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Name: Alec Penstone
Regiment: The Royal Navy

Date transcript: 01/08/2011
Transcribe by: David Davies

Timecode	What said
01:00:00	Start of Film 1
01:00:00	Good morning my name is full title Alec William George Penstone for my sins, I was born on the 23 of April 1925 my mother and father at the time were in service in Banstead, in Surrey and I was taken down there after being born in Hackney and from then on my life started
01:00:25	<i>And tell us a little bit about your career up to the point when you joined the Navy?</i>
01:00:30	Going back to pre-war days my father was severally wounded in The Battle of the Somme in 1916 and he suffered eight pieces of shrapnel in his body and eventually he died in May 1939 just before the Second World War started which was very lucky for him and I was determined I wasn't going to follow in the trenches so I decided that when I left school at fourteen I went to work in a company in Tottenham called David Gestetner's. we used to make duplicating machines and then of course the war started and we changed over to war work, and I was making Anti-Tank Rifle Grenade fuse caps, 20mm cannon shells and the various other bits and pieces.
01:01:25	When I was seventeen and a half I decided I want to join the Merchant Navy and I then went up to Dock Street by that time I was doing 12 hour shifts one week 12 hour days one week 12 hour nights and during my time on nights during the day I went to Dock Street and asked to join the Merchant Navy and they kept offering me engine room and I didn't want engine room I wanted deck hand so in the end the chap down there said "well if you're so eager to go to sea go down to Edgware and join the Royal Navy" which I did and by the time I was eighteen I was in the Royal Navy as what the call a HO (Hostilities Only) I was just signed up just for the duration of the war.
01:02:14	I done my training down at H.M.S Raleigh Torpoint and after various aptitude tests I was offered either a radar or ASDICs (Allied Submarine Detection Investigation Committee), ASDICs of course is what now known as sonar and it meant that you worked with the underwater sounds and as the pay was better one and nine pence a day I decided to take on that and I completed my training in a submarine detector at H.M.S Nimrod in Scotland and then I was sent over to Dunoon in Scotland for actual finding out what ship I was going on.

Timecode	What said
01:02:58	The first one I went on was a submarine and everyone was getting an extra six pence a day I decided to stay in the submariners service for a while I spent 6 months on coastal patrols around the Irish Sea and then the waters around Scotland and then I had a draft to pick up a new ship in Belfast and I went over there and while I was waiting I was sent off as submarine detector on my first ever what i would call Russian run to Russia by that time I never arrived at Russia because I was in a submarine we were short of escorts in the later part of 1943 and we went up there to escort a convoy up but we picked up another one on the return journey at Bear island and came back with her
01:04:04	When I went to H.M.S Campania which was a ship being built in Harland & Wolff in Belfast I was one of the first to commission her because it was my job then to inspect all the equipment that was going to be used for submarine detecting and from then on I served on her on the... I done ten Arctic convoys five Norwegian strikes and various other submarine activities until just before 1945 when the war was ending over here, we'd been severally damaged by a storm came down to KGV(King George V) Dock in London which was the first time I touched an English port and from then on I was sent back to my barracks in Scotland and I was given 7 days leave what the call VE leave that was about 2 weeks after VE Day but went back to barracks 5 hours later I had a draft for the Far East I came back on leave and decided to get married and from then on I was sent out to the Far East, I was married 2 days actually got married on the Saturday I left on the Monday and I spent the rest of my time out in the Far East took the surrender of Hong Kong from the Japanese and finished up doing police work on the Mandate Territories at Kowloon and various other points on there.
	Start of Film 2
01:05:33	<i>can you tell us a bit about your memories at the start of the war how you felt, your family felt?</i>
01:05:42	The day the war was declared which was on the Sunday I'd been around to my aunts in Tottenham and helping making a chicken run of all things and as I was walking back the air raid sirens went... well previous to that with great activity amongst the civilian population of having these Anderson shelters put in the back gardens of the houses and you'd go down and help dig a hole and put these steel structures angle up and bolt it together and then cover it with soil you know... and you know you felt protected but of course they used to fill up with water, more like a swimming pool a human fish pond but as regards to the first air raid I went back to my mother at that time and she happened to be off work because she worked at one place called The Belt which made soldiers equipment even before the war started

