

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

World War 1939-1945 - American

Personal Experience

O H 905

JAMES MCKAY

Interviewed

by

Dale John Voitus

on

December 2, 1982

V· This is an interview with Mr. James N. B McKay for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on World War II Veterans, by Dale John Voitus, on December 2, 1982, at the Home Savings & Loan Building, at 3.20 p m

Okay, Mr McKay, tell me something about your family background and your childhood

M I am the youngest of four Two boys and two girls in the family

V. What kind of education did you receive? Where did you go to high school?

M Boardman High School for twelve years I graduated in June 1941 [I] Graduated from Petty School, New Jersey, a prep school, in June of 1942 [I] Entered Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island on June 15, 1942

V Did you have any idea of what degree you were seeking at that time?

M Liberal Arts I completed Brown University in October of 1944

V A bachelor's degree.

M Yes

V· The youngest of four children?

M Yes. Wait a minute I said two of each It was three boys and one girl.

V Your older brothers, were they involved?

M My brother Wallace was two years older than I was My brother Donald was four years older than I am, and my sister Sylvia is six years older

V You got out of Brown in June 1944?

M No, I graduated from Brown in October of 1944

V What were the circumstances, or why did you decide to enter the United States Navy at that time?

M I joined the NROTC at Brown in September of 1942

V That is the Naval ROTC?

M Yes On July 1, 1943, all the NROTC's, the Army ROTC's, were put on active duty The V-12 Program started in the college in September

V Okay, V-12 meaning flight?

M No, it was a college education for people already in the Navy. Similar to the ROTC If you were in the Navy and had certain qualifications, they sent you out to college

V So you knew that when you left with your degree, you were going into the service?

M I was in

V You were in? Okay, you were already in

M: When I graduated, I got commission. Ensign, USNR, in October of 1944

V Then you received your preparatory training for your career while you were at college?

M Right

V Did you get to do any type of training on ship board, while you were at college?

M No Because of the twelve months that you are at college, there were no summer cruises (Laughter)

V Okay, then all your learning, up to the time that you got into the service, was through book learning [About] What the Navy was going to be like

M Yes

V Commission as ensign was not any particular field?

M No, it was not any supply or anything It was just a line officer

V Line officer?

M Yes Some kids out of that program got into supply and other technical fields, but in mine it was strictly a line officer.

V Then this is an interesting topic, since you are a little bit different as far as how you got into your career. Did the people in the Naval ROTC have similar

backgrounds?

M Basically, the Naval ROTC was similar backgrounds. I believe that Eastern College had no Army ROTC. They had the NROTC. The V-12 Program was also running along the same time. They had kids from all walks of life there, coming to Brown at the expense of the Navy. It could be no college previous to that or no necessarily "Ivy League" background type thing. One of the reasons I went to Brown was that my family went there. My dad graduated from Brown in 1911, my uncle in 1915, my brother in 1941, my sister in 1940, my brother-in-law in 1940.

V Okay, then V-12 started and that was when people were brought to Brown to learn not only about the Navy, but also to get a college education.

M Yes. Basically, they went through the same program that the ROTC went through. They got some college education, got your history, got your math, but you also got your Naval science courses. At the same time, Brown had basic training courses with Army meteorologist outfits. So they had an Army unit there also. They went on to Harvard or someplace for further technical training in meteorology. But they started out at Brown. I think at that point they were enlisted men. When you graduated from Brown, or they called you out, you got a commission in the V-12 or the ROTC. Somewhat early in 1944, part of the ROTC was called out and put on sea duty without finishing their college. Some of my good friends left about nine months before I did, and they ended up, a couple of them, in the sub-service and that type of thing. But the need was there for some officers, so they got them out of there, before regular graduation.

V Then you were more or less a pull that they could have?

M: Yes, when they had need.

V Okay, how did you feel, or was there a feeling of anticipation about where the war was going? Did you want to get involved with it or was it, "I will wait until I finish my school?" How did the people that you were going to school with feel about it?

M I do not know. It was a continual battle. Leave school and get the hell out and get in there. Some of them did leave early. I think that the basic assumption was that if Uncle Sam needs us real bad, he will come and get us at that point.

V In a sense, it was up to you?

