

YONGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Pearl Harbor Survivor – World War II

Personal Experiences

O.H. 1650

Charles Skibbe
Interviewed

By

Dirk Hermance

On

November 8, 1991

Charles Milton Skibbe

Charles Skibbe was born in Chicago, Illinois on July 19, 1923, son of Arthur Walter and Nettie L. Skibbe. Mr. Skibbe had four brothers and three sisters in his family. Mr. Skibbe lived in Chicago until he graduated from Washburn Technical High School and joined the United States Navy at age 17, on December 23, 1940. He obtained permission from his mother and a city alderman to enlist. A requirement of enlistment into the Navy at that time was perfect health and in particular, perfect teeth according to Mr. Skibbe. Upon entry into the service, Mr. Skibbe entered the Great Lakes Naval Training Center for Basic training. After a ten-day leave, he departed for Bremerton, Washington to be stationed. He was stationed on the U.S.S Nevada, BB-36 in late February of 1941 as a Seaman apprentice. He was assigned the position of primer man on the center gun of the first 14-inch gun turret on the Nevada. Mr. Skibbe was at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii on December 7, 1941 when the Japanese attacked. His battleship, the Nevada, was the only U.S. Navy battleship to get underway and move away from its moorings despite heavy damage from torpedo' and bombs. The damage being greater than expected, the ship was intentionally beached before it came close to the mouth of Pearl Harbor so it would not sink and block the entry into the harbor. Mr. Skibbe was transferred to the U.S.S. Indianapolis after the attack and saw combat in the battle of the Coral Sea. He was discharged on December 13, 1946. He received a Good Conduct medal, a Philippine Liberation Medal, an Asiatic/Pacific Medal with Five Stars, and a Pearl Harbor Medal in 1991.

Mr. Skibbe moved to Youngstown, Ohio in 1948. He married Julia J. Wrona and they had five children, Charles M. Jr., Marilyn J., Michael J., Julie Ann, and Robert L. Skibbe. He was employed by Youngstown Foundry and Machine Company, which became Wean United Corporation, from 1949 to 1981 when he retired. He is an active member of the Pearl Harbor Survivors Association, and returned to Hawaii for the 50th Anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor.

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Interviewee: CHARLES M. SKIBBE

Interviewer: Dirk Hermance

Subject: Pearl Harbor Survivor – World War II

Date: November 8, 1991

DH: This is an interview with Charles M. Skibbe for the Youngstown State University Oral History Project by Dirk Hermance at 856 Cornell Street, Youngstown Ohio on November 8th, 1991 at 10:30 in the morning. Okay let's start. Tell me where you were born and where you were raised.

CS: I was born July 19th, 1923 in Chicago, Illinois. I was raised in Chicago.

DH: How long did you live there?

CS: Until I was seventeen years old. Then I joined the Navy after High School. Went in the Navy December 23rd, 1940.

DH: At the age of seventeen?

CS: Seventeen.

DH: Was that a problem back then?

CS: No, it wasn't a problem. I had to have an alderman sign myself into the Navy with my mother's permission and I had to be in perfect health to get into the Navy in them days. We didn't go in and they fixed you up you had to be in perfect health and your teeth had to be perfect.

DH: Why your teeth? Do you know?

CS: Well, they didn't do it at that time; they wanted men that were physically fit. To go into the Navy, they didn't want to spend a lot of money in them days.

DH: That's interesting. Do you have brothers and sisters?

CS: Yes I do.

DH: How many?

CS: Lets see there's four brothers and three sisters.

DH: Four brothers and three sisters. And they were all raised in Chicago?

CS: Yeah.

DH: When did you come to Youngstown?

CS: After the war.

DH: After the war was over?

CS: That was in 1948 I believe it was. Yeah 1948 was when I moved to Youngstown.

DH: Well, tell me what it was like to be in the Navy at that time? What was average, first of all what did you do?

CS: Well, first important to a training at Great Lakes, Illinois for training and after training we had ten day leave to come back to Chicago and after that we went to Bremerton, Washington to pick up our ship and that was the U.S.S. Nevada BB-36. So, that was the later part of February. When we got to Bremerton, Washington that took us four days to get down to Long Beach California. After that it was regular Navy routine after that. I was a seaman apprentice going in and then it must have been about a month later when we go to Long Beach from Hawaii and all that time Hawaii was strictly training. I was turret, number one turret; I was a primer man on the center gun. A typical day for me in the Navy was like, an apprentice seaman you do all the dirty work. I was working the Jacket dust. The Jacket Dust is a commissary branch, you get your provisions ready for breakfast and dinner and for supper and that's what you did all day. Then outside of that you cleaned up your compartments, your bunks. You put your bunks up, which where on chains. When we first got on ship we slept in hammocks a regular hammock in them days. Then they did away with them and got bunks then. But that was a typical Navy day, which you did your routine work and you worked anywhere from eight hours a day plus your watches. You still got a watch. A two-hour watch is a dogwatch; a four watch is a regular watch and that was mostly for a look out for submarines or anything that might be on the surface.

DH: And this is pre-war?

CS: Yes, this is pre-war. Everybody had a look out station and everybody at a gun station. That's what you train for.

DH: Your gun station was?

CS: Number one turret and I was a primary man on a fourteen-inch gun.

DH: So, that meant that you handled the bags?

CS: No, I handled that primer to set the charges off.

DH: Oh, to set the charges off.

CS: What it was, was a thirty-ought six shell and when you'd stand underneath the gun and the gunner would drop the breach, you would reach with your left hand underneath the breach, put a primer shell into the locking mechanism. Then you'd hit on the gunnersmate toe and he'd know that the gun was primed and ready for firing.

DH: So, you'd reach to smack him on the foot to let him know.

CS: To let him know that I'd primed the shell.

DH: Oh on deck.

CS: Yeah, because I was below deck and he was even with the gun. Of course there are three guns at each turret. Now these are fourteen-inch guns we're talking about each shell is 2,000 pounds and two ninety-eight pounds bags of black powder went into each on of these to project them.

DH: What was it like when a gun went off?

CS: Well, you had a lot of recoiling, a lot of motion with the recoiling. Actually you didn't hear the sound because you were inside the turret. But you could feel it, but you actually heard all the mechanism's working the elevation, and the turning of the gun, and then you'd have to watch for the recoil. Now the recoil came back into my face with in about seven inches of my face when the gun recoiled. But I was standing in between a chamber see I was set back in there and that gun would just recoil and when it recoiled I'd hit him on the shoe again to let him know that it recoiled. Then the gun was lowered again and it was fired again, load the gun and fire.

DH: So, you were in a fair amount of danger?

CS: Well, only if in case something happened to the gun. If it wouldn't recoil or something you would hit him on the foot to let him know that it didn't recoil also. And then they'd elevate the gun back up clear of everybody. So, they could find out why it didn't recoil and then they'd set it off manually.

DH: How was that done?

CS: To tell you the truth I never go into, because I wasn't a fire control man or a gunner's mate. I was just an ordinary seaman and that was my job, just to prime the gun and that's all my work had to do with the gun. While during the Pearl Harbor attack our gun was knocked out of commission. We couldn't fire into the Harbor anyway.

DH: And that was turret number?

CS: Number one. Yeah, we were hit and our compartments down below started to flood, below our magazines and the water was coming up so we had to abandoned our turret and we went up onto the Gun Deck, which they call the Gun Deck is the five-inch thirty-eights and that's an anti-aircraft gun. My station up there was just loading the fuse pots with ammunition and the other fellows taken over and shooting them.

DH: So, basically when your turret got knocked out you had enough to do just getting up on deck.

CS: Right.

DH: And then doing something else.

CS: But before I got up there, we had Bos'n and Hill, which in the Nevada I don't know if your familiar with it but, but the Nevada had two Metal of Honors winners on there and seven Navy Crosses were distributed aboard our ship alone. Bos'n Hill were really actually the ones that got us away. While we were tied up he asked for a fire ax to cut the hazer's, he was blown off the crew the first time he swam back and got off the hazer's was blown off and we never did see him after that. So, he was killed and the other guy that got us away was Ross the chief engineer. He was only nineteen years old. The average age of our ship was nineteen and half years. You take I went in in 1940 I was seventeen and half when I went in December when I went aboard ship and then the following December I was eighteen and half when the attack came off in 1941.

DH: Let's back track a little bit. What was ship work like when you were on your way to Pearl?

