

ANZAC Centenary Project Interview on 3 September 2014 at the H J Daley Library between Andrew Allan and Korean War Veteran Peter Smith

AA When and where were you born?

PS I was born in Burwood, Sydney on 22 January 1933.

AA When did you come to Campbelltown?

PS I came out and put a deposit on a block of land in 1955 on what they called St Elmo Estate No 3. On Armistice Day in 1957 we actually moved into our house. We still live there in the same house.

AA How many were in your family? Did you come from a large family?

PS I had three sisters, two sisters and a stepsister. My mother was from a large family, she was one of thirteen.

AA How old were you when you got the call up for the Korean War?

PS I didn't get a call up. I volunteered to join the Navy on 19 October 1950. I was 17 years and 9 months.

AA Can you tell me the circumstances of how it happened? The background to why you went.

PS Why I joined the Navy? At that stage I had a stepfather and I didn't get on too well with him, but I take the responsibility for that. He was a good stepfather to my sisters and very good to my mother, but I wasn't very happy at home, so I decided to join the Navy. Fortunately I was healthy enough and had no problems.

I went down to the Flinders Naval Depot or HMAS Cerberus as they called it. It was the main training facility in those days. Everybody went down there and you did your six months training. You were put through the ropes by sometimes some very savage chiefs. Every now and then you would get one that was a little sadistic, but in the main they were pretty good.

AA You were telling me that your mother wasn't too keen on you going.

PS She wasn't too keen on me going to Korea because of the fact that she had five brothers go the Second World War. One lost a leg in Tobruk, one is still in Timor he was never found. The youngest one of that group came back in a

pretty poor shape mentally, but he overcame that in due time. In her opinion, our family had already paid their debt.

AA How did you feel about going over there? Did you have reservations or did you look upon it as an adventure?

5 mins

PS It was an adventure. The worst part about it was saying goodbye to my now wife of 60 years. Everybody else had done it and it was an adventure. There were some good parts and some bad parts. As the years go on, you remember the good parts more so than the bad parts.

AA Can you tell me what service you were in?

PS I was an Able Seaman in the Royal Australian Navy with a gun rig control rate which was called an RC, radar control of gun rig which back in the early 50s was considered something very new. We were watching little blips on the screen.

The main training for that was at HMAS Watson at South Head, which was ideal. The airport was just a few miles down the road and Sydney Heads with continuous shipping coming in and out and aeroplanes coming in and out, it gave us plenty of things to look at on the screen and differentiate what they were. It was becoming more scientific than just holding up your finger to see which way the wind was blowing. I found it interesting.

AA Why did Australia get involved? What were the circumstances; were we supporting America?

PS I don't know that it was so much as to support America, but the UK was there as well. We were part of the British Empire as it was still called and we had to go and help. We had been everywhere else. I think it was mainly to stop Communism ruling everything as Hitler's Nazism did in previous years.

AA So, you had just met Ellen, your wife now did you?

PS I met Ellen in 1952. I knew Ellen for about three months before we went round to the Montebello atom bomb test. I was around there on one of the destroyers that was screening the area. As we understood it, the Australian Government and the Americans and British were very wary of the Russians being anywhere near the place. They were doing a bit of spying I suppose to find out what we were doing. Our job was to circulate the area continually, mainly pinging for submarines and also to keep other people away. They didn't know really what the outcome of the actual explosion was going to be.

10 mins

AA What happened when you first got to Korea?

PS Our main object was to patrol the coast, cover landings and get in fairly close with the small ships such as frigates and carry out in any areas where they needed a bombardment to scatter the Chinese. Give them as much headache as you could and try and stop them coming between some of the small islands up there. They used motorised junks, they looked like junks but they could motor on a bit. Mainly covering landings or giving support to troops on shore who were being harassed by the communist Chinese and the North Koreans of course.

AA What was your individual role on the ship?

PS In normal steaming I was a seaman; I carried out seaman's duties. In action stations my job was in what they called the TS which was the radar control of the main armament. On that ship it was two twin 4 inch mountings which were fully controlled by radar. You could aim them. We would get information from our planes up top, sometimes the Americans, sometimes our own and we would just carry out whatever duties they wanted, wherever they wanted us to be to try to create some havoc and unsettle the so-called enemy. Sometimes that could take an hour or you could be there for 3 or 4 hours, depending on what was happening at the time. You were always with other ships. Sometimes we were with the Americans but mainly with English, Canadians and also our friends the Kiwis.

