

Lionel Price

My name is Lionel Price, born Leeds, England, 12th September 1924. At 7 months of age, came to Australia.

Family had hard times in the "GROUP SETTLEMENT" around Cowramup in the S. West and also in metropolitan area during the Great Depression. I attained the 8th standard at Perth Boys School. I worked as a Junior Clerk in a Sharebrokers Office and a shop assistant in a General Store. I joined the Navy and was inducted in April 1942 to go to Melbourne for training, 17½ years old. I always wanted to join the Navy, against my father's initial opposition, I joined cruiser HMAS "ADELAIDE" in January 1943. I was disappointed that into December 1943 we only sailed between Fremantle and Melbourne. I requested a draft to "N" Class Destroyers Pool and we departed late December from Fremantle for Columbo, thence to Trincomalli (Ceylon). We joined "NAPIER" January 1944, a fighting ship at last. We were "Flotilla Leader" and operated with the British Fleet in South East Asia with attacks on Sabang Island, Sourabaya and sweeps up the Bay of Bengal, plus other escort work. Then we were sent to Burma to assist the English 14th Army with shore bombardment on enemy gun emplacements, landing commandos, and the capture of the town of AKYAB. We were Command Ship in the invasion of RAMREE ISLAND off the Burma Coast.

After that we joined the British Pacific Fleet and worked with them in the Philippines and Okinawa campaigns and thence up to Japan. We operated with the Aircraft Carriers sending planes on bombing raids over Japan and we were in the "fall out" area of the 1st Atomic bomb. The day we heard of "Cease Hostilities" we had aircraft on their way for daily raids over Japan and when we got the message "Cease Hostilities Against Japan" the aircraft were recalled immediately. Unfortunately 15 kamikaze bombers followed the planes back to the Fleet after the "Cease Fire". Fortunately no damage was done to the Fleet but battleship "Duke of York" had one crash 100 yards astern from her.

Then came a period of waiting for organising the Occupation, Terms etc. and our Fleet joined up with the U.S. Fleets. What a sight! During the waiting period we experienced 4 Typhoons, which wasn't too good.

Then, one day, we entered "Sagami Wan" a bay just outside of Tokio Bay. Anchored there with the Fleet in sight Mt Fujiama. We had, at that time, been at sea for 50 days without sight of land, a record! We refuelled and provisioned ourselves at sea from Tankers and Merchant ships.

The next day we entered Tokio Bay. The first Australian ship to do so! A proud moment! We anchored just off the Naval Base of Yokosuka and some of our guys were already ashore with a landing force lead by our Captain. The signing of the Peace took place on "Missouri" ½ mile from where we were anchored. Soon after that we left Japan, called in at Guam Island for fuel and then home. On the way, 12th September 1945, I turned 21 years!

On "NAPIER" we sank dozens of mines with small arms fire (good shooting practice), had Air Raids and kamikaze bombers.

The Japs claimed twice to have sunk us in Burma (wishful thinking on their behalf) and up one of their rivers had a 500lb bomb land 4 ft off the shell magazine I was in but it didn't explode! How Lucky! We lost 2 crew washed overboard not far from Tasmania, in heavy seas.

After discharge I was employed as a Junior Cabinet Maker. Then up to Carnarvon as Tow Boat Coxwain on the Whaling Station and at times crew on various Chasers. Then I went over to Cocos Islands as Launch Driver at the Marine Base Air Sea Rescue Boats for 2 years. Then up to Koolan and Cockatoo Islands as Launch Master. I sat for and got my "Master of a River and Harbour Vessel" and "Marine Engine Driver" tickets. I had to deliver a launch and put moorings in for it at Groote Island (Gulf of Carpentaria).

Six months later I flew back to Groote Island to take delivery of a barge for them and put the moorings in for it, then back to Koolan Islands.

Then I came back to Perth and leased a Milk Delivery Round for 4 years. Then I took over a lawn-mowing round. My last work before retiring was as an "Escort Driver" escorting wide loads all over Australia.

I did my last escort at age of 70. Now at age of 80 my wife and I are quite happy doing trips and keeping up with our families.

In West Australia a group of "N" Class Destroyer men formed the W.A. Branch of the "N" Class Association and I have served on the Committee since it started about 15 years ago. I represent them at Kindred Service Meetings at R.S. L.

It's been a very full, active and enjoyable life. I hope there is still a lot more to come!