CS: It was just routine. You did your watches and you had your three meals a day. And you did your work and cleaned up your compartments, you're holding stone. What they called holding stone on the deck was you had a bar of hard sand and you'd put a broomstick in it and you'd shine these wooden decks. We had wooden decks on them in those days. And you'd shine these decks with a holding stone just bleach them out white. Then you stood your watch. You had sweep down and you had to sweep down the ship three times a day and take the trash to the incinerator. Just a typical day for like I say apprentice seaman they got all the dirty work.

DH: What did you do in your free time on ship?

CS: Oh, I read magazines and books and listen to the radio. In them days I think the Lone Rangers was on and the Shadow and different stories like that. Well, there was very little time for radio they tried to keep the ship quite you know. A lot of the fellows were sacking out that had to go on their watch at midnight they'd try to get a couple hours of sleep before that. So, we usually kept it quite. If you wanted to play cards or something you'd go down to the mess hall and play cards down there. Like I said though most of the time we just spent reading books and stuff. We had a library aboard ship; we had barbershop aboard ship. A battleship is just like a small city a miniature city they have everything there. Sundays we had church services, well, they had three different church services Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish aboard ship. But that was a typical day, just doing your job that's it.

DH: What would an inside of a battleship look like do you recall?

CS: Yes. Your compartment, like I was in first division starboard side, our compartment was a room consisting of three tables with benches that hung to the overhead, during meal time they would bring them down and set them up and then you'd have, you were assigned to bring food from the galley, you ate family style. Each division had their own compartment and that's the way you ate, family style. Your mess cook was the fellow that took your tureens they were three pots that fit inside one another and he'd run up to the galley and get all your food for that many men in the tureen. You'd pass them and you'd have your bowls and plates and everything. They'd feed themselves just family style. And the fast you move the better it was for your men, then the more they likes you if you got them seconds good that was more power to you. But there was a group a fellows like a family living in each compartment. And below that compartment was where are sleeping quarters were and our sleeping quarters were steal beds with a mattress on it and on chains. In the morning you would make your bed and unhook chains and put your chains up against the side of the bunk bed. So, that the room was empty, free from running, there was nothing in your way. Your traffic aboard ship was up starboard and down port. In other words if you were going to the bow you would have to go forward to go to the bow on starboard side only, if you were going to the stern you'd have to get over on the port side and go to the stern. That's way traffic runs aboard ship for the simply reason that you wont run into anybody incase of a battle. Now in emergency assignment they had a clacking horn that sounded and then they'd get on and say General Quarters or Fire or whatever was the thing that was happening at that time. Usually if they'd say it was a drill before that, the boats are made of pipe, but I understand that their not using pipes anymore aboard ship, but when I was in the Navy that's all they went by was bulletins pipe. That's were I ended up being bulletin and you call your different calls with the pipe. You figure your pipe and they'd know it was coming on like Sweepers man your brooms, clean sweep floor and half, chow, church, attention all hands, or if there was some special announcement you just get on there and blow attention, which would be a long blast and two short ones. Then you'd get on the PA system and tell them what was happening.

DH: You still remember the calls?

CS: Oh yeah. I still have my Bos'n pipe, I have the original one that we started out with, one more thing when you first go aboard ship in them days you picked out what you called a Sea Daddy. Now Sea Daddy is a rated man who was in whatever branch you was going to go into, the firing brigade, or fire control, or gunner's mate, or boats whatever your picking up. When you struck, they called them a striker, when you struck for that rate, well I wanted to be in the boats so I struck for seaman. So, then I made seaman second-class, seaman first class, and then I ended up a boats inspector. To work for them you had a Sea Daddy and a Sea Daddy is a rated man that shows you the ropes of the Navy, he'll take you under his wing, and he'll tell you different parts of the ship, and he'll explain everything and what he went through. That's how you pick up on life aboard ship.

DH: Who was your Sea Daddy?

CS: He was Robert Herkenhand and this goes back to 1940. I don't remember what happened to him, I never got in contact with him after Pearl Harbor. He was really a nice fellow. He was a second-class boats mate. He showed me how to use the pipe and showed me how to tie knots. Seamanship is a lot of cargo handling, tying of different knots, tying up the ship, running the ship, running booms, it takes a lot of things what they call the Deck Force. Now if you're in the Fire Brigade that's completely different that's all engineering. That's running the ship.

DH: So, you were on the Deck Force?

CS: Yeah, I was on the Deck Force.

DH: What was going on in Pearl Harbor the night before the attack? What do you remember that day before, that night before?

CS: I tell you it was a real peaceful night. We just came back in off of maneuvers; the whole fleet was out on maneuvers for about four days. We came in two nights before that. That night, the night before I remember they tied up on an ammunition rider below our starboard amidships. We were going to replenish our ammunition, the fourteen-inch shells. We were going to unload them, and bring on new ammunition. We were working on the blisters. A blister is what they used to elevate the ship, if they want to get their shells further, a tank you have to clean them every once in awhile, Oh I'd say their about fifteen inches wide and they go along the whole side of the ship. Now, if you want to elevate your guns they fill these blisters with water and that tips the ship to a certain degree. So, you can get further near your trajectory on your shells and be further spotted up. But, the day before I laid around in our shorts, the uniform of the day was short's and sneakers sneaker's are tennis shoes. And that was what the uniform of the day was. We had our white canvas stretched over the bow and that was to keep the sun off of us, while you're in harbor. Sitting around playing cards and reading, it was just a quiet night that's all.

DH: I've heard from other Pearl Harbor survivors that there was a band concert going on or a band competition going on that night.

CS: Well, yeah. That night at, our band was one of the best bands in the fleet they called us The Cheer-Up Ship the U.S.S. Nevada was the Cheer-Up Ship.

DH: Cheer-Up?

CS: Cheer-Up, Cheer-Up Ship. We had boxing and stuff like that, they had a band competition that night, but I didn't go to it because I had duty that night. But they did have it over at on of the landings. Our band that morning at Pearl Harbor was picked to play the National Anthem for the raising of the flags for colors that morning. They were assembling on the deck when this all happened.

DH: You mean on the day of Pearl Harbor?

CS: Yeah, on the day of Pearl Harbor attack they were already getting ready on the deck to start playing.

DH: Can I ask you something? You've been on the Maneuvers a few days before; did the Carriers go with you?

CS: No. No, it was all battleships. We were out there doing zigzag's and do different routines out there, and fire out drums and targets, we fire at targets being pulled by tugboats.

DH: Was Utah being used as a target ship?

CS: No, she was tied up in harbor.

DH: Not out for maneuvers she wasn't?

CS: No, she was tied up in port, Utah wasn't there at all.

DH: I knew it was a target ship and I was wondering if?

CS: I never saw her as a target ship out there. Now whether it was after that or before I ever came to Hawaii, but we fired at targets that were being towed by just regular targets; they were made out of timbers and they had a circle 'em and everything and they'd be off in the horizon some tugboat was three or four hundred yard ahead of the thing and then we'd just shoot at the target that's all. And then they'd have drone planes fly over, radio controlled drone planes fly over and we'd shoot at them with our anti-aircraft guns. But in them days you didn't have forty-long meters or your twenty-long meter, all you had was your five inch twenty-fives and on the board side your five inch thirty-eight was an anti-aircraft gun and then you had fifty caliber machine guns.

DH: So, it was basically mostly machine guns?

CS: Yeah that's what it was. As matter of fact the fellow aboard our ship he went up into the close capsule with three machine guns and how he got them up there that day I don't know, but he was up there he was firing those machine guns.

DH: Was that Pearl Harbor Day?

CS: Yeah.

DH: How in the world did he get them up there?

CS: I don't know how he got them up there we still don't know, but he was up there.

DH: Those are heavy as the dickens.

CS: We got quoted for getting three airplanes, three Jap planes.

DH: What's it smell like on a battleship?

CS: A lot of heavy diesel fuel smell you know oil. And then or course different times of the day you wouldn't smell anything just the men. There were human beings on there, but it wasn't a fowl odor. Just different smells at different times of like if they were cooking something in the galleys you'd get the aroma of the cooking. What can I say our food was delicious aboard ship. We had some wonderful cooks and wonderful bakers. All I can say is they had to cook for a miniature city.

DH: Was the crew on the Nevada relatively new to the Navy, a young crew?

CS: I would say yes. Because what they did was keep enough old timers there to operate the ship and then like I said as you went aboard, I am trying to remember and I can't remember for the life of me how many of us went aboard in Washington. There was a complete drafting of if I am not mistaken I think there was a little over a hundred of us that went aboard that ship that day. All the rest were maybe on that ship three or four months before that, but they were new men.