AA What was the name of the ship you were on?

PS It was the HMAS Kulgoa. The frigates were all named after rivers. We had Murchison, Shoalhaven, Gascoyne, Condamine and Waramanga. Don't know how the Waramanga got in there. In all, there were nine Australian ships that took part in the Korean theatre of war if you want to call it that.

15 mins

AA Did you have any experiences that stand out more than anything else, to do with fighting?

PS We had to go ashore on one occasion and help rescue some Koreans who were cut off. Fortunately that didn't happen a lot. We salvaged one of the sea faring fighters which was shot down and sank in fairly shallow water. Obviously they didn't want any of the bits and pieces left in there that could be salvaged by others. We had a couple of divers on board that went down and took parts out or blew them up, I wasn't privy to that. While we were in that area we were prone to typhoons, we experienced three or four typhoons, things get a bit hairy then. I think that the worst one was called Typhoon Kit.

AA That was a bit scary was it?

PS You could say that.

AA You obviously don't get seasick then.

PS Yes, I did on a couple of occasions in the early days. That's something that most people are able to get over. Sometimes you are too busy looking after yourself. I've seen some people get very, very sick, but usually somebody would smack you on the back and tell you to get over it, get on with what you are doing. Self-preservation is a marvellous thing, especially on a small ship in rough weather.

AA How long were you over there?

PS We left Sydney in March 1953 and we arrived back in Sydney in December 1953. Allowing time to get there and back we were in the war zone for about eight months. We were there when the armistice commenced. We had a problem with something to do with navigation and we were sent down to go into dry dock in Hong Kong to get whatever was wrong underneath fixed up. That took a couple of weeks. When we got back to Korean waters, it was 27 July, the day of the armistice. We all thought, you beauty, we can go home now. That wasn't to be, we stayed there until the end of November. We arrived back in Sydney on 9 December 1953.

AA Was the armistice ever signed?

PS I don't think it was ever signed. It was agreed to and they ceased fire, but they watched each other like hawks. We still sat there with guns at the ready. We were there as a peace keeping force. It was a way of saying to the North Koreans and Chinese, don't step over the line because we are still here. They knew that anyway. They knew what we were doing.

20 mins

AA This might sound like a stupid question. Did you get off the ship at all, or were you on the ship all the time?

PS We had breaks where we went back into Japan to Kure or Sasebo or on one occasion we went to Irikuni? We would go there for three or four days for recreation. If you got a week in there, you might be doing pretty good. We wouldn't all be off the ship at the same time, because there would be things to be patched up. The ship's sides always had to be painted. The rough weather tears the paint of the ship. We did recreational leave if you could call it that. That was mainly in Kure. We called into Hong Kong on the way up and back. We would spend about a week there, refuelling and restocking.

AA I guess you were pretty relieved when you were eventually told that you were coming back to see Ellen.

PS We had quite a few married fellows on board who were fathers. They weren't all serving sailors. Some of the fellows were about my age and I was one of the youngest, not too many of them were younger. By the time they went through school and most of them had specialised in something, in my case gunnery control, others were actual guns crews. They did the hard work particularly on the 4 inch guns. One of my little friends from Blacktown tells people that he did all the work and I sat up in the cubby hole and got a callous on my finger from pulling the trigger. Keith Chester is his name. He didn't specialise in anything, so he got the hard job.

25 mins

AA Did you have anything to do with the Koreans?

PS We used to supply their motorised junks. They looked pretty dilapidated but they had reasonably good motors in them and they could get along. We used to supply them sometimes with food. We had bakers on board who made fresh bread every day, so we would give them bread, tea, sugar, fresh water. We didn't really fraternise with them, most of them couldn't speak English. We knew that we had to help and it was pretty hard making sure that they were the South Koreans, because they all looked the same. We often discussed that if you had 3 or 4 of these junks together, one of them may not have been kosher, but we couldn't tell. So there was the possibility that we might have inadvertently given some to the so-called enemy. Our main area of relaxation if you could call it that was back in Japan. It doesn't take long to get from the Korean coast back into Japanese waters.