M. I think that you could have technically asked for active sea-duty and you could

have withdrawn from the ROTC I think the basic assumption among most of the kids that I remember was, if Uncle Sam needs us bad, we were there They were paying for our college We got twenty-one dollars a day, once a month, or something like that

V Okay, we have you up until your graduation and your conditioning upon graduation Where did that lead you, then? Did you have a choice of where you were going to go, or did you just get a set of orders?

M No, you could request I do not know yet of anybody that really got what they listed A fair number of our graduating class, I have no idea how big that was, ended up in the amphibious Navy I think the least I can remember is, something like fifteen of us went to Camp Bradford, Virginia for training in the amphibious part of the Navy I went somewhere around the first of November I had a week or so after graduation, then I reported to Camp Bradford, Norfolk area, about the first of November I was there less than a week and was assigned to a crew who was coming back to Pittsburgh to pick up an LST At that time we knew we would be assigned to an LST That is what Camp Bradford was known for in its training

V LST stands for what?

M Landing Ship Tank, with three hundred twenty-eight people on it. As I remember, they were sending three LST's a week out of there, down the river and through the woods

V Oh, down the Ohio and to the Mississippi?

M Yes, they were building them at Ambridge, they were building on the Naval Islands We came in and quartered the whole crew. There were three crews on that train from Norfolk up to Pittsburgh We lived in the dormitories at Carnegie Tech and went by bus out to Naval Island every day, where we had an office space to get supplies It was about two weeks time, based again for getting days paid. Remember, we got commissioned, a ship got commissioned on the day before Thanksgiving at Ambridge. We put it in commission, threw the lines off and started down the Ohio River [It took] Something like ten days to get down the Ohio and Mississippi In late November, water levels were low, so we could not run at night, particularly the Mississippi The water level was very low It seemed they had navigational problems getting this down We were on the ship, there was a Coast Guard crew of about one officer and ten or fifteen men who did all the ship handling going down through all the locks We spent ten days getting ourselves organized

- V How big was your crew, the people that you had working for you?
- M The normal LST at that time was five officers and around one hundred twenty men. Myself and another fellow were assigned as two preliminary extra officers, so we had seven.
- V What was the ship like? Did it have armaments to defend itself? Was it propelled or was it diesel?
- M It had two General Motors, twelve cylinder engines for main propulsion, twin screws. There was one engine on each propeller. It had three small diesel engines for auxiliary power, generators, pumps, and all of that stuff. Under normal sea conditions, it drew about twelve feet at the stern and about four feet at the bow. You could balance it down a couple of more feet. The bow doors opened and the bow ramp came down, opening up. The whole ship was three hundred twenty eight feet long. I think the tank deck itself was close to two hundred twenty feet. From the tank deck there was a ramp up to the main deck where you could load supplies, vehicles, and that type of thing. The main deck was basically open. Along the edge on each side were something like eight 20 millimeter guns. The bow had a single mounted 40 mm. The superstructure had two single. The double mounted 40's had some sort of gun control mounted 40 millimeter gun sighting systems.
- V The gun crews just manned it?
- M It was more than that. They had some optical sight help, but I cannot remember the gyroscopic thing. Turning it would lead the ship properly. It would lead the aircraft properly.
- V How many tanks were there?
- M I do not know. I do not think we ever carried tanks. We did carry for training exercises some amphibious tanks. We carried everything from construction equipment to aircraft recovery units to anything that needed hauled. An LST could, assuming the shore, go almost to the shore. Ramps came down and vehicles would suddenly drive off. As you came in, you would drop the rear anchor. You came in with a full blast. When you wanted to try to get off, you pumped your blast and pulled them in on your stern anchor that you dropped as you came in, and reversed your engines. Hopefully you could get off, if the tide was not too far out.
- V: That is a good description. You were assigned to the super numerary. What was your job?