DH: Did they come through Great Lakes, like you did?

CS: Yeah. Some from Great Lakes, and some from San Diego, and some from Florida.

DH: How many from Great Lakes that went through basic with you ended up on the Nevada with you?

CS: I was in Company of 140 going on in the Great Lakes and I think there were forty-four of us aboard company, some went aboard the Arizona, some went aboard the

Atlanta. They cut it off at how your name was spelled. Now my name was SK so I was in the last half of the list. Half went aboard Arizona and half went aboard the Nevada.

DH: So, in other words most of the people you came out of Great Lakes with ended up on the Arizona.

CS: On the Arizona. Two of my best buddies were on there too. They were killed there, because I saw their names there on the plaque. When I went aboard the Memorial. I saw their names. In them days you had brothers, a lot of brothers went aboard the same ship, but during the war when they lost the Sullivan Brothers they split them up right away that way too many won't be lost out of one family.

DH: Do you remember their names?

CS: No, I can't remember them. I'd remember them to see them, but not right off hand. Cause in them day twenty-one days of training you didn't know anybody that long.

DH: Who else was with you from Great Lakes on the Nevada during Pearl Harbor? That you still know of?

CS: That I still know?

DH: Yeah.

CS: None.

DH: None?

CS: No, a lot of the ones in my company were killed and two of them I never kept in touch with after that, cause we lost, most of my time in the war was spent on the Indianapolis. It was right after Pearl Harbor, it was four or five days after I was transferred to the Indianapolis, which was a heavy cruiser. Most of my war was spent on there. Them are the men I know better then any of them, cause I spent more time with them. Cause I was only on the Nevada a little over, well less then a year actually cause I went down in December and after December 7th I was transferred off of her. It was less then a year. Cause I went into the Navy in December and by the time I finished boot camp and came aboard the Nevada that was already in February. So, from February to December is the only amount of men I knew.

DH: That's a relativity short time, with a new crew.

CS: Right, yeah. There are two, three of the fellows that I know that where on the ship, but they didn't go through training with me. And that's John Kerber, he lives in Columbus; the other one is Charlie Lingerfelter, he was in the fourth division he lives outside of Columbus; and then there's one fellow in Michigan, Robert but I'd seen them three at conventions all the time we usually get together, you know the Nevada group.

DH: Let's talk about Pearl Harbor Day. What do you remember most?

CS: The dead bodies being pasted underneath me. I was coming out the turret, number one turret and you get out of that gun by crawling down underneath the underside of it, there's a hatch and its an explosion proof hatch. They drop it and you crawl down, which is only a matter of two and half feet above the deck. Now when you go in you crawl in on your hand and knees and then you go into the turret. Now coming out of there you were passing bodies that were wounded underneath there. We were trying to get them as comfortable as possible, a lot of them were burnt cause we were in there during the first wave we was in the turret. And then after we couldn't doing anything more with our gun they asked us to go up on the Aircraft Deck and give them a hand up there, so we came out of there. Cause your turret was filled up with smoke pretty fast. So, I was coming out there and they were pushing these bodies and wounded under the turret to keep them out of the fire from the strays. So, we were laying bodies up and down there and giving them morphine shots to keep the guys quiet. The one Bos'n told me I better go up on number one Anti-Aircraft gun, which is right above our compartment. He said go give them a hand. I went up there and it was a Stewart's mate, now the Stewart's mate was a colored fellow he worked in the officer's country. He was loading shells and the fuse setters and he told me his lips were burning and I said no your lips aren't burning your hairs on fire. So, I took my hat I put out the flames on his hair. He was loading them shells and in them days they had to weigh 128 pounds, these shells I couldn't even lift them up into the fuse setters. So, he told me you just get them ready and I'll put them in there. So, we staid there for quite a while and pretty soon it calmed down. We were getting under way. We started going right along side the Arizona. Man I never saw so much smoke and fire in my life that was in that harbor. The oil just floating on top of the water was actually burning; it looked like the water was burning. We could see kids diving off of ships into this fire to get underneath it and get away from it. We were only a few yards from Ford Island, which is a sea plane base for the Navy, it's a small island they had some cottages around it where some of the officers and their families lived right there on Ford Island. They were trying to swim over there away from the fire. Some of them made it and quite a few didn't. As for me getting underway we the Arizona we saw her mast coming down. Then we went over and got into the ten-ten dry dock. We headed that way and once the Japanese saw that we were underway they really laid into us. Where all these planes came from it looked like everybody was picking on us trying to keep us from getting out of the harbor. But we couldn't have gone out anyways because we already a torpedo in our port bow. We had I think eighteen, one hundred bomb hits on our decks. And there was supposed to be a five hundred pound bomb hit some places, but where I didn't know.

DH: Did it go off?

CS: Yeah, it went off. So, they did a lot of damage to it. We got over by ten-ten and for some reason, I heard this after the destroyer magazines where on fire and they blew and for us to try to get out of there if we could. So, they sent a tugboat out to help us maneuver around the channel so that we wouldn't sink in the channel. And then just then the second wave came in of torpedo planes and dive-bombers. And this tug got us across

the channel and shoved us into a sugared pained field. And that's where we stayed and we saw the bombing.

DH: So, a tug helped you to stay out of the channel?

CS: Yeah to stay out the channel. And that tugboat is a fireboat in Oakland, California.

DH: Is it?

CS: Yeah. They made a fireboat out of it and brought it back. It's a fireboat out in Oakland.

DH: Is it still attached to the Navy?

CS: No, no.

DH: It's been decommissioned?

CS: Yeah, it was decommissioned and that's when the city of Oakland bought it as a fireboat for the city of Oakland.

DH: That's very interesting.

CS: Yeah.

DH: Let me ask you this? That second wave that would have come about nine o'clock.

CS: Nine, yeah a little bit after nine when it came in.

DH: Okay, so you got some kind of relief between what 8:30am and 9:00am?

CS: Yeah, it was 7:55am when the actual first plane came over, cause we didn't make colors yet. We were just getting ready to go to colors. Colors was at eight o'clock and 7:55am was when the attack came off.

DH: So, people were on deck?

CS: Oh, a lot of people were on deck; the whole band was out there. That's where we lost quite a few of them on our stern.

DH: Right on the fantail?

CS: Yeah. They were waiting for color's the band was all lines up ready to start playing. A lot of the fellows that weren't on watch were out there. I was in the jack off Dost storeroom; I was opening up peaches and pears for Sunday morning breakfast. All I had on was a pair of shorts and a pair of sneakers, because it was so darn hot down there you

know. I was opening up these gallon cans and pouring them into containers. They had what they called a dumbwaiter that would send them up to the galley. The first time of the attack the whole ship just shook. I saw doorway from the dispensing office and the supply keeper offices were on the port side and when I looked out to me right that I saw these doors come flying open and stuff come out of there. I couldn't imagine what the heck happened you know. Then pretty soon I hear somebody running and saying the Jap's are attacking us, the Jap's are attacking us! They were sliding down and then the clackston hit General Quarters, Man You Battle Stations. And I didn't hear anybody say this is a drill or anything so all I had like I say all I had on that whole day was a pair of shorts and a pair or sneakers. So, I went up the starboard side and crawled through the hatches and they were closing the watertight doors already. So, once you close the hatch they only had a little eighteen inch opening that you crawled through and then you close that and screw it down to make it watertight. A lot of these hatches were coming down as I was going through; I had to go through them small hatches to get to my gun station. I stayed in shorts and sneakers cause that's all I had cause our compartment was underwater after we sunk. I didn't have any cloths for the next three days.

DH: How long did it take you get through the decks?

CS: Let's say about a good ten minutes.

DH: Cause you had to open and close each hatch on the way up?

CS: Right, yeah; because we were two decks below the galley and we had to come up from them to get and then we were mid-ship and I and to go to the bow where my gun station was. So, I had I'd say maybe three hundred feet I had to come down and another twenty-five feet over. So, and let's see I had to go up three ladders.

DH: How many layers below the top deck?

CS: Three decks down.

DH: Three down?

CS: Yeah.

DH: There were a lot of reports that all hatches were open in all the battleships.

CS: No, well, we were hit so fast that you didn't have time to close all of them. But, I know ours were a lot of them on our ship were closed, because actually there's two pieces of pipe that hold a hatch open and you've got chains going down on these stairs, these ladders actually and it doesn't take long to pull these pins and that hatch drops and the door's automatically close unless you want to get out then you have to unscrew it and get out. Once you get you have to slam the hatch down and screw it back down again so, its watertight.