The Japanese loved the Australians, not so much the English because they reckoned they were pretty lousy, the Canadians, Kiwis. We went into Sasebo and there was a very, very big American aircraft carrier and alongside that was a British destroyer and alongside that was the Kulgoa. By comparison in size, we looked like the carrier's lifeboat. The Americans were always very big on telling us how good they were and they used to call the British "Limies". We called them Pommies or other names but not Limies and they didn't like being called Limies. On this particular day there was a group of Americans and he called out to the Limies on the quarter deck of the destroyer and he wanted to know how the second biggest navy in the world was. At one time the Royal Navy had been the biggest and then the Yanks took over. As quick as a flash one of the blokes on the quarter deck called back, we're pretty good, how is the second best. There were probably 6 or 7 of us sitting chatting away and we all looked at one another and said, gee wish that I had said that. He was so quick. The Yanks didn't like it either. They were a bit

hard to take at times. They were the biggest and the best; they had the biggest buildings etc. Most Aussies don't like braggarts.

30 mins

AA What was the reception like when you got back? Were there people there to meet you when you got back to Sydney?

PS Our first port of call was Brisbane. None of the previous ships that had come back from Korea had called into Brisbane for some reason and we were greeted there like something we had never experienced before. Back then Brisbane wasn't a very big place, but there were so many people there. When we went ashore everyone wanted to buy you a beer. Consequently, quite a few of us had a couple of pots too many.

I had an experience. When I got ashore I went to the GPO and I rang Ellen at work and then we went and had something to eat and we went into a pub and everyone wanted to buy you a beer. I woke up at some stage or came to my senses and I was in a lockup. The Sergeant said to the young cop, where did you find him. He said we found him walking up the street singing to himself. So I asked him what was his name and where was he going. My answer was, my name is Smith and I haven't a clue. I had never been to Brisbane before and I don't remember saying that. So the old Sergeant said look in his wallet which was on the table. He opened my wallet and there was my identity card with my picture and Able Seaman Peter Smith. He told you the truth. They rang the ship and by this time it was about 11pm and the officer on watch was the gunnery officer and his name was Smith. I used to call him granddad, we worked fairly close together. They said, we have one of your crew up here, his name is Able Seaman Smith, there were two of us, one was a fairly tall dark haired Englishman and there was me, 5 foot 5 inches with blond hair.

35 mins

The officer said to the policeman, you have a Smith there, a tall dark pommy man. They said no, we have a short tubby Aussie bloke. He said can you send a jeep up and take him back. He said no, leave him there, he's never been in boob before. It will be a new experience for him. So early in the morning, I had a cup of tea with the old Sergeant and we had a chat and at a certain time, it was OK for me to go. So I walked out the front and I didn't know where I was. If I had known, I could have walked back to the ship. I called a taxi and the taxi pulled up and looked at me, I had no cap and my white shirt wasn't white. He asked me if I had any money and I still had a quid in my pocket, the coppers didn't take my money, they probably felt sorry for me. I showed the quid to the cabbie and he took me back to the ship, I'm sure he went around the block a couple of times. When I got there all the boys were waiting. As I was walking across the gangway Mr Smith the gunnery

officer asked me where my cap was. I said I didn't know. He told me to go and get it. I turned around to walk back off the gangway to go and look for my cap. He said, come back here you fool. I had to be charged for supposedly being drunk on shore. One of the senior blokes, who now lives near Mittagong, was telling me you are in big trouble now mate. They will probably have the wagon waiting for you in Sydney. I didn't know if he was having a go at me or not. I was going to be run in and that sort of thing, but by the time we got outside the river nothing happened. The old man, we used to call him the old man, he wasn't really an old man he was a very good skipper, he just wandered round past me and said, it gave you a bit of a scare did it. Get on with your work. Nobby Clarke, D H A Clarke a very, very good Captain. He finished up a Rear Admiral in years to come. He was at least a Commodore for sure. He was very good with the men, some are and some aren't. Some just get so full of themselves.

When we got back to Sydney, there weren't very many people at all. There would have only been around 200 on the ship, it was very small only about 300 feet long. Not all the crew came from Sydney; there were West Australians, South Australians and a lot of Victorians. The ship was built in Victoria. It was good to be home anyway.

40 mins

AA What happened to the ship do you know?