- M It ended up being navigator and watch officer, until after the war. When we came back, I ended up as communications officer, as long as I was with that ship, I think.
- V What about the navigation? Did you learn that once you had boarded, or was that part of your classes at Brown?
- M The theory was at Brown. The use of the modern, at that time, navigational guidance books, the proper books, was at Brown. We had some crude attempts at taking star sights. It was the only navigation that we had, the star sights, the Sextant. We had no long radio type navigation that they have now.
- V Was that a very important assignment for a new officer, the navigation?
- M I worked at the beginning with our executive officer for some time. He had not any more navigation training than I did. He had spent two years in the Navy, but he was on guard duty on merchant ships. He ran a gun crew on a bunch of these merchant ships to North Africa. He did not know a whole hell of a lot more about it. I knew more mathematics material. Our first attempt at star sight was when we were anchored in the Gulf of Mexico, see, off of Pensacola, in the Gulf. We took an evening star sight. We were about twenty miles inland. That was the closest triangle that we could make. We went on from there. We got pretty good at it. We got within two miles of Hawaii when we came in. We found the Panama Canal and the rest of them.
- V When you left the Mississippi River, where did you go?
- M We went down the Ohio and Mississippi, and to New Orleans. We were in New Orleans for just a few days. They put us in dry dock and put new propellers on. Going down, we kept bumping the bottom of the Mississippi. They automatically took this in and put new ones on, and sent you out. We went from New Orleans to Panama City, Florida, for shake down training crews. We were there about two weeks and got back. We stopped at Gulf Port on the way back and loaded up with construction equipment, asphalt and a whole number of other things to take out to the Pacific. We went back to New Orleans for five or six days for supplies.
- V Did you know that you were eventually going to end up out in the Pacific, or was it just at the last minute? Was it a secret?
- M No, as far as we knew right from the beginning, we were going. In October of 1944, Normandy was well passed. We secured France, it had started to crumble. There was no need for going into the European theater. That had all

been planned out a year before.

V· Pick it up from New Orleans We docked for three or five days in New Orleans We took off on January 2, if I remember correctly, for Hawaii, via the Panama Canal, by ourselves There was no convoy We got to Hawaii in the second or third week in January At that point, we were there for about ten days On the main deck of the LST, they loaded us with a combination of LCN's and LCBP's They were large landing craft The LCN was a good sized one Then inside of that, they put the LCBP That was big enough to hold twenty men or a jeep or something like that All of them had bow ramps

They loaded us there and put us in a convoy of LST's and cargo ships going to Guam We stopped at Inowetok on the way out and proceeded to Guam We got to Guam about the first of March My recollection still amazes me. The only people who did not know what the hell was going on were back home We went into a supply depot there We walked up to the officer's club the day after we got to Guam and somebody said, "Oh, you are getting ready for Okinawa " That night on the radio, say the first of March, Tokyo Rose was on the radio saying, "Hey fellows, we will see you in Okinawa in April " That was when the invasion was At that point, we unloaded all of the construction equipment We took out cans and cans of asphalt, and fifty-gallon drums of whatever

V What do you think that was used for, the airstrip?

M. The airstrip We unloaded all of that there in Guam. We resupplied ourselves and went up to Saipan, Tinian, and New Guinea I have recollections of the day that we pulling into Saipan It was the morning of the B-29's returning of the first two-hundred plane raid on Tokyo I am not sure if it was that night, or they firebombed Tokyo and killed around one hundred and twenty thousand people It was almost double the casualties of Hiroshima from the fire bomb It burned the whole God damn town

V· What was your impression of these airplanes? That must have been a sight

M That was the first real sight of a B-29 I had seen newsreel shots of them and things like that, but even then they were not too well known because they were just starting to fly out of Mariana up to Japan. At that point, as we were going out, the invasion of Iwo Jima had taken place It was still going on, I think Even yet, they secured Iwo as a base for fighter protection of the B-24's

At Saipan we loaded up with a Navy "Sea-Bee" outfit, which was charged with going in and repairing the airstrip on Okinawa Anyway, we knew we were going to Okinawa We were part of the invasion group at Okinawa. I think we already knew that when we got to Guam, but they sent us up there The

numbers of ships and people at that point were, needless to say, beyond recall. We ended up assigned to a group that faked amphibious landings on the southeast shore of Okinawa. It was part of the mountainous end. I do not know. I am not sure.

V You were a fake?

M Yes, a fake. The main landings took around the centers of the islands from the west. We were on the south east. We were north of Baha, which was on the southwest side of the island. I think later it became known as Buckner Bay. That was where the invasion took place. We were on the southeast shore. They had big battleships, cruisers, aircraft coming in. You had amphibious transports of all kinds, LST's, LCI's. On April 1st, they loaded the LCBP's, LCN's, and circled and circled. Everybody wanted in. They went up on the shore. Nobody put their foot ashore, but retreated. They did the same thing the next morning.

V. Tried to confuse the Japs?

M: Yes. They did the same thing on April 2. As I said, there were LCI's or LST's there and then there were big troop transports that came in.