Timecode	What said
01:06:46	and as she had previous experience of the Zeppelin raids on London during the First World War she was very very nervous indeed and she decided that that was the time that my brother would go away, be evacuated which I didn't fancy going away then I'd already left school then so I was at work so it was a tense time and of course the first air raid was a complete... well the first air raid warning was a complete and utter fiasco because all it was was one lone plane coming over the coast somewhere and all of the British Isles was put on alert for the air raid.
01:07:29	During that time activity went on in doing these air raid shelters including brick ones in the streets and under any piece of greenery they'd dig a hole fill it up with concrete and put a roof over it and we had well as they're called the phony war until Germany decided to invade Belgium, France and well all of Europe actually then we knew we were going to be on our own after France and Belgium collapsed.
01:08:03	Dunkirk was a turning point I think in all our memories we realised then that we were going to be on receiving end of a lot of hardware and also possible invasion and I think it mobilised the minds of the people more than anything else a few of the politicians wanted to surrender at the time you probably know about from the history books luckily Churchill took over and his speeches about fighting in the streets and everything else certainly inspired us and myself as a fifteen year old as well as working in the Gestetner's on war work I joined the ARP (Air Raid Patrol) as a messenger which meant during the air raids I was sent around the various posts or first aid post whatever they wanted with messages when the telephone lines were cut which was quite often on there...
01:09:02	When the Blitz actually started it meant that everytime the air raid siren went you all left your work and went down the shelters which was sometimes for three or four hours at a time and consequently the war effort suffered greatly in this way and in the end they put people on the roof of the buildings which then sounded the claxon if they were coming overhead and you carried on working until such time that they were over the top of you that went so you carried on at all times even when the bombs were dropping because you just couldn't afford to pack up and run to the shelters
01:9:47	As for the threat of invasion that was very very writhe at the time and you didn't know what was happening. Next the home guard was formed everybody was mobilized with pitch fork and bits of stick with knives stuck on the end and everything else we just wasn't ready.
01:10:06	<i>And when you decided to go into the Merchant Navy originally but then into the Royal Navy what did your family think about that?</i>

Timecode	What said
01:10:14	Well as my father died in 1939 I was the eldest son if ever I kicked over the trances as it was called and I was cheeky I was always threatened to be put on a training ship by my mother so consequently when I did go and join up she wasn't very happy and because I was the eldest son and at the time I was being offered a job in the tool room at Gestetner's which meant it was a reserved occupation and there was no way I wanted to get stuck there I mean most of my mates had gone and everything else so that is when I decided to take matters into my own hands and go... I knew then eventually I would have to go into one of the services but I wanted my choice and my choice was the Royal Navy I mean at the time as well I could have been sent down the mines if I had waited to be called up as they called it I could have been put in the Army or any other service that I probably didn't want to go so I went into the Royal Navy and she wasn't very happy
01:11:19	<i>can you tell us a bit about where you went for your training and what training was required?</i>
01:11:23	Yes certainly... I went to H.M.S Raleigh at Torpoint which was the Naval Training Centre down in Devonport and you do 6 weeks square bashing down there and then you go through for various aptitude tests which to me seemed a bit ridiculous when you can spot a number amongst a load of coloured balls and all this sort of thing but evidently they were assessing you all the time because after I finished my training as I say certain people in the class were offered specialist jobs and as I say I was offered ASDICs or Radar. Well radar of course was a fairly new thing at the time and I did hear through the grape vine that it was your eyes that could be affected by looking at the screen where as I evidently had a good pair of ears because when I got put through for ASDICs and you know you thought you were ok with that and of course as I say the pay was better one and nine pence a day so I decided to go in for ASDICs which meant being sent up to Campbeltown a place called H.M.S Nimrod for basic training
01:12:44	And in 6 weeks up there you're expected to be a good operator. We were trained by Officers and WRENs on attack teachers and we were also sent out in surface ships one of which was H.M.S Valena which was WD & HO Wills Tobacco people was their ship that was commandeered as it was built for the south seas and we were using it up in Scotland in December I swear it was half a port and half a ship but still we had are ASDIC training up there we were doing live attacks on our own submarines in the bay and if we picked them up and thought we got near enough we'd drop an hand grenade over the side and if it was near enough they'd send up a smoke float to say yeah good, good hit and at the end of this time you'd have a general examination and then your given your badge as an ASDIC Operator and you were a fully qualified ASDIC Operator.
01:13:49	<i>And what was the camaraderie like for you at that time?</i>

Timecode	What said
01:13:52	Very very good being it in that I came from a family where I had a younger brother and older sister and working more or less in isolation in the war factory and also in the ARP they were all older than me it was nice to have people of my own age around and in that time you formed quite a bond with people you had your oppo's as you called them that you went ashore with and you just looked after each other... very good
01:14:24	<i>And what was it like... you worked from a converted trawler?</i>
01:14:27	oh I was on trawlers beforehand yes captured German trawlers but that was of a different work ASDIC work going out there searching for U-Boats out there anything that could float had an ASDIC set put on it because the U-Boats at that time... I mean they'd already been deployed before the war started they were already in the North Atlantic, South Atlantic they were already on station as soon as war was declared with commerce raiders and of course a number of ships we lost specially in 1942-1943 could not be sustained. So every effort was made to track the U-Boats down and destroy them
	Start of Film 3
01:15:09	<i>And your first ship you went on was a submarine?</i>
01:15:12	Yes.
01:15:13	<i>So tell us a little bit about your memories of being in a submarine and your feelings about you know being in probably such a claustrophobic place?</i>
01:15:21	Well-being that I volunteered to go in submarines I couldn't crib with it if things had gone a bit amiss sort of thing but it was a bit strange because the submarine that I was sent onto was an old P- Boat that had been dug out the mud in Chatham from the first world war and she was in a bit of a state she'd been rapidly tidied up but my most experience was being depth charged round the coastline I think it was the Irish Sea and they come a bit close and big flakes of paint was dropping off all the lights had gone out except for the emergency lighting and big flakes of paint was dropping down with water squirting all over the place it was a leaky old boat and you think to yourself oh what have I let myself in for but luckily we got out of it and came up actually it was an E-Boat that was depth charging us. The E-boats used to tie up behind the Trinity House Buoys in the Channels and of course when the radar used to sweep round they'd pick up the Buoy knew there was a buoy on that marking by the chart but we didn't realise there was an E-Boat waiting behind it waiting to hear our diesel noise when we come up to blow air and to charge the batteries so as soon as you started up there they'd come shooting out and be rather naughty to us.

