

1 THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Professor. You've been very  
2 helpful. Thank you.

3

4 <THE WITNESS WITHDREW

5

6 CMDR RUSH: Sir, I call Mr Austin Chapman.

7

8 <AUSTIN CHAPMAN, sworn: [10.45am]

9

10 <EXAMINATION BY CMDR RUSH:

11

12 CMDR RUSH: Q. Mr Chapman, is your name Austin Chapman,  
13 and do you reside at [REDACTED]

14

15 A. Yes, I do.

16

17 Q. Are you a retired engineer?

18

19 A. Yes, I am.

20

21 Q. Mr Chapman, did you attend the Royal Military College,  
22 Duntroon, commencing in 1943?

23

24 A. Yes, I did.

25

26 Q. And upon graduation in May 1945 --

27

28 A. Incorrect. Graduation in December 1944.

29

30 Q. December 1944, and thereafter what was your service?

31

32 A. I went to a place called Morotai, in the Halmaheras,  
33 in about May 1945 and was then posted to the  
34 2/12th Battalion as part of 18 Brigade 7 Div.

35

36 Q. Thereafter, did you serve in the Occupation Forces in  
37 Japan?

38

39 A. Yes. The 34th Australian Infantry Brigade was formed,  
40 I think, around about October, not sure, 1945, and each  
41 battalion was raised from each of the divisions. I was  
42 granted the No. 1 Platoon of the 65th Battalion, which came  
43 from 7 Div.

44

45 Q. Where did you serve in the Occupation Forces?

46

47 A. When we first arrived, we landed at Kure, which was  
the Japanese Naval Base, and we were based in a place  
called Hitachi, which was about 8 or 9 miles from  
Hiroshima. Then in about May of that year - no, a little  
earlier - we went up to a place called Fukuyama, where we  
took over trainloads of Koreans from the Americans and  
escorted them down to a place called Shimonoseki and then

1 went back and got some more.

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

28

29

30

31

32

33

34

35

36

37

38

39

40

41

42

43

44

45

46

47

Then in about May 1946, a battalion was sent to Tokyo to perform ceremonial guard duties, is about the best guess I can call it. There was a guard stationed on the Imperial Palace, and I took the first guard on the Imperial Palace.

Q. Was it at that time or around that time that you were based at the Japanese Naval Academy?

A. No, no, I haven't got there yet. I'm in Tokyo.

Q. Okay.

A. I came back to Fukuyama in probably about May/June 1945, and then I was promoted to Captain and sent down to British Commonwealth Occupation Headquarters, which was on the island of Eta Jima, which is in the Inland Sea near Kure and was the original Japanese Naval Academy.

Q. Did you take up quarters in the Naval Academy?

A. Yes, we did.

Q. What was your role or function there?

A. My appointment, as they call it, was Staff Captain Q. There's the three branches - A, Q and G - and I was a junior officer in the Quartermaster Branch.

THE PRESIDENT: Q. Did you know my father? He was 2IC of the 67th Battalion, also stationed at Eta Jima.

A. Yes. It was 65, 66 and 67: 65 was from 7 Div; 66 was from 6 Div; and 67 was mainly from 9 Div, but, yes, sir.

CMDR RUSH: Q. You have provided a statutory declaration to the Commission of Inquiry concerning really your observations at the Japanese Naval Academy, which is at WIT.021.0001. What is coming up on the screen in front of you, Mr Chapman, is the statutory declaration that you have signed.

A. Yes.

Q. We'll go through it and I'll come back to the tender. If we can go to 0002, down to paragraph 4, what you have set out there is your recollection of walking around the old Students Assembly Hall --

A. Could I change your "recollection" word? I have a photographic memory, and I can see those murals now.

Q. Okay.

1 A. But, yes, on the left-hand side, there was a mural  
2 which depicted the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, and  
3 I have mentioned there about the aircraft carriers.

4  
5 Q. Why do you say that it was the Japanese attack on  
6 Pearl Harbor?

7 A. The mural showed with a bird's eye view. It showed  
8 aircraft bearing the Japanese symbol, which was a red  
9 circle with white flashes, and it also showed an aircraft  
10 carrier in the middle of the harbour. *Saratoga* was not  
11 there; it was in San Francisco. And the Captain of the  
12 *Lexington* - I think the other one was *Enterprise*, not  
13 *Saratoga*. The Captain of *Lexington* had a reputation for  
14 taking his ship to sea on a Saturday night, so when the  
15 Japanese attacked on the morning of 7 December, no aircraft  
16 carriers were there.

17  
18 Q. Insofar as the mural purported to depict the attack on  
19 Pearl Harbor, it was inaccurate in the sense that it  
20 displayed an aircraft carrier?