On April 3, they sent us out in this group of LST's. There were twenty-five of us. They sent us out about fifty miles southeast of the island. For two weeks, every hour on the hour, we would turn forty-five degrees to the right. We were turning around and around. IT was a big, God-damned circle. Somewhere in the middle of that, I remember because we were on watch that morning, in the mist and fog of this morning, came this American battle group. I had found out later that they had just sunk the battleship Yamato the day before, up in the China Sea. They were on their way back out of there.

We circled for two weeks. I cannot remember. About the fourteenth or so of April, we went around and landed in Buckner Bay, underneath the airstrip. We put to shore the Sea Bees, with their bulldozers, shovels, and backhoes and that stuff. In a few days we were assigned to a group of LST's and told to get the hell out of there. We went south from there to Ulithi. We were resupplied, and from Ulithi, we went down past New Guinea, to New Caledonia. It was the base when they started up through Guadal canal. We picked up an Army amphibious tank outfit that had been left there. I do not know how long they had been there, but they had been left out there.

V Somebody forgot them.

M We picked them up and we took them to the Leyte Gulf area in the Philippines. We got back there about the end of May. We spent the whole summer of 1945 training out new troops in amphibious landing, so we were finding a group that was going to land on the southern island of Japan. We spent the whole summer

training. On Monday morning we went down and picked them up and got them loaded on. Tuesday morning we would start early. We would simulate landings on some island. We had a group on board until the middle of August, when the Japs said they would surrender. I remember we were anchored in the harbor of Iwo. We got gloriously drunk that night.

V. V-J Day?

M. It was not really V-J Day, but that was what everybody celebrated. The surrender was not actually signed until September second out there, which was September first here. We had loaded them on Monday and during the night they had orders to take them back to where we got them. We went back and unloaded them. The following day, this whole group was sent to Subic Bay, north of Manila Bay for resupplying. We went to Manila Bay and got loaded for a trip to Japan. They loaded us and unloaded us. It took three times before they figured out that we had the right group boarded.

When we got to Japan, we went up in a convoy of LST's. We got to Japan on the fourth or fifth of September. It was three or four days after the surrender had been signed. We unloaded the group in Yokohama. From there we were sent back to Leyte Gulf to pick up another group, and Army howitzer or something like that. We took them up to the northern island in Japan, Hokkaido. We came back to Tokyo Bay again. We were in Tokyo Bay until late October, I guess. In Tokyo Bay, they told us to go to Guam. In Guam, they told us to go home. It must have been in late November, because I remember the day we crossed the date line. It was Thanksgiving Day. We had Thanksgiving on both sides of the date line.

V. Two Thanksgivings, huh?

M. Yes. Going back from Guam, we were loaded to the hilt with Army and Air Force ground personnel. We had fifteen pilots who wanted to go by ship instead of flying. These were Army guard units on the air base. There were mechanics and all sorts of people who had, at that point, enough points to get home and get discharged. We left Guam and it took us sixteen days to get to Pearl. At Pearl, they unloaded all of these troops. At Pearl they took us over to the depot there. Do you know what an LCT is? They handled about five tanks. They transported most of those on the decks of LST's. They lifted them out of the water and set them on the skids on the top of the LST. This had been on in the Normandy invasions. It had gotten as far as Pearl one way or another.

V. Oh, really?

M. I do not know how he got there. They decided to send him back to the states at

that point They loaded him on there I forgot when we left It was nine more days from Pearl to San Francisco We got into San Francisco on the twenty-fourth of December, 1945, having left January 2, 1945, from New Orleans

Recollections As we stopped at the Farallon Islands to pick up the pilot that took you up to San Francisco Bay, and the starboard engine quit We got to just under the Oakland Bay Bridge, through the Golden Gate, under the Oakland Bay Bridge at Treasure Island, where the World's Fair was It was a Navy Base then They sent out a signal that we should come over there and anchor and unload the people that we had They made a U-turn underneath the Oakland Bay Bridge and the other engine quit. We dropped our anchor right there and sat. I think they sent small boats out and got the people off if they wanted They sent a tug out the next day and towed us down to Hunter's Point on the San Francisco side It was a Navy repair base for shipping They towed us down there without any engines We did not have any engines We had auxiliary power, but no main engines I left the ship after Christmas.

We figured out at that point we had about five thousand hours on those engines and you were supposed to have a major overhaul every one thousand or something like that The longest we ever sat, we might not have gone far, in one place was five days We may have moved from this part of the harbor to that part of the harbor, but the longest we sat anywhere was five days

V You were a busy crew

M Yes

V You left the ship as soon as you got back?

