

### **Transcript of audio clip with Bill Aitkenhead**

So I found myself on a Liberty Ship, called the John S Hay it was a troop transport and in the holds they had what were called sturdy bunks, that's folding bunks, six on top of the other and it was very, very cramped, really. But to get to the beachhead – they were sufficient to get to the beachhead which was, we didn't know at the time, which was Omaha Beach. Have you heard of Omaha? It was the – the most casualties of all the beachheads. There was five beachheads and the Omaha which was the second American one, there was Utah and Omaha. Omaha was – [unclear]. More casualties than all five put together, all the other four put together. But we didn't know anything of this so there I was on this American ship and I was there to – to control all the gun crews to stop – that was the purpose to stop them shooting down our own aircraft and to identify enemy – that was the purpose. But it was also a cultural shock, do you understand? Cos I'd never been in the company of Americans before. My idea of America was Hollywood films. I, you know, I used to go to the cinema – everybody did in these days so here – here I'm in the – totally cultural shock of meeting the Americans. I mean, I thought they were very good. Crew in my excellent – no criticisms and of the troops that we took across I can only say they were magnificent but I'll come back to that in a minute. So the – one of the big differences was food. Now, food was severely rationed in this country, severely rationed and yet on this American ship it was though as rationing had never existed anywhere in the world. We had a four course breakfast cereal and then they had what they called flapjacks which was pancakes and they put one pancake down spread it thick with butter and another pancake maple syrup, pancake, butter, another pancake... There was about – there was about three or four inches high and then we had the bacon and eggs and biscuits, what they called biscuits, which was like a little scone and I think cereal was the – . There was one sailor there I used to there at this place with him and he ate twelve eggs every morning. Twelve fried eggs for his breakfast. I often felt like asking him if his contract with the US Navy was binding but I thought I'd better not [laughs]. But I got on well with the crew.