Timecode	What said
01:16:58	<i>Can you tell us a little bit more detail Alec about what it's like to be in a submarine being depth charged or being under attack?</i>
01:16:03	Well you had a job to do and you just carried on doing it there was no question about you know... you were diving or you were already down the bottom, silent running in other words we didn't ping we didn't make any noise at all and we just hoped that it would go away up top. It was just a question of I suppose training you know nobody panicked even in those days like you know there wasn't a panic there, there was nobody shouting and screaming you just carried on doing your job in fact it was very calm I admired the submarine service for what they done and what they do since
01:17:46	<i>And onto H.M.S Campania that was your main ship was it?</i>
01:17:48	That was my main ship yes...
01:17:50	<i>Tell us a little bit about that?</i>
01:17:54	She was one of the three escort carriers built in Great Britain all the rest were American she was built in Harland & Wolff in Belfast one of the three sisters there was the Vindex, Nairana and Campania they called them 'The Three Sisters' all three are the same class because we were the latest one we had extra technology onboard for night fighting and that sort of thing. she was laid down as a beef boat for the Argentine government and then when the war started she was left and converted from the keel upwards as an escort carrier she was a merchant ship with a flight deck and a hanger built into her and we were so lucky she was a British built riveted ship not like the American welded ships and therefore she had a steel flight deck instead of the wooden flight deck that the Americans had, as I say she was completely riveted so there was a lot of give in the bodywork she didn't split open when she doing turns rudder on in rough seas

Timecode	What said
01:19:01	<p>Commissioned her and then done are trials and went off and as I say the ASDIC cabinet was twenty seven foot down below the water line and you could hear all that was going on along the ship side there and you'd hear the explosions also we used to set the depth charges are own depth charges from down below because we knew how deep the submarine well the U-Boat was and in those days the ASDICs could pick up in good conditions a echo at two thousand five hundred yards I don't know if anybody realises what... they probably heard it on the museum being woop... woop... which is what... the idea was electrical impulses sent through the quarter plates travels through the water if it hits a certain item you will get an echo back of it and it is the echo back you determine whether it's either a shoal of fish, fresh water coming into the sea water, a wreck or a submarine or a U-Boat so it was up to the operator to classify and tell the bridge exactly what was going on. On the bridge there was a repeater that could hear the ping woop... up on there but because they were not the qualified ones it was down to us to tell them it was a U-Boat or anything else and of course they sent off to investigate.</p>
01:20:39	<p>Being on an escort carrier if I picked up at extreme range then usually a swordfish was sent off with depth charges to investigate, which brings to mind as well the information we used to get was... they would say twelve plus U-Boats ahead of us or twelve plus U-Boats astern of us we never realised where the information came from it came from Bletchley Park where they cracked the code I mean we never knew that we were just told a number of U-Boats and where they were and we tried to avoid them and we was always told down below because it was our job to make sure that they didn't close in on us on there. But that was going by the by. But Bletchley Park and the code breakers at Bletchley Park certainly saved are lives many many times on there.</p>
	<p>Start of Film 4</p>
01:21:35	<p>my actual time on the Arctic Convoys was starting off the first one I'd done in 1944 I have a list of all the numbers of them but I don't think there's any interest on that and being a submarine detector I was right down in the bowls of the ship forehead. There was five of us on-board and the ship side on one side buoyancy compartment forehead, small arms magazine onto the other side and 4 Inch magazine behind us and we were two decks below we were about twenty seven foot below the water line on there. And we were baton down because the damage control had to close the hatches on the top of us but we were well equipped because we had two hand grenades and a pair of bolt cutters in our cabinet the idea was if the ship was to be captured we were to use the bolt cutters to cut the two cables which was hanging from the dome at the bottom which was were the transmitter was so that sunk to the bottom and then carefully place a hand grenade in each set and sit back and wait for the bang but at least we'll die in the warm that's one thing</p>

Timecode	What said
01:22:51	<p>Many a time been up there when the ice scraped along the ship side and you don't know whether it was ice or a mine you just hoped it was ice and one time we were just turning out of our box during action stations to either fly off or pick up aircraft because we was always made the target if the German planes could hit the Escort Carrier then there be no air cover for the convoy and the U- Boats and planes would then have an easy time destroying the rest of the Merchant ships so we turned out of our box to as I say to fire off or pick up aircraft and I was on the set at the time and I heard a very fast HE which I recognised immediately as torpedo I reported it to the bridge straight away and watched the giro swing round so that our bows pointed towards the direction that it was coming in I picked it up at a range of about two thousand five hundred yards it got louder and louder and louder and I remember pulling my phones off onto the side of my face so I didn't blow my eardrums when the bang went and low and behold it passed about a fathom (1.8 meters) underneath us according to the trace I had in the cabinet and hit a merchant packet alongside so I knew that someone was looking after me</p>
01:24:21	<p>And then we just carried on... and a well we never stopped for survivors we had a rescue ship picking up survivors because if we stopped then we would have been next one in line for going down and that was on one occasion other occasions when going into the Kola inlet at Murmansk which was about a mile and a half wide and we always knew that the Germans had mined it either with aircraft mines or with mines from the U-Boats as well as U-Boats congregating there and then we had to go in... actually feel are way in and the two ASDIC operators on watch at the time would go one degree steps for fifteen degrees either side of the bow and if you picked up the slightest echo you would have to report it straight away because it could have been an ice flow or it could have been a mine so that was... as we were nosing forward and we were right in the bows, we done our job very very well to make sure we didn't get wet feet</p>
01:25:26	<p>All other times it was horrendous to hear the explosions and then when you came off watch or finished action stations to know that ships had gone down and then when you asked what the name of the ship was such as H.M.S Bluebell you knew that a couple of your mates, Atlantic operators were on there because we all knew, we had our own barracks we knew exactly were the ships and your mates were that were going on various ships and time after time you felt well were lucky... it not happened to us on there. But I don't think if you've got any other questions</p>
01:26:05	<p><i>In terms of that where were you travelling from and too and how many boats were you escorting?</i></p>