M. No I was eligible for a little R&R I think roughly the first of February I got a leave They assigned me from San Francisco to Great Lakes I had twenty-eight days of leave I came home Twenty-eight days later I went to Great Lakes and they reassigned me to San Francisco with five days delay I came home for a couple of more days I took the train to San Francisco I was assigned to another LST at that point We left San Francisco not too long after the war Apparently it had been decided at that point a lot of these LST's were being sent to Portland, Oregon and that area at the Kaiser Ship yards to be decommissioned and deactivated, then in the mothball fleet at Pastoria

Somewhere around the first of April we got up there I stayed there until the middle of June when I finally had enough points to get discharged From that point they reassigned me to the Great Lakes and sent me to the Great Lakes where I got discharged That was June of 1946

V What was your rank?

- M Ensign I was at the point that every month they moved it up. At one point at twelve months as an ensign, you got a promotion. Then it was thirteen and fourteen. I never did get out of it.
- V I wrote down a series of questions about your experiences that I want to ask you. First of all, when you picked up your ship in Pittsburgh and took it most of the time to the Pacific, what was its name?
- M No name.
- V It was just a number?
- M Yes, 838. LST 838.
- V. You told us you went through the Panama Canal to Hawaii and into Pearl Harbor. What were your impressions when you first saw Pearl? I know there probably was not much to show that it had been bombed by then, but I suppose there was still something?
- M Parts of the Arizona were still sticking out of the water. Other than that, there was not anything.
- V Were there any moments of reflection, this is what caused it all or this is what started it all?
- M Yes. Of course, one, you were in Hawaii and you never expected to get there in the first place. Two, your recollections of Pearl. It was busier than hell. At that time, Pearl Harbor or Australia were the places where they had to make the major repairs. The big dry docks where a heavy cruiser could go in and pump the water out to repair the bottom half. I do not think there was anything else between Pearl Harbor and Australia. It was a busy, active place. No signs of the original invasion, other than the Arizona sticking out. I think they cut part of the superstructure. You could see it sticking out of the water.
- V: Your experiences in Okinawa. I assume the reason that you were sent away was to protect you from the possible Japanese air strikes? Were you exposed to any? This is the time that everyone was talking about the kamikazes.
- M April 1, as we were coming in, I cannot remember if they were LST's. I cannot remember. It was in four columns. One group stopped and the other proceeded or something. The ships were sort of bunched up. The ship ahead of us did pick up a cimices. It was barely the first signs of dawn. Of course, we were at general quarters, and had been for several hours. The first crack of daylight, this

thing came in. It was a Coast Guard LST. The ship was one hundred feet ahead of us because we had gotten out of position. The damn thing went through the side wall, through the interior side wall, and ended up in the tank deck area. It had a small bomb aboard which went down the shaft to the engine room and blew up.

My recollection was the LST had a Marine Corps tank outfit. Two rows of tanks and three rows of 50 caliber ammunitions stacked in boxes about three feet high, downed that whole tank deck. The thing caught fire. Within an hour, they had to abandon ship. We picked up about half of them and another LST picked up the other half. The next day I think we transferred everybody that we picked up to an LST that did nothing but pick up drivers. They had an LST set up as a mini-hospital and kitchen-type thing. They took them. Low and behold, two or three hours after they pulled everybody off, a sea-going tug shows up, and tows the son of a bitch up on the shore and leaves it there. To me, the amazing part was everything was always there when you needed it, at least in part of the war. All of a sudden, there was a God-damned sea-going tug two thousand miles from dry land and there it was.

Again, coincidence, that LST just pushed it up on the shore and left it burn out. When we got back to Pearl Harbor and went into the west arm, west loch, of Pearl, there was that son of a gun tied up on a couple posts out in the west loch. They towed it back. Those half-inch steel plates looked like a cheese-grater with all of that ammunition that had gone off.

Then we had no D-Day and D plus two were in there. While we were out circling, we saw no enemy activity. We came back in and it was the nightly air-raid from Japan, the high-level bombers had come in. We were probably fifteen miles north of Naha. The Navy had big ships, artillery.

V Where were we?