DH: So, once your ship was under attack your crew responded very well and did exactly what you were supposed to do.

CS: There's so many men assigned to these hatchways they don't close by themselves. There are men inside each one of them hatches to close them.

DH: Did you have an assignment like that?

CS: No, I had a gun station that I had to go to.

DH: Okay, so, that was their battle station to make sure this hatch was closed.

CS: Right and then after that some people had battle station of just taking care of the wounded or going down and helping doctors or the corner, bringing bodies in. It depended on what your station was at that time.

DH: After the second wave, what did you do during the second wave and what did you do after it?

CS: Fighting fires.

DH: That's it?

CS: Fighting fires. Oh, we had fires up in folks hold, down in the paint locker, where the chain locker is; the paint locker is down there. That thing was just blazing, cause that's where our torpedo hit. It ripped a hole in there I forget the size of it, it was supposedly forty-five feet long and twenty some feet wide, I think it was. The hole that got knocked in there. Cause it hit below the armor belt. There's an armor belt along the whole side of the ship and it hit below that and it just tore everything off.

DH: It was down deep?

CS: Yeah. That's why our compartment and the magazines were flooding already from the number one turret. Each turret as you go down through the ship has your own magazines and your own shells. Now number two turret, this is about fifteen twenty feet and then they had their own magazines and shells and they had to go down further, because they were up above us in the number two turret. We were on the main deck they were on the second deck. But I remember before I left I looked down and from where I was I could look down three decks and all of the sudden I started seeing them close the hatches, but as they were closing the hatches the water was already coming up through them.

DH: It must have been a big hole.

CS: It was it was a huge hole.

DH: So, when the Nevada was finally moving it was pretty much bow down?

CS: Bow down, yeah. It didn't have no list on it though, she went down bottom, she went down quite a while. So, evidently it must have went right though. Cause as your bow comes up its narrower, so, something had to give on the starboard side as well as the port side, but the port side was it took the blunt of the torpedo. It hit on the port side, because we were tied up starboard.

DH: Well, that meant then that... I am picturing a map of Pearl Harbor in my head and the Nevada was at the end of the row all by itself and it came in from the port side with the torpedo.

CS: Right.

DH: So, they came around the island from out of the North West and basically attacked from the South.

CS: Yeah, what they call a fleet landing.

DH: Yeah.

CS: A number of these planes I saw came in from the Fleet Landing, which would be facing the bow would be to my left. And I saw them coming in from the Fleet Landing and they were low, the torpedo-bombers. And they were coming in and the dive-bombers were above them. It was, and when you turned around the next time you saw them coming in from the mountains, then you'd see them coming in from Pearl City. Pearl City was now over on our starboard side.

DH: Right.

CS: And from our fantail we could see Pearl City. The Utah was on the other side of us on the other side of the island though on Ford Island. Ford Island is the dividing when you come in channel, when your coming into Pearl Harbor from the sea you go to your left around Ford Island. You go right around the whole island and then battle ship row starts. So, this here way you just pull into your quake, where you're tied up. Each one would be pulled right in place without all kinds of maneuvering. There would be a tug waiting there and he would just push you against the quake and that's why they called it battleship row, but you never came in to your right coming in Pearl Harbor. You always stay to your port side. You went port and then you turned around and came in starboard pulling out. I guess they have traffic in the harbor the same way they do aboard ship. No right at the end of Ford Island was the big ramp were the PBY and the Sea Planes, SOC, the King Fishers, and all your scouting planes, aboard ship you had three scouting planes you carried them with you at all times. On ours we had three of them and we had a catapult, two catapults on the stern and one on number four turret a catapult, we put them planes up there and that's where they staid.

DH: What kind of planes?

CS: Scouting planes that's a bi-wing plane amphibian.

DH: They went to Kingfishers later on right?

CS: Right.

DH: Let me pause for a second here. There's a picture you showed me of the Nevada and you recall earlier that you were up on the bow fighting fire.

CS: Yeah, that was the chain locker and the paint locker. The hatch was open down there so we had our hoses down in there to try and put the fire out. There was, when I got up there, there were four other fellows up there beside myself. And after that we couldn't do anything more with that fire and we were already under water so we just dogged down the hatch, closed it down and took the fire hoses back to number two turret. We were fighting fires up on the portside then. There were fires burning all over the ship then. So, we forgot about the paint and chain locker and went back there.

DH: Was there any kind of chain of command or did you pretty much have to work independently as needed?

CS: I'd say independently, cause there was one boats mate that took over, I don't recall what division he was from, but he seem to know what he was doing. When he needed people here he'd call them. They'd drop that over there and come over here and give us a hand over here. And then the others ones all I can remember is working at the bow of the ship. From our compartment forward what was going on behind us I don't know, not until that night, when we started walking around and seeing different things that happened. That we realized how bad we really were hurt, cause all we could see was the bow of our ship and we saw from the mast where the bridge was and that was all blazes up there where people were fighting fires up there.

DH: Your Bridge got hit as I recall.

CS: Yeah, right.

DH: Took a bomb hit.

CS: Right a bomb hit right after.

DH: That was thy main Bridge?

CS: Yeah, that was the main bridge right there. That wasn't Fire Control Bridge.

DH: Right behind number two turret?

CS: Yeah, right behind number two turret, the look out tower's. The fire was creeping up the stacks and they got them fires put out pretty good up there. What was happening behind the stack is where a lot of the fires where. There was a what they called a sea store behind the broadside guns where they sold a little bit of everything jewelry, watches, anything that you wanted to buy, it was like a catalog order store. That took a direct bomb hit right there cause the navy tackle was wiped out on the broadside gun. That place was just blown to pieces. I guess that bomb must have hit right in that store and blew that all a part. Some parts of the galley were destroyed and boat deck was really bad shape all the boats were burning. We had a fifty-foot launch, a forty-foot, a thirty-foot, and then a whaleboat and they were all like in a nest. They were all on fire they were burning.

DH: Where those life boats too?

CS: Yeah, yeah. They were just burnt you couldn't even throw them in the water. A lot of life rafts went in the water and Cape Kopek Life jackets they went in the water. Like I said too men didn't abandon ship until we was over by that sugar cane field. A lot of people jumped off ship, come on back is aint going no place. We're sitting on the bottom; even our main deck was in the wash with water when we sank in the sugar cane field that was still above water.

DH: How long did you fight fires?

CS: Until about I think eleven o'clock that night. We were still fighting fires.

DH: You were still at it?

CS: Still at it.

DH: From nine o'clock in the morning.

CS: From nine o'clock that morning until eleven o'clock that night. I remember a buddy of mine, the two of us for some reason ended up in our compartment. It was already dark out and if one guy fired a shell the whole island did, that's how edgy everybody was. But about eleven-thirty, quarter the twelve we finally sat down, our fires were out then. We sat down and I told them are you hungry? He said no I am not eating. We hadn't eaten since breakfast. We just sat there in that compartment and he started shivering; getting cold that's all we had on was a pair of shorts and our sneakers.

DH: So, this is in our sleeping compartment?

CS: No, this is above our sleeping compartment, where we ate.

DH: Oh you were in the mess hall.

CS: Yeah. So, I told him we ought to go down and get some of our blankets or something. We opened up the man whole hatch and it was full of water. Our bunks were underwater; our lockers were under water, and everything. So, we couldn't even get a blanket. So, we just sat there together in that compartment. I guess eventually we must have dosed off, because the next the day the sun came out and started warming boy it felt good then.

DH: Did you have any lights or power?

CS: No.

DH: Nothing?

CS: Nothing, the whole island was blacked out after that. They had a complete black out after that.

DH: Let me stop for a second. So you spent a cold night, in the mess, no cloths, no food, hadn't eaten all day?

CS: Maybe it was the shock who knows. I mean it was hard to say. It didn't bother us to be without food, but I know the next morning I was getting kind of hungry then. I remember I told them I wonder if anything is left of the galley? We went down there and we got a loaf of bread. Of course they were cutting the blood of the loaf and stuff off the loaves to save them, but the tugboat came a long side us later on and brought us food. So, we did have food after that.

DH: So, it was at least twenty-four hours before you got a full meal.

CS: Oh yeah. And even at that it wasn't a full meal it was only sandwiches and coffee.

DH: Which was about as much as you could handle.