PS Yes, the ship left Sydney and went to Melbourne, all the boys were paid off and they put it in what was called ships in reserve. They sort of mothball them. Eventually she was towed back up into Sydney and was at HMAS Waterhen for quite a long time. She was used as an accommodation ship for other ships that were in getting minor repairs done and the crews off those ships were domiciled in Kulgoa. They took a lot of the interiors out and made it into sleeping accommodation. Eventually she was sold and towed up to Taiwan to be cut up. It was a sad ending for a nice little ship. I've got the exact date at home.

AA Are there many men left from the ship and do you have contact with them?

PS I haven't done it much over the last two years. But in 1998 I started looking for them. I just got a bee in my bonnet one day and put a couple of ads in papers such as Reville and I was surprised and I think I finished up with about 60 odd replies. I used to send out letters, a lot of them are now deceased. My main reason for doing it was that there was a big buzz going around that there were going to be something in Canberra in the year 2000. I poked and asked a lot of questions in a lot of places probably where I shouldn't have been asking questions to try and find out if they were serious about this, if something was going to happen, and it did. It turned out to be a marvellous

day. There were a lot of Americans there. I think I had 50 men march, that's why we got the banner made. When I more or less got the OK that things were going to happen I then got the history of the ship from the day she was built, where she had served and what she had done and got the banner made for that day in 2000 when we had the big parade in Canberra. Thousands turned out that day; they even built little grandstands opposite the Memorial. I can remember my wife saying to me later that day that she was in one of the grandstands and there were a lot of American ladies and they were in raptures over it. It was nice to think that the Yanks were saying something nice about someone else. It was a very big day. Some of my army friends get upset when the navy goes first. It was a long time coming. The ceasefire was in July 1953 and we stayed there until about 1957 I think. Ships were going up there as peace keeping just to make sure that things didn't get out of hand and we would have been ready if something had happened and fortunately for everybody it didn't. But it was a long time coming until the parade in Canberra in 2000.

45 mins

AA What about ANZAC day?

PS Up until two years ago from the year 2000 we marched in Sydney, but we didn't get many. That year we got some of the Victorians stay up. We would probably get about 12. We didn't have a lot of people and of course we are getting a bit ancient. We used to get two young sailors to carry our banner; we even had two lady sailors one year which we didn't have when we were in the navy. There were WRANS, but they were not lady sailors. But usually we would just walk over to one of the ships that were lining up somewhere and look for a bloke with the most stripes on his arm and say, excuse me sir could we borrow two of your very fine men here to carry our banner. They would say, no trouble and usually the young blokes would stay with us afterwards and have a beer and a sandwich.

Believe it or not I've got two 6 foot grandsons. One year, one was in the army at the time, but was on leave and the two of them came in and carried the banner for us. There were four frigates that worked together, the Condamine, the Shoalhaven, the Murchison and the Kulgoa. When we got smaller, we used to march in Sydney two by two up George Street. When the march finished, a bloke called Les Gibson who was more or less in charge of the Shoalhaven and I was in charge of the Kulgoa, only by virtue of the fact that nobody else wanted to do it, he walked over to Keith Chester the bloke from Blacktown and said where did you get those two fine young 6 foot blokes from. Keith's only a little fellow like me and he said they are Smithy's grandsons. Gibbo said don't be silly, how could a little runt like him have two 6 foot grandsons. Keith tells me this so I went over to Gibson who was around 6

foot himself and I said what's this slinging off about my 6 foot grandsons. He said that Chester told you and I said off course he did, he's my mate and that's what mates do. I said, you be careful. The boys did a good job. It then just got to the stage where we didn't have enough. So for the last two years, perhaps three years I've been here. This year they gave me the job of holding the banner. There should have been two of us but the other bloke I didn't know, his wife died. It was a very good day. As a matter of fact, there is a book coming out that I wrote a report on it. I've never held office down there.

50 mins

I was President of the Golf Club for many years. I'm a life member there. I don't play golf any more either, I don't enjoy it. The old golf course was here, up that little George Street. We didn't want to move the golf course but the powers that be said it had to go. Fortunately we had a good Mayor at the time Gordon Fetterplace, and he helped us greatly to get what we got. We didn't get what we wanted, but we got a lot more than would have been passed over if he hadn't been on our side. As President of the Golf Club, I was invited to the opening of the Hospital. They had taken some of our land already to build it. Anyway I went and after about half an hour I got up and snuck out because people who were getting all the kudos weren't the people that should have been getting all the kudos.