Timecode	What said
01:26:09	<p>We were travelling from Loch Ewe in Scotland or Scapa Flow depends were we were at the time up to Murmansk up in the Arctic itself well Murmansk and Polyarny were the only ice free ports... when I say ice free I mean still eighteen inches thick but it wasn't completely frozen over and to get there we had to go up... right up the Norwegian coast which of course was held by Germany they had all there airfields on there and all there inlets were all hiding the U-Boats and patrol craft and everything else on there. And up in the summer we could go where the ice cap receded we'd go further north and go around the top of Bear Island and drop down into Murmansk. Which you'd go practically at the top of the world up there but of course in the winter when the ice closed in closer nine times out of ten we had to come the wrong side of Bear Island which enabled the U-Boats and aircraft to congregate in a much smaller area.</p>
01:27:21	<p>Convoys were always between six and eight knots, which was slow and consisted of whatever escorts they could afford because we had to look after the South Atlantic as well, North Atlantic was bringing stuff over from Newfoundland and we lost so many of them. The number of ships could be ten, fifteen, thirty spread over several miles of ocean and the escort carrier were usually ahead of the convoy in a box we were protected by a destroyer or corvettes because as I said if they got the carrier the world was their oyster they could do what they wanted with the convoy, except for the guns on the ships there and that. One fast convoy that we done was bad we were told I always remember it JA61A if you got an A prefix you knew it was a special convoy. Two liners I think it was The Empress of Australia and The Empress of Canada we picked them up at Loch Ewe and we saw they were filled with khaki clad men and we assumed that we were taking British Troops up to Russia and this was after D-day incidentally but it turned out that they were Russian slave workers that had been picked up in France when our forces invaded France and taken back to England and Stalin wanted them back because they were Russian subjects and were going to be treated as heroes when they return. I think there were sixteen hundred altogether on the two liners and it was a fast convoy. We done it in about four days up to Murmansk and when we got into Murmansk instead of going alongside as what we thought they'd be they sent off... they anchored out in the Kola Inlet and sent tenders out bringing off a hundred at a time and we couldn't understand why some of them were jumping over the side it was only later we discovered not one of them survived.</p>
01:29:46	<p>they were taken ashore at Russia not with brass bands and heroes as they were expected too but as contaminated Russians and I'm pretty sure was it 1970 odd the mass graves were found in the tundra way above Murmansk every one of them was killed. Weren't very good.</p>

Timecode	What said
01:30:11	but then of course you got PQ17 which I wasn't on that is when the British Government, Admiralty actually heard that The Tirpitz had come out from a place in Norway where she'd been fuelled there and was going to attack a convoy and all the escorts were told to turn towards the attacker because no heavy units were in the vicinity they were still about a hundred miles astern of the convoy. To go and attack this Tirpitz which was a proper battleship and to tell the convoy to make an independent way to Russia unfortunately it was a false alarm and by the time they found out that the Tirpitz was just shifting her berth in there twenty nine merchant ships had gone to the bottom in one afternoon and I don't think the merchant navy has ever forgiven us for it but there was nothing we could do a couple of the escorts still stayed with the convoy but most of them went to attack the main enemy as it was called and left the convoy to the mercy of the U-Boats and the aircraft, not a happy day in the Royal Navy but nevertheless not the fault of the ones on the sea at the time it had all come from the Admiralty.
	Start of Film 5
01:31:32	<i>Terrible... so in terms of the ship you were on Alec how many U-Boats did you sink do you know?</i>
01:31:40	Well we actually downed two U-Boats but both by our own swordfish but others were claimed as joint efforts between the attacking ships you just reported them and then hope for the best because of their range and where we were in the convoy being of course at the head of the convoy we could pick up stuff ahead of it and by the time you turned out to fire off aircraft you'd be very vulnerable because you had to keep a straight and steady course at that time for flying off and taking off so the escorts always took over any contacts we actually got on there. Depth charges sometimes we dropped a depth charge if we wanted some fresh fish if we'd picked up a shoal of fish sort of thing they might drop a depth charge and we'll have fresh fish on there.
01:32:36	<i>So in terms of the carrier Alec how many planes did it have, which was Swordfish I understand and was that RAF piloting those?</i>
01:32:43	No no it was Fleet Air Arm.
01:32:45	<i>So can you just tell us a little bit about that in your own words?</i>