CS: That's about it yeah. They tried to get it up to us on the tugboat. And it was running around the harbor trying to feed all the ships that were knocked out, no power, and no fresh water. But like I said to do it all over again I wouldn't mind doing it all over again. I mean it was an experience that you'll never forget. I don't know I said I wouldn't have missed it for the world. It was an experience that we'll remind me of the days when I was young. In them days you were young and foolish too. You didn't care, eighteen years old you were scared, you were brave, you were a little bit of everything.

DH: What were your feelings shortly after that, how did you feel yourself about what had happened to you? What were your thoughts?

CS: I don't know. It's kind of hard to explain. What I was thinking of was what's going to happen to this ship now. What's going to happen to the rest of the crew? Are they going to scrap this ship are they going to rebuild it? Am I going to be transferred off of

it? Things like that, that running through your mind you know. This is your second home, away from home. You kind of miss it you know. All kinds of weird things run through your mind, like what am I going to be doing now and is this really going to be a war? How long is it going to last, what's going to happen to us? You're wondering about things like that. I think it was the second day after, Secretary of the Navy came aboard our ship and call to quarters and we lined up in our perspective quarters, which is on the starboard bow, the ones that were left of the first division we lined up just we were; and I still had my shorts and sneakers on.

DH: No other cloths?

CS: That's all I had. They Secretary of Navy came down and shook every one of our hands. He said "Job well done." I remember that. I remember shaking his hand; he was Secretary of the Navy then. I remember shaking his hand, he went down and shook everybody's hand on that ship.

DH: What else did he say?

CS: Just said that it was a catastrophe that happened here, but you guys lived through it and you did a good job, a job well done. So, he said they didn't take over the island and that's what we were worried about.

DH: They give you any other information?

CS: No, that's all. That's all that was said.

DH: What kind of news did you get, besides the newspaper?

CS: Well, we didn't hear anything for about, just this scuttlebutt that was going around from word of mouth from one to the other. The ships coming in to feed us, the tugboat and stuff like that. Asking what's happening over there and they'd tell us what happened over there on the beach it was just hear say what he hear from this guy and that. But there was actually no news at all. Everything was blacked out.

DH: So, you got nothing official from the Navy or anybody else?

CS: No. Nothing. The only thing that we could surmise was the different damage that was done on that island. You'd look around the harbor when things quieted down the next couple of days and you could see the damage and the smoke still bellowing out of different places, ships laying on their side and everything. It's hard; you have to be there to really understand it.

DH: When did you get off ship the first time after the attack?

CS: The first time I was off that ship was when they transferred me.

DH: You were on ship despite the fact that it was still in the water the whole time?

CS: Oh yeah we stayed right on our ship the whole time. I think it was about four or five days later that they wanted some seaman to go aboard the Indianapolis. And then I was transferred and it was late at night when they transferred us. I didn't even see my ship. It was so dark you know. They took us off on a forty-four foot motor launch and they took us over to the dock where the Indianapolis tied up. Let's see that was close to the ten-ten docks where she was tied up at.

DH: The ten-ten docks?

CS: Yeah, the ten-ten dock is a dry dock, where the Pennsylvania was in during the attack.

DH: Okay.

CS: Right of stern of that is the Warf where ships could tie up. So, she was stern of that. We got over there, I remember crawling on the boat, walking down the dock and then we went aboard the Indianapolis. Everything was dark and they said just find a place to sack out and we'll straiten everything out in the morning. If you're hungry go down to the galley and get something to eat. So, we were hungry so the four of us went down there and they said where's your cloths and I said I don't have any. So, he said go down to the storeroom and get some cloths. So, I went down there and got a uniform and some shoes and socks.

DH: So, basically you were in shorts and sneakers for about a week?

CS: Well, just about five days I think it was before we finally got over to the Indianapolis. And then the next morning that ship just let loose of her lines and she started out of the harbor and we didn't know where we were going or what we were doing. But she just left the Harbor she just left Pearl Harbor.

DH: Did the Nevada get any kind of power back on, fresh water facilities any of that sort, during that five days?

CS: No, nothing while I was there. Nothing at all.

DH: They weren't able to restore anything?

CS: Nothing, she just laid there in the water.

DH: Who was in command for those five days do you know?

CS: Captain Scanlon finally got back over there; he came aboard on the tugboat after we were under way. Our Senior Officer was Lieutenant Commander Ross. Well, he wasn't he was a regular Seaman, he was Second Class Petty Officer Ross and he was one that

got us under way. But there was a Lieutenant Commander I forget his name. Tuscan I think it was or he was Henson. But two nineteen and half-year-old guys got us underway actually Bos'n Hill he was killed; he was a chief Bos'n officer. There was only one Lieutenant Commander and I forget his name and he was running things after we got underway. The quartermaster was running the bridge, until a tugboat brought Captain Scanlon, they brought him out on tugboat and he came aboard ship.

DH: When did Scanlon return?

CS: During just before the second wave hit.

DH: Just before nine?

CS: Yeah.

DH: He had been ashore do you know why?

CS: No for what reason I don't know. He was over and he got a ride from a tugboat that was going by and they found out that he was the Captain of the Nevada and they took him right over and he got aboard ship. So, then he took over.

DH: Is that the same tug that helped you load ship?

CS: Yeah. Right.

DH: What was the name of that Tug?

CS: I can't think of that now, but I got it in the book though.

DH: Well, we know it's the Oakland Fire Boat so that makes it easy.

CS: Yeah. It had a weird name to it. Then after that we had different tugboats come along side of us and take all our dead off. He had our dead stacked on the stern of the ship. They moved them.

DH: Did you have to help that?

CS: No, I just help brought some of them up to the Stern; we carried them up on stretchers. I think I carried three bodies up there, that's all I carried up to the stern, where they were going to take them off.

DH: How did you treat the wounded? Did you help in that?

CS: No, I didn't have anything to do with the wounded. I just made them comfortable during the attack, you know as much as I could. Like I said I had to go to my fire station

and run the guns up there, but after that there was mostly fighting fires with a fire hose. Cause fire extinguishers really didn't do anything.

DH: Well, what could you do in the intern days, for the next following days? What jobs could you do? What was there to do, where there any orders given for you?

CS: There were no orders given.

DH: So, basically you spent those days just waiting?

CS: Waiting, straightening up, trying to find bodies, or trying to find different things that you could find to make things more livable on ship, but that's about it.

DH: What did you do?

CS: Not a hell of a lot of anything to tell you the truth. Just like we swept down our compartments and stuff and swept most of the stuff over board that was in our way to make things more livable. We tried to get some mattresses out. We opened up the hatch later and went down, we swam underwater to see my locker and I got a picture album out of it and we got some mattresses that were up near the hatch, we brought some mattresses up to sleep on.

DH: How could you see? Did you take lanterns with you?

CS: Well, it was daylight when we went down and we just felt. You know your way around in the dark and I know where my locker, my locker was just a couple of feet from the ladder going down. I had a heck of time opening it, but once I got the lock off and pried the door open, it just flew right open with the water. I had a picture album and I took that and I don't know what happened to that it was years later that I had it aboard the Indianapolis. I don't know if I even brought it home with me. You did a lot of foolish things in them days. Like you tried to save something, for what, what were you saving it for? We only went down there once and we got what we wanted out of there we thought, but we did get some dry mattresses up out of there. We put them up in our eating compartment and that's where we slept.

DH: So, basically you slept in your mess, because that was the room big enough to fit.

CS: That was the only place.

DH: Was it crowded?

CS: No, not really because there were only so many guys from the first division that was left. And each division lost quiet a few men, there was a forty-six on our ship were killed and eleven hundred were wounded.

DH: So, basically you just served on those few days, you just did whatever you could?

CS: Whatever you could to make yourself more comfortable and that's all, just existed actually. You just existed that's all.

DH: Did you sleep a lot?

CS: No not really. Everything was too jumpy in them days.

DH: So, you never got back ashore you just got transferred right to the Indianapolis?

CS: Right to Indianapolis, never hit the shore. The only time I hit the shore was when I went aboard the Indianapolis that was the only time.

DH: And that was at night?

CS: And that was at night.

DH: How late at night?

CS: Oh let's see it must have been about ten o'clock at night. It was pitch black and there were no lights on the island. They just had a small light on the boat to get you over to the dock. It was blacked out, no smoking the harbor nothing.

DH: So, you got on the Indianapolis and it moved out, where did it go?