I was listening to certain people around town, certain politicians and the way they were talking, I could imagine them being up there with a trowel and a brick and I knew that wasn't the case. I worked in town in a butcher shop and I knew what was going on, probably too much sometimes. I went home and got changed and went back to the golf club. We had three clubhouses, the first one was here, it was really a little hut, the next one was up on the hill and the third one is where it is now. I called the boys and said you know where I went this afternoon. They said yes, well I said I walked out and I don't want what happened there to happen in three or four months' time when we open the new clubhouse, all these people claiming all sorts of things.

55 mins

One of the boys, Frank Barton who was a Director who was one of the best gentlemen that I have ever met had one fault; he worked for the Taxation Department. We all used to sling off at him. He said obviously you're not happy with what happened, we don't know what happened, we weren't there we are taking your word for it, but what's your bloody alternative. I said I have one; I want your permission to go and see Gordon Fetterplace on Monday morning and suggest to him that we write a joint letter on Council letterhead which is much nicer than a Golf Club one and we invite Sir Roden Cuter the Governor. Frank who was spokesman for the group said you're going a bit

high there aren't you. I said that I am working on the presumption that if you go for the top you might get the middle. If you go for the middle you might get the dog catcher. Now the dog catcher might be a very nice fellow, a lovely father and husband but he is not the sort of person that you put on top of your big poster. So I went and saw Gordon on the Monday. His first words to me were, I saw you sneak out. I said you would have snuck out too only you had all your robes on and people would have seen you. I made the suggestion to him. He called me a genius. He said it might work, we'll try it, you can only try. I left it with him and it would have been at least a month when I got a phone call at 11.30pm and it was Gordon and he said I have got some good news for you; the Governor is going to come. I said why are you calling me at this time of night, why didn't you tell me earlier. He said that he could have told me at 10am but he couldn't tell me before he told the other Aldermen and they had a meeting that night. He said if I had told you at 10am when I knew it would have been all round town by 11am. So it happened, the Governor came and his name is on the plaque outside the front door. There is only one bad thing about that plaque; there was the Governor, Mr Fetterplace, Mr Garling, Mr Springfield the Captain and Smith. They are all dead. The Governor was a marvellous bloke and he had a bit of devilment in him. A lot of polities turned up and they all wanted to speak. If you have only been here five years you wouldn't know Clive Tregear.

AA I've heard lots of stories about him.

PS I knew Clive many years when I was working in Ingleburn and he lived there, a wonderful bloke and great orator. He used to come to the club with Harley Daley. They used to do the rounds on certain Sundays, maybe the Bowling Club or the Golf Club. As I was the President, the boys would tell me that my mates were there and I would have a few drinks and a talk with them.

60 mins

When I found out the Governor was coming, I rang Clive and said it's Pete Smith here. He said hello digger. He and Harley were great mates of Judge Gerald Patrick Donovan, the District Court Judge here. He became a friend of mine too, I had some funny friends; I was the odd man out. Anyway I said I want you to do me a favour. You don't know this yet, but Sir Roden Cutler is coming to unveil the plaque at the Golf Club, would you do me the honour of being the MC. He said Peter of course I will. I said thank God for that, that is one job that I can tick off my list. He was marvellous.

AA I have heard recordings of his speeches.

PS Through Harley, I met the old Judge and he was a character too. I sat on a couple of juries there when he was Judge and being a friend of the Judge I probably shouldn't have been on a jury.

AA You knew Harley pretty well did you?

PS Oh yes. I got away with murder I think with some of those blokes. Judge Donovan played golf at the Australian. I worked for a company at one stage and the Manager of the company was a member of the Australian Golf Club. I could get an invitation every now and again to play and I would have a Wednesday afternoon off to play. I was there one day and Judge Donovan came in. I didn't see him come in, but he had a big deep voice, a bit like Clive and he called out across, struth what are you doing here. I turned round and said here comes the Judge. Everyone stopped and he said I'll give you here comes the Judge. I probably got away with a few things I shouldn't have. There have been some big characters around here over the years. Some crooks too.

AA You would have known Norm Campbell.

PS Yes, he lived near me. He used to be a very good photographer. When I came here, I was a kid just out of the navy, one day before I was 24. They paid you off the day before you were due to leave. I never checked this out but they reckon if they pay you off a day before you are due and you turn around and give somebody a bit of lip they could grab you again. Somebody told me that years later and I thought boy how lucky was I.