Timecode	What said
01:32:50	Yes... I think our complement being that I was ships company and not Fleet Air Arm which we had, I think we had twelve Swordfish, six Wildcats I've got the details here somewhere and three Fulmar's which were night fighters and they were responsible for different areas of use sort of thing like you know, the night fighters particularly you know on there. but going on to that were talking about flyers the Royal Air Force and the Fleet Air Arm devised a system called CAM ships (Catapult Aircraft Merchantmen) where a Hurricane was mounted on a bow of a merchant ship on a catapult and in the event of an attack it was fired off with this hero inside it who would then try and shoot down any of the attackers.
01:33:48	We used to get spotted by a Blohm and Voss which was a German plane that used to circle around the convoy and they used to radio our position you see and wait for the U-Boats and if you get rid of that before they sent off you got a chance of escape, but when it landed it had to be crashed in the sea as near as possible to one of the escorts to be picked up pilot only couldn't pick the plane up they were real heroes, but yeah all the pilots were I mean the photographs I've got of the crashes on deck was bad enough but to actually three minutes in the water might as well give up.
01:34:33	<i>Were you ever sunk at all?</i>
01:34:35	No I got my feet wet twice but not through enemy action once was in Scapa Flow I was a coxswain of a sixteen foot captains boat and it blew up one Saturday afternoon and all boats crews were bringing the boats inboard which was the motor cutter, motor launch and my skimming dish (fast motor dingy), sixteen foot skimming dish and as I was being lifted up the ships side I was stowed just underneath the flight deck a big wave come up lifted me up and then when it went down, it dropped it and of course all the slings went the break come on the slings and I finished up going down to the bottom I finished up coming up on the engine cover which luckily I hadn't bolted down that morning I had a broken nose and various other injuries and I was about a quarter of a mile astern of the ship by that time so they sent a motor boat to pick up the pieces including me and I was charged with breaking and entering ship, losing a motorboat, losing a sheep skin jacket and a set of lights but because circumstances on Saturday afternoon the leading seaman hadn't been watching over the side he was on the winch instead of waiting for the torpedo man to operate the winch, I got away with losing a motor boat, losing a sheep skin jacket, breaking and entering ship, but I got charged six pound three and eight pence for losing a set of lights, which shouldn't of been in there.

Timecode	What said
01:36:08	And the other time was in Murmansk harbour I'd been out in the boat for about 12 hours going round being that we were a flag ship so we had an admiral onboard and he used to go round different ships in the harbour make sure and this is when I got fired on by the Russians came in to close to the shore, which was a restricted area and he was standing in the stern Rear Admiral MacGregor and flying his flag as well as white ensign and we were fired on with machine guns and his words were Coxswain I think we should get out of this or words to that effect which I did.
01:36:51	but yeah trying to climb up the ladder we tied the boat up, up to the boom at the side which was a bit cold grabbed on to the top of this to pull myself up and fell out my gloves went back. And once again I was charged with breaking and entering ship and losing a sheep skin coat because they realise you can't swim in a coat so I was dragged aboard put down the sick bay.
01:37:21	Oh there was a third time I was on the ????? out in the Cháng Jiāng, Yangtze painting ship side and I fell over there I swallowed to much of the yellow river and I finished up with black water fever but that was warm water
01:37:41	<i>What did you think about all the death that was going on around you the Germans, the Russians obviously that we just talked about and your comrades really?</i>
01:37:52	I don't think it ever entered our minds when we picked up U-Boat we know it was either them or us they wanted to kill us and we had to be the first one in there when you knew some of your mates had gone then you thought oh well its not happened to me I've got a lucky ship, every ship was lucky until you got hit believe me but yeah some of the stories you heard I mean H.M.S Bluebell one of our escorts three survivors no sorry no survivors on the Bluebell all ships company went. Denbigh Castle brand new ship out of Aberdeen never even made it to Russia she got hit and they beached her and blew up on the Russian coast two thirds of the ships company gone on there. Very hard to think like you know, but it weren't going to happen to us we were lucky, we had a lucky ship the captain was good, the admiral was good because we hadn't got our feet wet.
	Start of Film 6
01:39:09	And can you tell me about the time when you had to turn around in a force twelve gale?