M I forgot that for three or four days we were in Buckner Bay. We always considered ourselves lucky when we landed. We could only get so far up on the beach and the reef. When the tide went out, we were sitting high and dry. Part of the cargo that we carried up on the bow was at least two hundred fifty-gallon drums of high octane aviation fuel. The first thing when we got off, we loaded it on the truck and they took it up on the beach. They stacked it up there. It was not more than a half an hour after they put the last one up there and an airplane came over strafing hit this thing and the whole thing went up. Fortunately, it was not on our bow. Other than that, we were sitting up all night shooting our guns at aircraft. They were pretty high up, forty millimeters might have done something. Basically, the only way you could have gotten them would have been fighters. As far as I can remember, none of them came down low for strafing attacks. There were some across the airfield, strafing.

- V There was nothing low down near you?
- M No, nothing coming down low and trying to strike us. They were all high-level bombers.
- V Okay, let me ask this question. On a typical day, how long you were on duty, or did you have certain watches you had to stand? Tell us what it would be like.
- M. Basically, there was one officer on watch all of the time. There were four on and eight off. There was a dogwatch to break up the cycle. You could have 4:00 to 8:00 at night and then you had 12:00 to 4:00 at night and then 4:00 to 6:00 in the morning, and 6:00 to 8:00 in the morning.
- V Just kept rotating?
- M The navigator was always out early in the morning and late in the evening. At that point, I think I was assistant communications officer and keeping his books and things up to date.
- V You see these movies about the Navy. They had movies for their guys and ice cream? How well supplied do you feel you were?
- M. Basically, I, again hindsight, being what it was, a part of me will always remember the kitchen. Most of the time they had food. They had movies. While you were at sea, it was horrible because if they had two or three, they showed us two or three over and over and over. When you were in harbor, you could swap with your neighbor.
- V. Was mail call pretty regular?
- M Mail call was atrocious. It was about every three months. Payroll was the same way. You could never find a paymaster. If you found a paymaster, they could not find your pay record. There was not any place to spend it anyway. When you did get paid, you got a check and sent it back home. On our ship, the officers, they ate out of a general mess. There was no separate mess on some of the bigger ships.
- V. Oh, really?
- M. We ate the same stuff. Generally speaking, the food in the Navy was pretty good. The only thing that I did not like was the God-damned mutton that they got from Australia. We wondered what some of those sheep rolled in.
When we left Ulithi and headed towards New Caledonia, we were really

out of the war zone. As I remember, once we got south of the equator, we had a little celebration there. We stopped at Mannus and Admiralty Islands and then went down by New Guinea. When we were south of there, we ran with our lights on in a convoy. We would have a movie on the main deck at night. I would go down and have two cans of beer at night, if I was not on watch.

The typical conglomeration of people in the crew were kids from Appalachia that could not read. We had courses when we could, and helped them read and write letters back home. There were guys from Texas and everything. They were quite a group of people and most of them got along very nicely, considering. I would say all of the officers were college-material types. Andy Galbreath, who I bunked with, was from Kansas City, Kansas. After the war went on and he tried out for one of the campus football teams as guard. He was wide and 225 pounds. He was not too tall, but he had a good build.

V Big guy?

M Our executive officer was thirty-two, which is fairly old for that type of crew. He and his father ran a weekly newspaper in Marshall, Missouri. He was one of these various out-going individuals. He had been on our guard duty. He knew somebody everywhere he went. He had ten million stories. He would sit at general quarters in the morning or an hour before sunrise and an hour after sunset. He was a really nice guy.

Our captain was an Annapolis graduate. He graduated from Annapolis in July or August. He was the next to the last man in his class. He was spot prompted to full lieutenant and out in charge as captain of LST. Our engineering officer was the Mustang. He enlisted back in 1936. He was a chief motor and machine mate on the USS Portland. He got a commission. He had a lot more knowledge of the Navy than any of us. He had a lot more common sense. I think a lot of the officers had more common sense than our skipper. Somebody had to be in charge.

Our fist lieutenant and our engineering officer were well-qualified ship handlers and that sort of thing. After I went back and got assigned to the other LST after I had to leave, we went to Portland. They put me in a group that was deactivating ships. I did not know piping and engines and all of that. I had to rely strictly on the chief or somebody who knew what the hell [they were doing]. All I did was see that they showed up every morning and left every night. They would say to go over and drain the main blast lines, these pipes were harder than anything else. Basically, they were pretty well trained for it. Now again, a lot of it was on-the-job-training. With the shake down cruise in Florida, it is a constant thing. They would take you out in ships in a long line and they would tow this "sleeve" and let us practice shooting. I think they came closer to the airplane than they did to the sleeve.