21 A. Yes. I particularly noticed that.

22  
23 Q. How did you know that it depicted Pearl Harbor?

24 A. Well, I've seen photographs of the attack and all that  
25 sort of thing. You could sort of see the layout of the  
26 battleship row and the harbour. By 1946, they were  
27 familiar photographs.

28  
29 Q. Then if we can go over the page to paragraph 6, you  
30 there refer to a mural which was on the opposite wall of  
31 the foyer.

32 A. The right-hand side, yes.

33  
34 Q. Just for clarification --

35 A. When you walk into the foyer, the thing of  
36 Pearl Harbor is on your left; on the other side is the  
37 other mural, depicting a ship and a submarine.

38  
39 Q. You say that the ship, as one looked at the mural, was  
40 steaming, if you like, across the mural and would have  
41 ended up on your left shoulder if it had come off the  
42 mural?

43 A. Steaming towards my left shoulder, yes.

44  
45 Q. In the foreground was a submarine?

46 A. No, it was the turret of a submarine, and that turret  
47 had a red circle painted on it.

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47

Q. A turret or a conning tower?

A. I'm sorry, "conning tower" is the right word. My apologies.

Q. That's all right. You say that the turret or conning tower had a red circle on it?

A. Yes. The Japanese aircraft had red circles with white flashes, but this was a simple red circle.

Q. Then at paragraph 8, you say this:

*I could also see that the cruiser was flying what was definitely an Australian White Ensign. I know that it wasn't a British White Ensign because I could see the blue background with the flag in the corner and what looked like stars underneath.*

A. Yes.

Q. That is your photographic memory of what was depicted?

A. I can see it now.

Q. Do you know what the White Ensign of the Royal Australian Navy looks like?

A. In the top left-hand corner, it has the Australian flag, and the rest of it is white, as far as I know.

Q. There, you refer to the background, as I read it, "I could see the blue background with the flag"?

A. The blue background in the corner, yes. The rest of it was white.

Q. You refer to "what looked like stars underneath"?

A. The stars were on the blue part of the flag.

Q. Mr Chapman, the Australian White Ensign - and I'll show it to you - was not introduced to the Royal Australian Navy until 1967.

A. Fine. I merely tell you what I saw.

Q. I suggest that it would be impossible for you to see a White Ensign with the stars of the Southern Cross on it?

A. I think that's probably a fair comment. I saw a flag which seemed to have a blue section in the top left-hand

1 corner, is probably a better description.

2

3 Q. But you have indicated and volunteered a photographic  
4 memory in relation to a flag that could not have existed at  
5 the time that you say you saw it?

6 A. I'm not aware of that. It was not a totally white  
7 flag.

8

9 Q. You say in paragraph 9:

10

11 *I immediately thought to myself "This is*  
12 *the sinking of the Sydney".*

13

14 A. Yes.

15

16 Q. Why would you have thought that?

17 A. I was surprised that the other big Naval victory that  
18 the Japanese had had was the sinking of the *Prince of Wales*  
19 and I think the *Repulse*, and this was a single ship with  
20 the conning tower of a submarine showing. I guess I just  
21 reacted that way.

22

23 Q. The White Ensign, if it be a White Ensign, would have  
24 been a Royal Navy White Ensign, I suggest?

25 A. I'm aware of that, yes.

26

27 Q. It couldn't have been an RAN White Ensign. You're  
28 aware of that because, what, you understand that it was not  
29 introduced until approximately 20 years later?

30 A. Well, I'm not aware of that.

31

32 Q. Going back to my initial question: a ship with the  
33 White Ensign of the Royal Navy and a Japanese submarine -  
34 why would you have registered the Japanese submarine at  
35 this time as being associated with the loss of *Sydney*?

36 A. I'm sorry, I don't know. I just saw this conning  
37 tower of the Japanese in the foreground and what seemed to  
38 be a light cruiser steaming towards it. I was a young  
39 officer then. We had been taught Naval recognition, but  
40 that's as far as that went.

41

42 CMDR RUSH: Sir, I'm not sure if this has been tendered,  
43 but I do so. It's from the Royal Australian Navy website.  
44 It's at COI.007.0029 and it sets out the history of the  
45 Australian White Ensign and its introduction in 1967.

46

47

1 EXHIBIT #222 STATUTORY DECLARATION OF AUSTIN CHAPMAN,  
2 BARCODED WIT.021.0001

3  
4 EXHIBIT #223 HISTORY OF THE AUSTRALIAN WHITE ENSIGN IN  
5 1967, BARCODED COI.007.0029

6  
7 CMDR RUSH: Q. Following that, Mr Chapman, you had  
8 a discussion with someone you refer to in paragraph 10 as  
9 the Camp Commandant.

