAF.

What was I going to say? Can't remember.

During your time as Flag Officer Commanding the Australian Fleet you were involved with Confrontation?

No - I was sixty-seven, I think it was. I went to England for three years and I missed Confrontation completely, I wouldn't have known it was happening.

That's the next part of the program which the War Memorial hopes to continue with after the Emergency, to look at Confrontation because that's not recorded.

I don't think any of the ... I can't recall any of the senior ones who were there.

In confrontation?

Yes - I can't remember anybody - J P Stevenson, I think, had the *Sydney* at one stage.

I think *Parramatta*, *Yarra*, in '65 - '64, '65, '66 - were the main frigates. In addition to that, of course, our minesweeping squadrons were quite heavily involved.

Vampire was certainly.

And *Vampire* was sent.

Of course, David Hayward has died so you can't get him now.

I compiled a list of the officers on board your ships in Malaya.

Sir, is there anything else you want to add?

There is a thought somewhere at the back of my mind, but I can't remember it - it was only gossipy anyhow - now, what could it have been? Oh, I know, yes, it was only gossip. I only twice got the severe displeasure of the Naval Board. Both times - one was when I was in *Sydney*

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and the other was in *Melbourne*.

We commissioned the *Sydney* - she'd been in reserve for years and she'd been brought out to be a training ship. We commissioned her with 150 people total - we hadn't got a navigator or anything - and we managed to get her. They sent us out for a shake-up cruise up in the Coral Sea, and they gave us about 100 reservists, or fleet reservists actually, including the cipher boys. Navy Office in Melbourne sent us up for ciphers.

In those days you had to report your position at mid-day by a classified message which meant a Typex machine, or whatever it was called. We did that the first time and we couldn't get a reply from Navy Office. We did that for about four days and on the fifth day we got a plain-language from Sydney saying, 'Where are you?' Well, to cut a long story short, they'd given us the wrong rollers that went into the Typex machine. I got the severe displeasure of the Naval Board for not reporting my position. This was just a laugh.

The other one. The *Melbourne*, which had been an RN (vessel) had the captain's bathroom right in the stern, and had one of those enormous baths with sloping sides, and no shower - sorry, shower over the top of the bath. Around the outside one of my predecessors had rigged up a canvas screen. To have a decent shower - you are still on one foot because of the shape of the bath. I took this for a few months and I sent for the shipwright officer one day. I said, 'I think this bath needs to be condemned; what do you think, shippy?' - 'Oh, yes, sure, I think it ought to be condemned.' I said, 'Well, we won't condemn it until we get out to sea, then I hope you'll build me a nice proper shower.' 'Oh, no trouble, sir.'

This happened according to plan, but unfortunately the engineer officer had decided he didn't like the steel furniture and had the shippy make him teak furniture, without telling me. The shippy didn't think much of this and reported it in his report to Melbourne. Of course, the whole dreadful truth about the bath came out. The Secretary brought up the severe displeasure of the Naval Board for unauthorised alteration and addition to HMAS Melbourne captain's bathroom. I burst out laughing. 'The admiral wants you, sir.' I went into [McNicol] and he said, 'This is desperate.' I said, 'It is a scream, I can die laughing.' He said, 'What do you mean?' I said, 'Thought of the Naval Board sitting around solemnly, giving me their severe displeasure for taking out something which was unusable and putting in something that was lighter and useable.' I said, 'It's a scream, you could write to *Punch* about it.' He said, 'You can't talk about the Naval Board like that.' And I said, 'If the Naval Board can behave like that, I can go on talking to them like that.' It is surprising I didn't get the third one.

One final thing. We came in on the *Melbourne* in a ceremonial entry - we had the RN, the RNZN - we beat up north and it was a stinking day. It was so arranged that the big ships would pull out *Melbourne* to starboard rounding - I forget the name, the last turn into Sydney Harbour.

Bradleys Head.

Bradleys Head. The other two big ships were going to port, and the littlies would go in between the big ships to go up around Garden Island when we berthed. Well, we got there - I was up on the upper bridge where McNicol had had a special - don't record this - he had a special wooden frame with a ladder leading up to it, and rail, so he'd have his ceremonial entry, and he was up there. The line had broken to the tugs and we were being blown onto Taronga Park Zoo at a rate of knots, things were a bit squeamish, and I was moving from side to side, tripping over this

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bloody ladder. I said, 'For God's sake, get rid of those ladders.' So they ripped the ladder away and we eventually struggled into berth at Garden Island without any emergency. A little voice was saying, 'Do you mind if I get down now?' He walked out across the flight deck and he said, 'Come and have a whisky.' Whisky I don't like, but whisky at ten o'clock in the morning is not my idea of fun. He was soaked to the skin, and so was I.

Good memories.

Poor McNicol.

Sir, on that very funny note, thanks very much for coming in and going over your times in the Navy.

The other thing I did learn in the Navy, and it served me in good stead - I discovered it half-way through my career, I suppose: look out if he speaks quietly. The more tense I got the quieter until I was actually whispering. If I jumped up and down they knew it was just fun.

That concluded the interview at 11:20 a.m.

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