On the other hand, from there on in, every time we approached land in the

Pacific, the group commander would have a sloop towed. We got to where we would shoot off three feet of that and then another three feet. We would get down to the ring and shoot it off. It really got very good. They would practice that type of thing.

V. You mentioned a little bit about the crew. Were they mostly draftees?

M. Yes.

V. There was a good mixture, though, as far as experience and then the new people?

M. Yes. WE had a few experienced chiefs, petty officers. There were a few even in the amphibious Navy. There were a few of them. There were some electricians and motor diesel men, that type.

M. Mostly just draftee people?

M: Yes.

V. Young.

M. Yes. Our radar guy had been a small contractor down in Alabama before the war, doing some building jobs and that type of thing.

M. What was your feeling, or maybe you can give an example of how the people felt about the Japanese, the enemy? Was it something like, "While we are here, we have a job to do, so let's do that and go home," or was it a sense of more obligation because of what they did to us? How did the people feel about the enemy at times, overall?

M. The Navy attitude was entirely different from the Marines. You never saw your enemy other than ten thousand feet in the air. Again, we had been indoctrinated and read the newspapers of the atrocities that had gone on. I have to assume from everything that I had read since then that they were true. There was not much quarter given on either side. The Marines were not too generous with their captives and vice-versa. I still think that World War II, in general, most servicemen felt that they had just cause for being there. It was an entirely different attitude, I think, in Vietnam. There was a great deal about why the hell we were there. In this case, with Hitler and Germany and Japan out to conquer the other side, I think most Americans felt very strongly that this is why we had to do it. There was not any way out. That was my recollection of it. You have to wonder sometimes whether you could convince the public to go out and do what

they did not do before. It just is not soldiers and sailors, but the people back home.

V You were talking before about going back to Hawaii.

M It did give you a peculiar feeling to see the Japanese and know that we were treating them as friends. Most of the Japanese that we saw on the second trip in 1980 were young. They were a good bit younger than I was. Apparently, Honolulu is a favorite tourist spot for businessmen from Japan. It does leave you with a peculiar feeling of a great deal of hard feelings then and they can disappear and that is probably rightfully so.

V I am going to give you a chance here to give you a couple of minutes. I am going to ask you for some final comments. Take a couple of minutes. You can think about what you would like to say about your experiences and how it affected you as a person, what you feel that it is important or not important as far as today or how it fits into your life. Just kind of evaluate your whole experience, if you could.

M I think my reaction is probably typical. You remember the humor, the good spots, and forget. My recollection of the whole experience is pretty much what I would get in reading Mr. Roberts once in a while. Hurry up, wait, complete boredom at times, it was that type of thing. That disappears in a hurry. You even forget the tension of being in the invasion. It does not take you long to put that behind you and forget it. You remember the stupid stories. In the Philippines, you had to keep a block, tackle, and a rope at the gangway to pull the guys aboard because they were not sober enough to climb the ladder and that type of thing.

I do not think it is fair to my judgement of the people in the Philippines. It is not fair, but the only thing they seem to do is steal from the Americans. We got to go to Yokohama three days after the surrender. The streets were bare. All the rubble there was in neat little piles on the empty lot. In the Philippines in August, a year after liberation, a building had blown up and they just drove around it. It was amazing.

The Japanese were amazed at anything mechanical. I remember when we pulled in Hokodate. It was an old town on Hokkaido to unload an artillery group. They had a Japanese labor gang come in and unload the shells. The whole town turned out when the ship came in. We opened the bow doors and put a ramp down onto the dock there and everything moves out. It is an experience I would not have missed. I think meeting all those different types of people under those circumstances is an experience that you do not often get. You certainly do not get it at college. It also led me to believe that I did not want to get into a great big organization with all of that bureaucratic red-tape that went

with it

V Is there anything else?

M: A few of the people who I knew who got deferred through the war for one reason or another, they were, clear up until the middle of the late 1950's, criticized by a whole lot of people. For one reason or another, they had not gone to the war and the rest of the folks had. I had no feelings that way, but a lot of parents were that way, too. My friend, Lou Garry, got deferred because of his condition. A lot of people did not like that. Again, it is a different attitude now, I think.

V Yes, entirely. Thank you.

End of Interview