CS: We started heading South trying to find the Jap Fleet, went down to I think it was Wake Island and then we just cruised out on patrol, cruising until we found out what they were doing. Then they sent us to another island I forget the name of it. But then things just started falling into place and that's when we had the big battle. The Battle of the Coral Sea I was in that. Well, it a five major engagements on the Indianapolis. We spent a lot of time up in Alaska; Jap's were on the Aleutian Islands. We were trying to; we took some of them over.

DH: Unimak and Kisska?

CS: And Akutan at Dutch Harbor, Attu, Near, Rat, Agattu Islands.

DH: Yeah.

CS: Kodiak was the Naval Base up there. Kodiak, Alaska was the name of the place.

DH: When did you finally get some kind of official news? Where you able to get radio news again?

CS: When I got aboard the Indianapolis the Indianapolis put out their scuttlebutt sheet every week it had a little newspaper that they would put out. Then they started listing different things you know like what happened at Pearl Harbor and how many were killed

and what ships were damaged, and different things like that. I still have newspapers from the Indianapolis that's I am saving that I put away. I saved all the front pages of them and I still have a collection of them.

DH: That's terrific.

CS: Yeah, one of these days I am going to have to start getting them out and start reading them. There must be about twenty or thirty of them front pages from the U.S.S. Indianapolis.

DH: Are they from right after from when you just got on board?

CS: Yeah. Just from the time I got on board until I got off.

DH: So, they're pretty fresh. They're right after.

CS: Yeah right after Pearl Harbor.

DH: Did you ever eventually hear F.D.R.'s speech to Congress?

CS: Yeah, I finally heard it. I heard a lot of things after that too, politicians are another breed in themselves. We still can't figure out why Short and Kimble got blamed for it, when there should have been other people blamed for it. But they were exonerated so.

DH: Interesting. What was, where you on land at Pearl before the attack?

CS: Oh yeah.

DH: What was it like?

CS: Real nice. We used to get on the Liberty there get off at the Fleet Landing and you'd get a cab and some of the guys would get in the cab and go right down town Honolulu, very people went out to Waikiki Beach believe it or not.

DH: Why?

CS: Because there was nothing out at Waikiki Beach only swimming and your hotel was the Royal Hawaiian Hotel and most of your action was right down town in Honolulu.

DH: What did you do?

CS: Went to the Black Cat and had a couple of drinks down there and went to the YMCA and house of ill repute were all down there.

DH: Red light district.

CS: Red light district yeah, that was all Honolulu. They had different uniform stores there if you wanted to buy a tailor made uniform, souvenir shops that you'd buy stuff in and send home, it was just like any other place just like a tourist place. Nice and warm, beautiful weather you couldn't complain about the weather. It was a real nice city.

DH: Do you remember the Black Cat Club?

CS: Yeah.

DH: What was it like inside?

CS: It was wide open; no front on it the bar. The doors never closed. It was right across the street from the YMCA and behind the YMCA was the Presbyterian Church I believe it was and that's still standing the church is, but the YMCA is gone. They also have a new state building that is a government building. I'd say to the right of where the YMCA was. That's a big office building you know a state building now. But where the Black Cat was that's a double deck parking place now that's all torn down.

DH: What was it like inside can you tell me about the décor?

CS: Just a regular bar with pictures hanging on the walls and a couple of Hawaiian Girls singing up on the stage with hula skirts on.

DH: What would they sing?

CS: Different Hawaiian songs or the American Songs that were popular in them days. Rum and cokes that's what you were drinking and the Andrew Sisters were real popular then and we used to listen to their record there, they had jukeboxes there. Different restaurants Wolf Fats and eat Chinese food there and he's still there.

DH: That' restaurant is still there?

CS: Yeah.

DH: Has is changed much?

CS: Oh yeah quite a bit, I don't know how many times its been refurbished.

DH: What else could you do for recreation?

CS: Well, you could get into a ball game down there, pitch horse shoes, go swimming, go surfing a lot of surfing out there at Waikiki.

DH: Did you try it?

CS: Oh yeah. I've done some surfing out there. You had to take a bus to get out to Waikiki from Honolulu. To us it was a waste of time, because you could have swam in the harbor if you wanted to swim why go ashore to swim at a beach? Just like your swimming parties when you're anchored some place you'd take scaffolding off the side of the ship and you'd swim off the ship. You enjoyed yourself that way so why would you want to go to Waikiki Beach unless you were really a surfing nut and you went and got the surf boards and everything, but just to swim around in the water it was no big deal. And there were theaters you'd go to theaters and different things you'd want to see down there.

DH: What were they showing at the time do you remember?

CS: No, I don't remember. I wouldn't even remember any movies that I saw and I've been to quite a few of them down there. And I know once they never allowed us to smoke in theaters down there I remember that. You were allowed to smoke in theaters because they had concrete floors and very little the chairs were just wooden chairs. People would come in with their whole families and have a picnic lunch with them and eat in there and everything.

DH: Did sailors do that too?

CS: Once in awhile, you'd get a boxed lunch some place and take it in eat there and watch the movie.

DH: Was it expensive?

CS: No, everything was real reasonable in them days. Now, the food is still reasonable in Hawaii as far as that goes restaurants and stuff unless you go to a really exclusive place.

DH: What if you wanted to get out of town where the natives lived? What was that like?

CS: I don't know you'd have to take a cab or know somebody with a car for transportation.

DH: You could do that then?

CS: Oh yeah. As long as you were on Liberty you were free to do anything that you wanted it was your time, nobody could tell you outside or a restricted area. Like some of the places were restricted and military personal weren't allowed to go there at all.

DH: Like what?

CS: Oh maybe different beer gardens they'd have a lot of trouble. With the elders spiking drinks and getting guys in trouble, maybe some of the red light district houses were off limits and some of the officers clubs where the officers went they were off limits to enlisted personal. Cause in them days they were segregated the officers from the enlisted

in them days. Different, you just had to make your own good time for yourself that's all there was to it. A lot of time you spent in the parks and stuff, you spent time in the afternoon lying around relaxing that's all you could do if you didn't go to a show or go to a beer garden or something just lay in the grass and enjoy yourself away from the ship.

DH: How long was your average Liberty Pass?

CS: Not over night, nobody was every aloud over night in Hawaii. You had to leave in the morning right after colors until six-thirty or seven o'clock you had to be back aboard ship.

DH: In other words if you wanted to have a good time you had to do it in daylight hours?

CS: Day light hours and the only way you got overnight Liberty was if you knew somebody there and then you'd get over night, but you had to have a place to stay to sleep and you had to leave their name and when you'd be getting home. But outside of that it was just like any other place, when you where on the Coast you got a hotel room and staid overnight you had a seventy-two hour pass or a forty-eight hour pass you didn't go back there for two or three days depending on what your pass was. But Hawaii they didn't do that you had Daylight Liberty only.

DH: When you were out on the Indianapolis when you went out later on was there a big difference in the ship length?

CS: Oh yeah. It was a smaller crew for one thing and it was a fast moving ship. You had different gun stations, I wasn't even on the turret on the Indianapolis I was on the forty-millimeter quad mouth forty-millimeter. See they got them ships fixed up real fast, with guns and stuff.

DH: Yeah once they put anti-aircraft on them.

CS: That's just like them B-17's we never knew anything about a B-17 until there were nine of them flying in from the United States during the Pearl Harbor Attack a lot of them got caught in the crossfire and a lot of them were shot down. They didn't have any armament on them outside of side arms from what I understood.

DH: Yeah, they were unarmed.

CS: Yeah, only the officers had forty-five automatics that's all they had on them their own personal gun that they were issued, but for machine guns and ammunition none of them were armed and they just happened to fly right in there during the attack and a lot of them were lost.

DH: What job, how'd you get to be a Bos'n Mate?

CS: Just sticking with the gang, striking for it. Worked my way up from seaman second class to seaman first class and then started studying the books for coxes running small boats and then I run a small boat for Admiral William Hulsey.

DH: Really?

CS: Yeah, I ran his gig for a while up in the Aleutian's and I also took on as a passenger emits. Captain Scanlon run his boat, not Scanlon I can't remember his name, but I was running the Captains gig for a while and I just brought myself up that way. Soon as I became coxes they put me in charge of a small boat.

DH: How much time did you spend with Hulsey?

CS: I was with the fleet for over a year.

DH: What was he like?

CS: Nice guy, real nice. He was a rough going guy talked like a regular seaman.

DH: Course?

CS: Yeah, strict when he wanted to be, he could be real friendly when he wanted to be too. I never had any trouble with the officers that I was involved with I always got a long with them.