65 mins

PS We used to have the picnic races out at Appin, they were marvellous. They just fell away. We have two trophies at home. We had shares in a horse Copper King that won a race out there, won by 10 lengths. We trained him at Warwick Farm.

Another fellow that was a character here was a bloke called Max Hosking. I met him through the Golf Club. Max knew this fellow at Liverpool who had been a fairly active trainer. As he got older he was still interested in horses but he couldn't handle 10 or so horses but he handled a few. He had one special one that was almost a pet. Max was talking to him about the picnic races and George Fishlock used to run the pub out at Appin and owned some of the land out there that had the track on and Max took me to meet this Jack Hawkes, he was a lovely little man and he said, I'll fix the old fella up, you'll be right and he bolted in.

There was a trainer in Sydney at the time called McKurley and he had a horse in the same race and he had this big entourage of people and he was going on about his horse would win. I said excuse me Mr McKurley; I have a horse in that race. He looked at me, like who are you, Jiminy Cricket or something. I said could we have a little wager, if your horse wins I will buy your entourage a beer and if my horse wins you buy my entourage a beer. He said, you're on

son. Time goes on and the race is run. They have this special tent for owners and trainers. I didn't have an entourage, just me and my wife, Max and his wife. So I went to one of the guys on the gate who was a local, probably worked for Council. I said look I want to bring in a few blokes on the quiet, they won't have a ticket. So I had about 15 of them. So we went in and they presented the trophies. I walked up to Mr McKurley and said it looks like it is your shout, come on boys. He knew, he knew!! He copped it sweet and the boys had their two drinks, they were only small. They did the right thing and nicked off afterwards. Mr McKurley knew that he had been stung. That doesn't happen around this town any more not that I know of anyway. If it does, I am too old to be in it.

70 mins

PS It's still a good town. It was very small when I first came when I was 8 in the cubs at Petersham. We used to come out to Campbelltown and hike out past the College to the Woolwash. The Woolwash was a good swimming hole back then. There would be about a dozen cubs and we would come out for the weekend and we would camp out there. I came out two or three times when I was a kid.

AA What made you come out here to live when you were in your 20s?

PS I saw an ad for the St Elmo Estates. We were living in North Manly so I said to Ellen I will go and have a look. I don't know what time I left North Manly but I had to get down to Manly to the ferry. There was no train at the Quay then, so I had to walk up to Wynyard, get to Central, get the old Puffin Billy out to Campbelltown then walk from the station to where Bradbury Avenue is now. There were all these white pegs. There was a bloke sitting in the tent and I asked what kind of deposit do you want. He said 50 quid. I said that I didn't have fifty quid on me, what kind of holding deposit would you take. This other fellow came along and he said a tenner. I've still got the receipts. I gave him the £10 holding deposit. He gave me a couple of weeks to get the rest of the deposit or I would lose my tenner. It was as simple as that. I then went to England and came back 12 months later and put in an application for a War Service Loan and that's how we bought it.

When I got out of the Navy I didn't know what I wanted to do. If I hadn't gotten married I probably would have stayed in the Navy. In the amount of time that I had known Ellen and the amount of time that I had been away, it didn't seem fair. My brother-in-law got me a job sorting parcels with Yellow Express. Then I found out that the Repatriation Department would put you through trades. In those days they were in Grace Building in town. I asked what kind of trades did they have. He said they had carpentry, brick laying and tiling. I asked him which one paid the most.

75 mins

He called one of the other fellows up and he said butchery. I asked him why is that. He said the master butchers pay the award wage and we subsidise then 60% of it. Every three months or so, you have to do a test. The better you are, the less we give you and the more the butcher pays. I asked him to find me one of these guys and he did. He found me a fellow called Fred Tomkins in Tempe. I went and met this Fred Tomkins who was about 6 foot 3 inches and had a huge hand. He had a shop in Tempe opposite what was the original tram depot which then became a bus depot. I had a yarn with him and he said alright son I'll give you a go. I asked when do I start and he said you have started. So he gave me a coat to put on. He was so big, that the coat looked like the old gunslingers used to wear, it was so big. I asked what am I going to do. He said you are going to be taught to make sausages. So within about two hours, I had made my first batch of sausages about 60 pounds of sausages. Then he said, do you know what you do now, you clean the bloody place up. Straight away, don't let the fat settle, get buckets of hot water and fix it up. He made a couple of phone calls during the day.