10 A. Yes. In every headquarters, there's an officer  
11 appointed to administer it - in other words, food, water,  
12 protection, et cetera - and he's called the Camp  
13 Commandant.

14  
15 Q. Do you recall where he came from?

16 A. He was an Australian Major.

17  
18 Q. Apart from being an Australian Major, do you recall  
19 from where he came, division or otherwise?

20 A. I don't know.

21  
22 Q. You suggested that he take a photograph?

23 A. Yes.

24  
25 Q. You saw him some time later, and he hadn't taken  
26 a photograph?

27 A. No.

28  
29 Q. But you went to check later whether the murals were  
30 still there, and you say they had been removed?

31 A. They had been painted over, yes.

32  
33 Q. Did you speak to any person from the Japanese Navy  
34 concerning the murals?

35 A. Yes, I did. You're familiar with the term an  
36 "officers' mess", obviously. You're familiar, your Honour?  
37 In our officers' mess, we had three barmen. One of them  
38 spoke perfect English. I recall talking to him, and he  
39 actually turned out to be a Japanese Naval flying officer,  
40 who had flown over Sydney in a light aircraft the day  
41 before the midget submarines came in. I mentioned this  
42 mural to him, and he said, "Well, they were trying to  
43 glorify the submarine service." I said, "Oh, I see". We  
44 didn't have a very long conversation about it, but he  
45 obviously knew of the two murals.

46  
47 Q. You refer to the Camp Commandant. Did he have an

1 interpreter?

2 A. Yes. The interpreter, of all people, had been the  
3 Japanese Rear-Admiral, I presume, who had been in charge of  
4 the Naval Academy and he had stayed on as the Camp  
5 Commandant's interpreter. He heard what I said and seemed  
6 to be concerned about it. Please remember, sir, my duties  
7 were a Staff Captain Q, and that's what I was mainly  
8 concerned about, but this incident stuck in my mind.

9

10 Q. You made a submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry --

11 A. Yes, I did. Before that, I bumped into a Naval  
12 officer, who was in a school, and he suggested that I write  
13 to the Chief of Naval Staff, which I did, and then I made  
14 a submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry. Yes, I did.

15

16 Q. I want to take you to a passage in that, if I may.  
17 The commencement of the submission is at  
18 PINQ.SUBS.001.0074, and if we could turn to 0075, the first  
19 page, to the centre paragraph. You referred there, above  
20 this paragraph, to the Commandant and the interpreter, but  
21 I want to take you to the last four lines of that main  
22 paragraph. You'll see that it commences, "A few days after  
23 joining", and if you go down to the last four lines, you  
24 said there:

25

26 *However, I particularly noticed that the*  
27 *flag was an Australian flag, the ship was*  
28 *a cruiser and this mural could not have*  
29 *been a representation of the naval battle*  
30 *of Malaysia as submarines were not involved*  
31 *in the attack on the Prince of Wales.*

32

33 A. That was my understanding. I understand that the  
34 *Prince of Wales* and her escort were sunk by aircraft.

35

36 Q. In relation to your memory and your recollection, as  
37 I understand it, you are not in a position to say that the  
38 flag you saw was the Australian White Ensign?

39 A. Oh, no, I'm not saying that - I see what I said is  
40 "I particularly noticed that the flag was an Australian  
41 flag". That was my interpretation.

42

43 Q. But in light of the Australian White Ensign not being  
44 introduced until 1967, you agree that your interpretation  
45 must have been mistaken?

46 A. What I saw was a flag, and if you draw a flag in four  
47 quarters, three of the quarters appeared to be white and

1 the top left-hand quarter appeared to be blue with some  
2 other colours on it, and it was sort of folded in the wind.  
3 So I suppose, yes, my instinct said that that's the  
4 Australian flag.

5  
6 Q. Whilst your instinct said it, that description that  
7 you've just given does not fit with what you've put in your  
8 statutory declaration as to there being stars on the flag?

9 A. There were stars in the blue area.

10  
11 Q. Stars in the blue area?

12 A. Yes. The Australian flag has the Union Jack in the  
13 top left-hand corner, has it not, and then the Southern  
14 Cross stars on it?

15  
16 Q. But not in the blue area.

17 A. Isn't it? Oh, well, I thought it was.

18  
19 THE PRESIDENT: Q. Just go back to the previous exhibit.  
20 Just before you leave that, I'm interested in the logic in  
21 that last sentence, Mr Chapman.