DH: What about Nimitz?

CS: Nimitz was quieter so I thought tall, slim, sandy hair. He was a lot quieter than Hulsey. Real nice fellows though they knew their seamanship they knew everything about the Navy, they couldn't take a back seat to anybody, because they were right there.

DH: How'd they treat the sailors, just the average Joe?

CS: The Average Joe they treated him very well, I am surprised. I never unless somebody was doing something then they'd probably speak up then, but as long as I've known them I've never heard them bad mouth anybody and they said the called him Bull Hulsey, but I imagine during a battle he was strictly on the ball that was his job. And when he bellowed out an order you better do it and that's all that was too it there's no two ways about it.

DH: No let me get this strait, Admiral Hulsey was using the Indianapolis as a flag?

CS: No.

DH: How did that come to be?

CS: They transferred the flag, they took it from one ship to another I think it was the Astoria and the Helena and they were transferred.

DH: Isn't that during Coral Sea?

CS: No this is up in Aleutian Island.

DH: I am sorry in the Aleutians that's right.

CS: This all happened in the Elution's. Like I said I was never attached to the flag, but the experiences I had with them transferring from one ship to another moving it around if he had to have a boat to take into Dutch Harbor we'd take him in. Then he had his own personal then he had his own gig too. Well, they called it an Admirals Barge and he had his own barge then, but I had the Captains gig available, if his was being used some place else we'd run over there and do it for him. But there was quiet a few of the cruisers up in the Dutch Harbor. Like I said we were the only ship up there to sink a Jap freighter up there on Indianapolis CA35.

DH: How'd they do that?

CS: We caught them off guard one time. We came in, when we were patrolling in the Baring Sea and we cut through the Strait coming back into the Pacific where we were leaving one another. One cruiser would be in the Baring Sea, two would be in the Pacific and then after so many weeks we'd just switch. We'd come into the Baring Sea and they'd come into the Pacific. Well, it just happened the night before we switch we went into the Pacific and I think it was the Helena, if I am not mistaken, she went into the Baring Sea and we were cruising down below at two and we got a beep on our radar that there was a ship out there. We asked them to identify themselves and they start firing with five-inch guns at us and we weren't even in range with our eight-inch. So, our captain say's give them a broadside with the eight-inch and see if they give any response that way. So, they hit them and we blasted that ship pretty bad. The next morning we went along side of it when it was sinking and there wasn't a survivor on it no place.

DH: How many rounds were fired do you know?

CS: No. I'd say just taking a rough guess maybe forty rounds of the big guns, the eight-inch. See their turrets were five-inch guns on that one. And then I don't know how many in five-inch guns we fired at and after that. And then we fired forty-millimeter shells at it too. But all we say was fire that all we saw that whole night.

DH: You were on duty during this attack?

CS: Oh yeah. We were at general quarters, anytime you fire a gun you're at general quarters and everybody is on duty.

DH: Where were you?

CS: I was up on the forty-millimeter gun on the starboard side.

DH: So you were?

CS: I was a gun captain.

DH: Which side was being fired, the starboard side?

CS: Both sides you cruise one way and then you come back.

DH: Zigzag.

CS: So, both sides were firing. We fired at it too.

DH: You were relatively close to the Bridge, were you not?

CS: Yeah our gun was right below the Bridge the forty-millimeter gun that I was on, because I was in the first division.

DH: So, the observation deck would be right above your head?

CS: Right above our heads yeah. That's why we could see a lot of it from where we were at. It was pitch black that night and all we could see was the shells, the tracer shells to see where the other shells were hitting and one big explosion and that thing lit up like a birthday cake out there.

DH: No survivors?

CS: Not a survivors, no. Your only aloud three minutes in the water out there and your froze to death out there.

DH: Yeah in the Baring Sea, sure.

CS: The Baring Sea and the Pacific.

DH: Did you go along side did anybody board her?

CS: No, nobody boarded her. It was too risky to board her.

DH: Still a blaze?

CS: No, she was sinking already, it was going down already. Like I said Halsey said try to hold it until he got there he wanted to see it, there was no way he could see it.

DH: He wanted to see it go down?

CS: Yeah, but that was one he missed out on. But when we went to the Baring Sea we left the Coral Sea and we had no fowl weather gear or warm cloths when we went up there. All we had on was summer uniforms. When we got to Dutch Harbor all our winter stuff was waiting up there. Boy I tell you, you want to see some boys move for winter clothing you get out there it was fifty-four degrees below zero was nothing in the Baring Sea. You'd have to put a face mask on to keep your face from freezing and any place where there was steam coming off your face your eyes, your nostrils, your mouth you just had ice cycles hanging off these masks. Every morning you'd have to go out there and break the ice off the ship to bring her up out of the water cause you'd take a quarter inch wire and it looked like a two-inch wire and when the ice got finished forming on it, you'd have to break all that ice off.

DH: How'd you do that?

CS: With fire axes and different bludgeoned interments like small sludge hammers and stuff break it up and shovel it off the ship to bring her up out of the water.

DH: Everyday?

CS: Every morning break up the ice and get it off there.

DH: Everybody turned out?

CS: Everybody turned out for that, yeah all the deck hands. It was an experience though, I saw one place in Alaska I've never saw in my life and I haven't seen it since and they call it Colds Bay Alaska. We pulled in there on night to get out of a bad storm, it was the most beautiful place in the world I ever saw boy was that nice. It was just like somebody painted a picture of it, you went in through a narrow channel into this looked like a lake, but it was just an inland and then these big mountains in the background and they called it Colds Bay Alaska, if I remember it right that's what it was and for the life of me I said one of these days I am going to look at it really study it to make sure that's where it was. We pulled in there to get out of a storm that night and the next morning we left. When we were leaving the sun was coming up in front of the bay where we were pulling out and it was really beautiful. I went ashore at Dutch Harbor and donuts were three dollars apiece and a cup of coffee was five dollars. They had some wooden sidewalks there. I went in to get the mail see we picked up our mail at Dutch Harbor, they'd drop it off there and then we'd go in with our whale boat and pick up our mail and take it back to the ship.

DH: That was one of your jobs?

CS: Yeah as being a Bos'n Mate.

DH: How much mail was there?

CS: A couple of sacks. Mail would back up awhile. IT was nothing to be out at sea for fifty-four days and nights without even seeing land we were just cruising and patrolling.

All this mail would pile up, sometimes you'd go in there and you'd have a forty-foot launch full of mail when you'd come back. Sometimes it would take four or five hours to distribute mail aboard ship.

DH: Whose job was that?

CS: You had a postmaster aboard ship. You had a postmaster aboard ship and he would sell stamps and all your mail was censored, your officer your division officer would censor your mail before it was mailed. I remember after that they had the D-letters.

DH: Let me ask you something, Bob Bishop brought this up when he was talking about after Pearl Harbor they gave out cards to send home to let your loved ones know that you were all right. Did you ever get one of those?

CS: No, my name was in the paper that I was killed in action, in the Chicago Times and a gray lady asked me, I can't remember where this was.

DH: A gray lady?

CS: Yeah, that was the women's auxiliary that worked with us.

DH: Oh okay.

CS: They work with the Navy Auxiliary.

DH: Oh the WAVES.

CS: No.

DH: This is different?

CS: This is completely different than the WAVES. They weren't attached to the military service at all they were volunteers. It was something like the Salvation Army, but they called them the gray ladies and they had some of the men in their organization come aboard our ship, that was another thing that happened after that, and they took your name and address and everything they asked you who it was you wanted to notify and I told them my mother. Well, at the time my mother worked for the Chicago Daily Times downtown and that's where she saw my name missing in action and then she got this letter the next day saying that I was all right. She didn't know what to believe. So, finally the Chaplain wrote her a letter saying that I was all right.

DH: How long did that news take to reach home?

CS: Four or five days before anything got over. We didn't have telegrams for three days to get a telegram.

DH: You weren't able to get any message home until after the Indianapolis?

CS: On the Indianapolis right.

DH: And how long had you been on the Indianapolis?

CS: Let's see I'd say about twelve or thirteen days we were out and then we came back in and that's when I finally got a couple of letters off to my mother.

DH: And that was it that was the first chance you had?

CS: Yeah.

DH: To notify your family.

CS: Yeah. Outside of that I still have a clipping of one of the papers that says local boys in the serves from the Chicago Sun Times and my picture was in that paper.

DH: Tell me about the ammunition lighter?