Timecode	What said
01:39:12	We'd just come back from Russia in Sept 44 and just after we left Murmansk we run into a force twelve, which was a rather severe gale and we were running before it the whole convoy scattered and we run before it towards the Norwegian coast after four days of travelling towards the coast the captain decided that the ship would turn about at sixteen hundred hours which was four o'clock in the afternoon everything had to be baton down all aircraft to be double lashed in the hangers all the fire floats in the companionways to be lashed and recommended that anyone that could sling there hammock and climb in it, which most of us tried to do anyway sixteen hundred hours the ship turned about and she did she nearly turned turtle we actually rolled to forty five degrees either side as my mess deck was the midships we shipped water through the embarkation space straight onto the mess deck and there was about a foot of water sloshing about there that of course went around to the other side as we rolled over the other way and another lot came in from that way and we were about twelve – eighteen inches of water in there.
01:40:30	At that time the ???? pipes leaked petrol on our mess deck from the high octane spirit and low and behold the ventilation fans caught fire and set fire to the petrol on top of the water so we had a right mixture I happened to be in my hammock at the time and I was hanging on to the shrouds as I was being swung around and I happen to look at one of the staircases, the ladders going up to the deck to see the whole lot lift, they weighed about three ton they were on gimbals at the top the bottom wasn't secured and as the ship rolled round they went straight up against the deck head about three ton anyway we righted ourselves and all hell broke lose all the fire floats had broken lose in the companionways, aircraft had broken adrift in the hangers and there was crashes and banging and everything else I mean it didn't steady down straight away we was still rolling like fury for about another hour after that and we had a war correspondent onboard because we were a flagship Godfrey Winn and he later said Germans would have cursed, Italians would have cried but those British sailors were laughing. I don't know where he was he wasn't on our mess deck I tell you that because we were doing a lot of swearing on there
01:42:02	but anyway it righted itself and the damage was considerable to the ship we got the flight deck waved still flight deck at about eighteen foot where the waves had crashed down on top of it we'd lost the sponson with the Bofor's Gun that had been ripped off on there water was leaking, running to the petty officers mess, which we didn't mind because it wasn't ours up forehead and all in all we suffered severe damage luckily the damage control people onboard which we were all well trained to do managed to keep us going and we arrived back in port after collecting the rest of the convoy up but that was a bit hairy.
01:42:52	<i>And tell me about the Article Godfrey Winn wrote?</i>

Timecode	What said
01:42:55	Seeing from the flight deck of the escort carrier Campania as the carrier Nairana followed by other warships plunged through heavy winter seas it was in this dirty weather that U-Boats trying to attack the convoy were routed and attacking planes shot down. Ship rolled over forty five degrees in seas so mountainous that ships rolled to forty five degrees naval aircraft took off from British air craft carriers to protect the convoy against attacks from U-Boats and German torpedo carrying planes. Convoy of British and American ships was bound for a Russian Arctic port, actually we was on our way back, Rear Admiral MacGregor in the escort carrier Campania made contact with the enemy on the last lap of the voyage U-Boats were concentrated our aircraft immediately attended every swirl in the water and anything that looked like a periscope Admiral MacGregor secretary commander of the ????? told me.
01:44:04	At least one U-Boat was hit all the wreckage welled to the surface after a depth charge attack by the corvette Banbury Castle that was the first kill the return voyage was more exciting... oh that's right must have been the return one then. They'd not left more than two hours when there was a heavy explosion probably of a torpedo that missed its mark. The next morning about ten U-Boats were trailing the convoy one did not dive quickly enough and got hit and damaged but was not sunk said commander. The next day submarines turned off and enemy aircraft alone come around in one attack about ten machines came at an escort carrier carrying two torpedoes... sorry I can't see it but anyway the whole point about was like we was under continuous attack the whole time on there. An Admiralty communique says that at least two U-Boats was destroyed and two torpedo carrying aircraft and one reconnaissance aircraft was shot down into the sea
	Start of Film 7
01:45:25	<i>So are there any other particular incidents Alec that stick in your mind?</i>
01:45:33	Not really it was just a question of all things... good things... bad things you know on there I just consider myself very very lucky as did all of us on the Russian run but a we managed to come back. I mean our motto on our blazer was we are the lucky ones because we come back heck of a lot of them didn't but as I said to you before the merchant navy men and the CAM ship pilots were real heroes because they were going up on tankers loaded up with high octane fuel, ammunition deck cargo of tanks and everything else on top and in Liberty ships which as you probably know some of them were split in half without a torpedo even hitting them because the welds didn't hold two or three different stories about why they but I don't suppose my place to talk about them on that but yeah one of those things. But we were lucky we were riveted and withstood it

Timecode	What said
01:46:42	and of course afterwards we were in D-Day landings here we escorted the ships across for the D-Day we were the covering force then we went off to Brest to take part in the anti-U-Boat ??? Brest is where the U-Boats were and we stayed outside there to make sure none of them come up to the ships coming across. We also escorted across one of the pipelines which we didn't know was a pipeline we thought it was a communication cable and my instructions were no depth charges within a thousand meters of the laying ship I said well what happens if I get a contact well you drop a hand grenade over the side keep them down and then of course we found out afterwards a petrol pipe which run from the Isle of White here over to Normandy amazing site that watching that unroll as it goes across from there.
01:47:38	And then the story after that was the war was finishing over here and we done the last but one convoy and then we were sent off as the war was finishing to round up the U-Boats that were surrendering and I missed VE Day completely by about a fortnight three weeks I was still at sea but we were rounding up the U-Boats up along the Norwegian coast waiting for them to surrender flying the black flag escort them into Loch Ewe and handed them over like in there and then came back to KGV Dock were we went and got paid off there.
01:48:25	<i>Can you tell me... can you just talk me through a day in the life for you... you know what it will be like you know when you wake up in the morning lets say just for a day aboard ship?</i>
01:48:33	It depended entirely what watch you were on because as you know there's all ships watch's you got a first part of port watch, second part of port watch, first part of starboard watch, second part of starboard watch so there was always one of those four watch's on duty. If you were on duty you were either... say you done the middle watch which was from four o'clock to eight o'clock in the morning so four a.m. to eight a.m. at eight a.m. you come off watch and you go down and possibly there was sixteen men in a mess and two of you will be allocated as cook of the mess for that day you were responsible for the cleaning of the mess and also the preparation of the food and everything else and therefore as soon as you come of watch you would be put on as cook of the mess you would arrange to get some breakfast for the other sixteen men and after they had there breakfast they went off to their duties some went on watch or cleaning part ship or whatever duties they were on.