22 A. Yes, your Honour, what's that?

23  
24 Q. What you seem to be saying is that there were two  
25 possibilities. There was an Australian flag, which you  
26 recognised as an Australian flag, and the two  
27 possibilities, apparently, were either *Sydney* or *Prince of*  
28 *Wales*, and your logic seems to be that it couldn't have  
29 been the *Prince of Wales*, as submarines were not involved  
30 in that encounter; therefore, it must be the *Sydney*?

31 A. Apart from that, your Honour, the *Prince of Wales* was  
32 a big battleship.

33  
34 Q. Yes, but that's not the reason that you advance. The  
35 reason that you advance is that submarines were not  
36 involved in the attack on the *Prince of Wales*. One could  
37 equally say that we could exclude the *Sydney*, because  
38 submarines weren't involved in the attack on *Sydney*?

39 A. I have no idea whether they were or weren't.

40  
41 CMDR RUSH: Q. Mr Chapman, we could include the *Perth*,  
42 which was sunk as a consequence of being hit by, I think,  
43 four Japanese torpedoes and was the type of ship that  
44 *Sydney* was?

45 A. Yes.

46  
47 THE PRESIDENT: And the *Centaur*, which wasn't a cruiser,



1 which I think was hit by a submarine.

2

3 CMDR RUSH: If I can go back to the previous document,  
4 sir, WIT.021.0003.

5

6 Q. At paragraph 8, Mr Chapman, you say:

7

8 *I could also see that the cruiser was*  
9 *flying what was definitely an Australian*  
10 *White Ensign. I know that it wasn't*  
11 *a British White Ensign because I could see*  
12 *the blue background with the flag in the*  
13 *corner and what looked like stars*  
14 *underneath.*

15

16 The Australian White Ensign then had the Union Jack, or the  
17 Jack, in one corner, but there was no blue background.

18 A. I believe you 100 per cent, because you know what  
19 you're talking about. All I recollect - and I can see it  
20 now - is that that ship was flying a flag which appeared to  
21 have one blue quarter and three white quarters. Maybe what  
22 happened, and it's understandable, was that I concluded  
23 that was an Australian - I understood that the Australian  
24 White Ensign was a white flag divided into four pieces,  
25 with the Australian flag in the top-left corner.

26

27 THE PRESIDENT: Q. With the Union Jack in the top  
28 corner. You said "with the Australian flag in the top-left  
29 corner".

30 A. I thought it had the Australian flag in the top  
31 corner. I'm told now that it's the Union Jack, but I'm not  
32 a Naval expert, your Honour. I can see where the problem  
33 lies, and that is that, seeing this, it was definitely  
34 a light type of battle vessel. It certainly wasn't  
35 a battleship. It's conceivable that I decided that that  
36 was the sinking of the *Sydney*, but that was the impression  
37 I got at the time.

38

39 CMDR RUSH: Q. There is just one final matter,  
40 Mr Chapman. Do you remember where the flag was depicted on  
41 the ship, where it was flying from the ship?

42 A. There seemed to be a mast behind the ship and there  
43 was a cross, whatever you call it in Naval terms, and it  
44 was flying over in that left-hand point.

45

46 CMDR RUSH: I have no further matters, sir. Thank you,  
47 Mr Chapman.

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Mr Chapman.

THE WITNESS: Thank you, your Honour.

<THE WITNESS WITHDREW

CMDR RUSH: Mr Olson is the next witness.

SHORT ADJOURNMENT

CMDR RUSH: Thank you, sir. I call Mr Olson.

<WESLEY JOHN OLSON, affirmed: [11.52am]

<EXAMINATION BY CMDR RUSH:

CMDR RUSH: Q. Mr Olson, could I ask you to state your full name, address and occupation to the Commissioner, please?

A. My name is Wesley John Olson. I reside at [REDACTED] and I'm a locomotive driver.

Q. Mr Olson, you've had a long interest in and studied over a long period of time the Naval engagement involving the *Kormoran* and the *Sydney*, and it resulted in the publication of your book, *Bitter Victory*, in 2000?

A. That's correct.

Q. In your book, under a number of chapters, you examine the engagement and put forward various theories as your interpretation of the events and how they might have unfolded?

A. That's correct.

Q. There are a couple of matters I want to take up arising out of the book, and if I can start at page 269 of the book, *Bitter Victory*, where you discuss *Sydney's* torpedoes. You say that there is little doubt that four torpedoes were fired from the starboard tubes of *Sydney* shortly after *Sydney* crossed the stern of *Kormoran*.

A. Working off the interrogation statements and the reports that were generated by the interrogation of the German prisoners, that was the information we had at the time in 1941, and I saw no reason to dispute that. But from the discovery of the wreck and the torpedo tubes, we