The next day when I was leaving that night he said don't come here in the morning, go straight down to Johnsons at the bottom end of George Street, they have all cooking supplies, butchers aprons and chefs outfits etc. Give them this number and they will fit you out with some aprons, a couple of coats, a set of knives, steel etc. I said to this bloke I've got a number to give you and he said oh yes are you with Mr Tomkins. I said yes, he said come out the back, he fixed me up with all the gear and I was a butcher. After three months I was out there working away one morning and this fellow came in and saw Mr Tomkins and said he wanted to see what I could do. So he told me what to do and I did it. He said we won't take any money off you now, but I will be back here in two months and then you will lose the whole lot. I was there for about 12 months and he told them not to come back any more, he was quite happy to pay me, I could do it.

80 mins

Then we moved out here and to go from here to Tempe on the old steam train was too much. He knew that I couldn't do that. I got a job with a bloke at Ingleburn called Dench. He was a crook. Greg Percival is a gentleman but Dench was a crook. He tried to put me back on the program. One of the fellows came out and I said Mr Dench wasn't there. He said that's OK you just carry on and I will sit over here. So I served a couple of people. This fellow came in, I knew who he was, he owned a big dairy down there. He had a lot of staff who lived there and he used to feed them so he had a big bill. He said he

wanted to pay the bill. I said OK I knew where the book was and got it out. The bill was about four hundred quid, a lot of money. He counted it out in cash and I checked it all and gave him a receipt. This bloke is sitting there watching it all. Arthur came back and this fellow introduced himself and Arthur said he wasn't happy with me, I wasn't really measuring up. The fellow said I have been sitting here for an hour and a half and watched him and he has run the shop. I've watched him and he even took a big account.

When the fellow left, Dench said who was it and I said Mr Black. He said what did you do with the money. I said down there and I gave him a receipt. He said that was supposed to be under the counter, with no receipt so it didn't go through the books. We fell out very quickly. He should have told me. I wasn't brought up to be devious. Then I got a job over the road with a bloke called Hower, they had shops in Fairfield. Jeff Towell was the manager, he was a very good butcher and honest. I didn't get the job through Jeff. They were building the shop and I asked the builder if they were building a butchers shop and they said yes. I asked who they were building it for and they said for a bloke in Fairfield. So I rang the Fairfield shop and they said Mr Hower lives up the mountains and only comes down to the shop twice a week. So I told him what I was looking for. He gave me a number and said you can ring me back on this number and I will see Mr Hower. Anyway Mr Hower on his way home on the Saturday came out and met us and had a yarn and he said the job is yours when the shop opens. So I worked down there with Jeff. Albert Hower was a nice old man. He only had a daughter, no sons. I thought he might take me under his wing for a while cause he had a lot of money – but he didn't!!

85 mins

PS He was a good man to work for. All that fell out of the sky. A friend of mine said how would you like to work for an insurance company. I said I don't know about that. When the boys up at the Golf Club found out, they were laying bets on how long I would last.

AA So, how long did you last?

PS Sixteen years. I worked for Manufacturers Mutual. I wasn't flogging normal house or life insurance door to door; I was trained as a property surveyor. I had a company car and all that and I just went wherever they wanted me to go.

AA You are very versatile, you've done everything really.

PS I've had a bit of fun, even played drums in a band, not that I was very good. You do what you can and make the best of it. I have four lovely kids and 8 or 9 grandkids. Two of them are up in Townsville now; their father has been in the army for many years. The eldest boy did some time in the army, he was

one of them that came down and carried my banner for me that time, big Josh. The other fellow Ethan, he has just qualified as a Doctor. He starts work at the Townsville Hospital. When he passed out of school, the Uni up there sent him a letter, because he had such a good pass. He didn't tell us that, his girlfriend did. We were up there and they were studying together, asking each other questions. I said something to her, and she said Ethan's clever. I said you can't be too bad; you're at Uni with him studying medicine. She said I had to apply; they wrote and asked him to come. We'd never been told that. Now he's finished and his younger sister is finishing third year law, all the brains went up to Townsville!! Touch wood none of them have been in big strife.

AA Thanks Peter, that has been really good.

PS If later on you are going to put up a montage of pictures, I have some good ones. I have one of the nine ships that served which would make a good feature.

AA That would be really good.