Timecode	What said
01:49:36	<p>If it was action stations of course everything went you just left everything and just went down to your action stations on there. The longest I was in action stations down there was five days continuous luckily we had a bit of warmth down there, we had some food down there ships biscuits and that sort of thing but nevertheless that was... the day you went back and you worked part of the ship then either doing work, cleaning up, tidying up or even go into lessons there were advancements for different subjects if you were going through for a torpedomans course you'd probably have a couple of hours on that or you just worked parts of the ship. Brushing and cleaning typical naval routine and then of course that worked out on your four hour shifts and we were unlucky because being only five of us on a ship we had to work three watches so it meant at times my part of ship which was first part of port were off and I was still working and it got a bit hairy at times when I was supposed to be in two places at once I was supposed to be down in the ASDIC cabinet on watch or cook of the mess I couldn't be in two places so you had to sort of try arrange a relief to do it on there</p>
01:51:03	<p>Evening times in harbour was very good or what you called make the men's Saturday afternoons out would come all the pastimes we had one chap onboard that had a little kind of sewing machine and he scrounged all the old blue serge material and make toys take to the local hospital stuff them with anything health and safety wasn't coming into it stuffed with old jeans and anything else like that others would be... and accordion he'd have a bit of a sing song have a sods opera that sort of thing we had a tot of rum every day in those days which was very welcome but you also had soft drinks in the recreation space or if there was any trouble aboard where to blokes were fighting they were immediately separated and had a grudge fight in the recreation space with boxing gloves which happened to me I got seven bells knocked out of me because I didn't have any temper but nevertheless this is the sort of thing that went on day after day</p>
01:52:10	<p>There was always cleaning to be done, there was always maintenance to be done and being I was also the coxswain of the skimming dish I also had the responsibility every twenty four hours of looking after that boat and if the captain wanted or any of the officers wanted to go ashore I was the one that had to take them and that could be night or day anytime in your twenty four hour duty on there</p>

Timecode	What said
01:52:37	A funny thing that happened when I went to Hong Kong we went alongside in Hong Kong I was on the cruiser Bermuda then H.M.S. Bermuda and I was called duty coxswain report to the gangway and I thought well my boats inboard so I can't go round... coxswain reporting he said I want you to take your boat and go to Aberdeen and pick the mail up I said my boat is inboard sir he said there's your boat I said that's a jeep sir he said yeah it's your boat I said well I can't drive he said you're a coxswain there's your boat you drive it to Aberdeen and pick the mail up and bring it back. Four wheeled American drive jeep all over the mountains down to Aberdeen the other side of Hong Kong pick the mail up and bring it back again... which was shattering but that was the first time I drove anything like that I found that one could reverse but you couldn't reverse a boat got no breaks on a boat but no it was quite interesting but that is, that was the Navy in those days if you had it down as a coxswain you'd be a coxswain of either a boat or whatever it was they liked to put you into like you know
01:53:56	Brings up another point... Rescue Ships we used to always take a rescue ship up with us towards the later part and one particular one was called the Northern Gem and believe me it was a gem it was a drifter a fisherman's drifter trawler it had been used going up with a civilian crew on it, they used to go up fishing up in those waters and she used to come up as a rescue boat and the fantastic work she carried out there really one of the ships got hit she'd go right alongside it she was smaller than the others but she still took a hell of a risk in doing it. picking them up out of the water nine times out of ten they were put back again the next day wrapped up in a hammock and chains at their feet and put them back over the side but they was still picked up like you know dog tags taken off and that sort of thing like you know but... anything else
	Start of Film 8
01:54:51	<i>How often did you get back home to see your family?</i>
01:54:55	Let me think I had my first leave Christmas 1943 when I met my wife the next time was October 44 when I got engaged the next time was as the war ended over here in June 45 in actual time all the time I was with my wife including the leave I got married on was thirty four days because I was away all the time. You got local leave up in Scotland but when you say family leave when you had to come down to The Smoke to London that was only three times, but you could go ashore up to a minute to midnight say up in Glasgow or Scapa Flow last place god made but never finished it. they had a canteen there Flotta the beer was... but anyway that was the thing like you know on there.