CS: On the sixth of December we stopped unloading our ammunition for the fourteen inch guns and we had an ammunition lighter tied up along side our starboard beam and we were putting the old ammunition on there. So, we load that thing up pretty good that night they took the full barge out of there and they brought another empty barge in that same night and it was tied up to us December the seventh and the Japanese really machine gunned that thing. It was made out of corrugated sheet steel and it had so many holes in there it looked like sieve when they got finished. They were waiting for it to explode, but it never did explode for the simple reason it was empty.

DH: They gunned it, but they didn't try to bomb it?

CS: They tried to bomb it, but they were hitting us and the water and everything else. Actually I never did see and bomb holes, just machine gun holes in it.

DH: They were just trying to set it fire then.

CS: Set it on fire or blow it up with the ammunition that they thought was aboard it. But they had any information about it they probably thought it was loaded with ammunition from the night before the sixth. But December the seventh that morning it was empty that was pushing it plate and we were supposed to do that Sunday afternoon.

DH: Move ammunition out?

CS: Move ammunition out, yeah. What we were doing was replenishing out ammunition bringing fresh ammunition aboard ship.

DH: Fresh powder?

CS: Yeah, fresh powder and shells. And they were going to a different type shells too at the same time. That was the reason for that lighter being along side of us and the repair ship that was tied up along side the Arizona if she wouldn't have gotten out of the way we couldn't have cleared her going along side of her when she finally got underway, but the repair ship was along side the Arizona.

DH: They cut themselves loose?

CS: I don't know if she cut herself loose or she moved that night, but I don't remember seeing it there when we got under way she wasn't along side the Arizona any more and I don't know if they moved it that night or the night before.

DH: So, in other words the Arizona was tied up to the West Virginia wasn't it?

CS: No, no the Arizona was just had another ship along side of her and that was the only thing that was along side her was a repair ship.

DH: Okay so the repair ship was gone in the morning.

CS: Yeah, the repair ship was gone.

DH: Must have moved it in the night.

CS: During the night I guess, cause when we got under way that repair ship was gone.

DH: And it would have been in the way.

CS: Yeah, we would have cleared her bow, as a matter of fact here's a picture of it and it shows the repair ship right there. And right ahead of the Nevada.

DH: Yes.

CS: See we would have hit this bow first coming out of it, see here's the Arizona here.

DH: Right.

CS: See her canvas is stretched, there's that lighter, and here's out canvas stretched. When we got out we would have hit her bow, but she wasn't there that night.

DH: Interesting. I've asked you to bring out your Bos'n pipe so, play what you would play for your Bos'n pipe calls and name each one if you would.

CS: All right. To call attention to all hands would be (whistling) all hands man your battle stations that would be one. (Whistling) Sweepers man your brooms clean sweep down four and AFT empty all trashcans at the incinerator.

DH: That would be the order to go with the whistle.

CS: Yes that would be the order with the whistle and usually the crew knew what the whistle meant and you wouldn't even have to say it over the P.A. system.

DH: They'd start going.

CS: Once they started the P.A. system and you'd blow into the P.A. system and then still tell them for the new recruits coming aboard ship and then for an officers call it would be (whistling) and then you'd call the officers name aboard, but that's all...

DH: And mess call?

CS: No mess call was just like an attention call and that's usually call and the same with ringing the bell with the times, you'd strike the bell every half hour. (Whistling) All hands way down to the Galley to receive your meal.

DH: You'd use the same call?

CS: Attention call was the most important call aboard ship.

DH: Was there a Liberty call?

CS: Liberty call was one, but I can't for the life of me remember how it went. But it would stay the starboard side and Liberty party fall in on the portside or whatever side the latter was on.

DH: If you were taking aboard an important officer was there a special call or was it just the attention signal?

CS: No, if it was an Admiral then you'd have sideboards, what they called sideboards you'd have a welcome party. That was the old timer and he would blow with his left hand, now I could never do that because he had to salute with his right hand when the Admiral came on and pipe with your left hand.

DH And you couldn't do it?

CS: I couldn't ever do, so I never piped an Admiral aboard ship. For like a Captain or any visiting dignitary you could pipe with your right hand and you wouldn't have to salute, but for an Admiral you'd have to blow it with your left hand and salute with your right when he came aboard.

DH: He taught you how to blow the Bos'n Pipe.

CS: My Sea Daddy. Now the best one I remember with the pipe was Ed E. Holt, he was a second-class Bos'n Mate.

DH: This was on the Indianapolis?

CS: No this was on the Nevada yet.

DH: Oh really?

CS: Yeah. He was the one that took me down the chain locker and gave me his Bos'n pipe and he said I don't want to see you come out of here until you know how to blow at lest one call, and that was the one call I learned the Attention call.

DH: The first one?

CS: Yeah and after that when I became a coxes I wore this around my neck at all times. That was your badge of honor.

DH: That's the job of a coxes.

CS: Right and then you wore this continuously around our neck, all day during the day. You made your own fancy lanyard that you wore around your neck, which I have a few of them left yet. A lot of times spent making them things on ship.

DH: How long would it take you to make a lanyard?

CS: Maybe a couple of days.

DH: Special knots?

CS: Yeah all special knots and its what they call Macramé today, same thing as matter of fact I've made a couple hundred Macramé hanging baskets since I've been home.

DH: Were their special names for the knots?

CS: Yeah clove hitch, half hitch.

DH: Oh the usual knot names.

CS: Then splicing I knew all splicing I went to Robling splicing school up in Washington when I was a coxes to learn how to splice the big hazards to tie up ships. Long splice, short splice, eye splice, a running splice, and then your knots and your most important knot was the bowl in on a bit and that's what you used to tie up ship, you'd make a bowl in and you'd throw it over the cleat and that's what held it.

DH: If there's one thing from all your experiences particularly involving World War II that sticks in your mind what is it?

CS: The scariest I ever was, was during the battle of the Coral Sea. I think that would be about it though cause I never saw so much action in my life that was there and then after, the after affects really got into when you see these sharks and barracuda's swimming and eating the bodies that were blown off these other ships during that battle and Kelly became a hero that day.

DH: Yeah.

CS: I remember that just like it was the day before yesterday. I think that was one of the most wars that I remember so vividly about that battle I don't know why, but there were five other battles after that but it didn't faze me as much, it was shortly after the Pearl Harbor attack though, that we finally got into that. Maybe that was one of the reasons I remember it so well, but I think that was during the one I remember mostly the Battle of the Coral Sea.

DH: Has it ever bothered you?

CS: No not really, I mean once in awhile you get a little depressed about it, but like I said that was years ago with in the last twenty, twenty-five years it doesn't bother me anymore to talk about it. As a matter of fact when I used to think about some of my buddies aboard the Nevada that were killed and one fellow in particular I saw who was pinned against the stantion with shrapnel, the shrapnel went through his chest, and I went through training camp with him too, and we used to call him Lardo, he was a heavy set fellow real nice fellow to talk to, but he wasn't in my division, I think he was in the fourth division if I am not mistaken, but when I went up on the boat deck to help carry the bodies and the wounded that day I saw him pinned up against the stantion with the shrapnel in him and when I came back he was already moved, which I thought he was already dead. Two years later he pulled into Pearl Harbor and they called me down to the main deck the officer called me down and he said I had a visitor and I went down and here it was this fellow that we called Lardo and I told him, he said do you remember be? And I said no I don't, because he was a little thin guy after this I don't think he weighed a hundred pounds, he must have weighed a hundred and ninety. When he picked up his shirt and said Chuck don't you remember me, I said no he said I am Lardo. I said no you can't be. He said oh yeah he lifted up his shirt and he must have had a hundred and some stitches down his stomach and across his chest he had another forty some stitches where they just opened him up to fix everything in his chest and his stomach. His knees were all full of shrapnel and his legs, but he was living. Back in them days it's a miracle I thought you were dead. I saw him one time after that and then I never saw him again cause we transferred off the Indianapolis put a ship in commission U.S.S. Ocklawaha a fleet tanker, I put that ship in commission a plank going around that one and then I lost contact with all of them cause the Indianapolis was sunk.

DH: Right.

CS: To this day the only ones that I know are three of the fellows on the Nevada and two of them we are talking and got to know one another more on a personal basis then we do try to remember then when we were kids, cause that all we were, were a bunch of kids aboard ship. Today, now we're sixty-eight years old you have a lot of guy's that you're talking to and you bring back memories that way. Like I said if I had to do it over again the same way I'd do it, it wouldn't bother me. But I might be a bit smarter.

The tape ended here.