Timecode	What said
01:56:06	When we were over in Belfast once again that was just local leave you don't get over very much not like nowadays like where there entitled to so much leave every so often like you know or when they even change ships crews now... I mean I went out to the Far East for over a year and in that time I didn't come home but nowadays they fly out a crew change crew leave the ship out there and just change crew you know.
01:56:35	<i>And in terms of when you left the Arctic Convoy you then went to the Far East?</i>
01:56:38	Yeah what happened was we done the last but one convoy to Russia and as I say we got damaged I was sent back to my barracks in Scotland and I was given seven days VE leave as it was called came down me girlfriend as she was then and went back after that and five hours later I had a Far Eastern Draft so I applied for leave again and I was told I could have another seven days leave and came back and decided to get married and at that time because no bands had been called...
01:57:16	do you want to get married in a church so the vicar said I'm sorry I can't marry you in a church but the only way is if you go to Westminster Abbey see the Archbishop of Canterbury if he feels kindly towards you he will give you a very special license that will enable you to get married in any Church of England church with three hours' notice including Westminster Abbey so I did it I went down there and swore on a stack of bibles that I was a good character and everything else and low and behold he gave me this beautiful parchment big seal on it which I took back to the vicar in Tottenham and he agreed that on the Saturday I'd get married so I thought well I'll apply for extra leave so I sent a telegram of to my commanding officer and back came yes twenty four hours extra leave providing you go straight to Liverpool to pick up the ship, which I agreed to do so I got married on the Saturday I left home the Monday and I came back about fifteen months later all that time.
02:58:18	<i>And when you went to the Far East what were you doing over there?</i>

Timecode	What said
02:58:26	We took surrender of Hong Kong at the time... I went out... you probably heard of the H.M.S Amethyst she got caught up the Yangtze after I left her. But I went out there and I was supposed to join the Amethyst and I finally caught up with her in the Huangpu River out there we came down and by that time... well on the way out we... we was fifty eight thousands of us we were expendable we were going to invade Japanese Islands and we knew they would put up a fight anyway and that was just the Naval contingent fifty eight thousand, but the Army and all the rest of them out there. And of course they dropped the atom bombs which saved us there's no doubt about it so consequently we were sent doing the police work sort of thing and we went to Hong Kong took the surrender of Hong Kong and because of the speed we surrounded the island there was a civilian internment camp on there called Fort Stanley which that film Tenko reminded me very much of it was women and children.
02:59:37	And they were able to point the finger at the ones that committed the atrocities against them and all of them was arrested and court marshaled and all those that found guilty they had Royal Naval officers as defence lawyers but those that were found guilty we hung and that was the end of that but a...?????
02:00:04	My mate and I was going across Hong Kong the other side and we came across a cave being nosy we looked inside there... all skeletons in there and dog tags everything Middlesex Regiment who were there when the island was first captured in 1941 and we reported it back to the commanding officer and he notified the war graves and they found what had happened these soldiers had taken refuge in this cave and the Japs had just thrown hand grenades in and blasted them to pieces but at least the dog tags were picked up and people were notified that they were not missing they were killed in there but... ...makes you realise you were lucky and that
02:03:50	<i>Were you still doing the sonar work?</i>
02:00:57	Oh yes but of course there was no call for it once the Japs had surrendered I mean that was the whole idea of going out there but once the Japs had surrendered I was just put onto general duties I still kept my badges and my rank and everything else, still got paid for me badge so that was it
02:01:15	<i>And what did you think about everything that went on in your experiences now you look back after sixty or seventy years?</i>

Timecode	What said
02:01:23	I was very very lucky very very fortunate indeed to survive it but as I said previously it wasn't going to happen to us each one of us that thought we were lucky and if we were on a lucky ship that was it. when we finally came home we were promised that our jobs would still be open for us nine times out of ten they didn't though... but I didn't want to go back to Gestetner's so I got a job in a zinc foundry and never done it before in my life but I finished up running the factory for them in Tottenham north London in there until I decided as I was trained as an electrician in the Navy because that's part of your training for the ASDIC's you were a torpedoman first which is ships electrician and you go through further courses and I decided I'll join the electricity board when I applied I was told no chance I haven't served an apprenticeship there was only five of us on the ship to keep everything going onboard there but because you haven't got that piece of paper
02:02:41	So I decided I'd start my own business up funny enough it started off with... there was no laundrette in those days I bought thirteen hoover mark one washing machines with a little roller on the top and I was hiring them out half-crown an hour it was alright until the Suez Crisis got no petrol so that went by the board but after that I was hiring out I was calling myself DRS Domestic Rental Service washing machines, vacuum cleaners one and nine pence a day, electric drills shilling a week all things like that
02:03:27	<i>And what do you think to the state of the Navy now Alec?</i>
02:03:34	Well sometimes I'm very disgusted with it as with H.M.S Cornwall when she watched the Somali Pirates actually pick off an elderly couple of their yacht and take them ashore and they done nothing they were in range of it because they hadn't received orders from the Admiralty that's the sort of thing that I think to myself well I just can't credit what the Navy's come down to because I mean we went into Norway when we heard there was a hundred and eighty Norwegians going to be taken to Germany as slave labour we didn't worry for permission we sailed in there from Russia went in and picked them up took them back to Russia put them on merchant ships and brought them back which included a baby born on the way which we managed to find in 1970 odd we brought her over here but no you know I mean that to me was what the Navy was all about

Timecode	What said
02:04:33	but to me now I mean I went on H.M.S Sutherland came up to Russia with us in 2005 and I suppose the discipline onboard but when you see the Naval officers with your arm around you know one of the ratings there chattering away you know I think to myself what happened to discipline I suppose it's a good thing I don't know but I despair at some of the people that are controlling the Navy specially the government what they've done in axing all the ships because were a maritime nation and sooner or later these countries are going to start saying well you got no ships they can't defend it like we'll take this bit which as you know it's going to happen in the Falklands before long but there you go.
02:05:28	End of Films