

ORAL INTERVIEW

PAUL PAPISH, U. S. NAVY, USS HOUSTON

Today is March 1st, year 2002. My name is Floyd Cox, I'm a volunteer with the National Museum of the Pacific War in Fredericksburg, Texas. We're here in Houston, Texas, today at the Hilton Hotel on the University of Houston campus and we're interviewing Mr. Paul Papish. If you don't mind, I'll call you "Pap". That's what everybody calls you.

MR. PAPISH: That's right.

MR. COX: Concerning his experiences during World War II. Pap, I'd like to start out by asking you a little bit about your background, when you were born, where you were born, brothers and sisters, and a little bit about your family background, and we'll take it from there.

PAP: I was born in Pueblo, Colorado, April 4, 1919. I was in Pueblo for awhile, then moved to Denver. These were the Depression times and my father was out of work. He found work in Denver mowing lawns. My mother had a small business that took care of the family. She would pick up dry cleaning from fire stations in Denver and around the area. She would pick up their uniforms and have them dry cleaned, would mend any tears, replace any buttons and things like that, and she would charge a nominal fee to 'em. She got to really know the firemen and the firemen really liked her

business, and so she kinda had that for the family. Right across the street in Denver, when we moved into Denver, was a golf driving range. They had floodlights. People would come, buy a bucket of balls for about 50 cents (a penny a ball) and hit these balls out into the field. Fields marked in various yardages and the tee was kinda in a semi-circle. And the people would just drive the balls off the tee. I got a job picking up buckets after they were empty, going in and filling the buckets again, and for that I got 50 cents a night. I would take that 50 cents and go across the street to our home, put that 50 cents on the table, kitchen table, and we had beans to eat the next day. I went to the Catholic school in Denver, St. Philamenas. I started there in the fourth grade, graduated from there in the eighth grade, went to the ninth grade to another Catholic high school in Denver, Cathedral High School, and graduated from Cathedral High School. Played football and basketball and the Nun that I had, she always told me “apply yourself, apply yourself. If you would just apply yourself, the world is yours.” And I guess I was crazy enough. If my grades were falling down and my playing football or basketball jeopardized, I could bring ’em up. I mean, it was just like that, and she would just shake her head. (Laughter) I don’t know if you’re Catholic or not, but when we graduated, that Nun had a real part of my life. Each person that graduated got what is called “The Miraculous Medal”; that’s the medal

that she gave me.

MR. COX: What Pap is showing is a medal that he has hanging around his neck. Did you wear that all through your Navy career?

PAP: I used to keep it in my billfold, and one day during the war time, I thought, well, I'll make a lanyard and I'll put it around my neck. As I was plaiting the lanyard and finished the lanyard, I was laying down on deck, which when we were in action, we had to do. My battle station was an after-battle dressing station. We took care of wounded; anybody got wounded, we would take care of them or get them to the pharmacist mates, who were hospital men. At that time they were pharmacist mates. I was laying down on deck and weaving this lanyard, and I put the medal on the lanyard and put it around my neck. I no sooner got it around my neck, I got up, I was walking from about here to the door...

MR. COX: That's probably 30 feet.

PAP: Yeh, and went through the hatch and the bomb hit. And that bomb hit practically where I was 30 or 40 seconds before. But when that bomb hit, it threw me across the deck and, of course, we were in general quarters below decks. And it was hotter than hades down there. In fact, I was the low man on the totem pole, I ran up and got these joe pots full of water and came back with them. From sweat and water being spilled, the decks were just wet.

And I slid across the deck from here again to about that door and right up against the bulkhead. I shook my head and the first words I heard were the pharmacist mate, "we're hit; grab your battle lanterns and go out and see what you can find." I picked up my battle lantern, went into that next compartment and it was the station for the after repair party. And everyone in that repair party was practically wiped out from that bomb hit. One man survived and he's here today, too.

MR. COX: What's his name, Pap?

PAP: Howard Brooks. They sent him out to inspect. Someone had said there was some wiring down some place and he was an electrician. And they sent him out and he was out on that, so he survived. I was practically going into the next compartment and I survived. Of course, the after battle dressing people survived because the steel wall and then actually there was the barbette of turret three, which was steel, heavy steel...

MR. COX: Now barbette, you mean...

PAP: This is the mechanism below decks which is training and elevating the guns.

MR. COX: It turns the turret back and forth.

PAP: Yes. So I stepped into that compartment, and I shined my battle lantern on the bunk. All the mattresses had to be rolled up on the bunks when

they are not in use. And this Chief was sitting on one of the bunks. I walked up and I said, "Chief, we're hit. Come on let's go." I kinda nudged him and he just fell off the bunk, and he was just peppered with shrapnel and he was dead. I shined my battle lantern around and I heard this voice, "Help me. Please help me." I found him and took him up the ladder to where a hospital man was. His name was Egri. I took him up and I put him down and I said, "Take care of him, Doc." He says, "I will. Go on down and see what else you can find." I don't know to this day how many trips I made up and down that ladder carrying a wounded man or carrying a dead man. The hospital men would look them over and everything and they'd say, "Put him on the fantail." He was dead. But, like I say, to this day I don't know how many trips I made up and down that ladder. It was just mechanical, I guess, because we were trained in this. This Captain and the Admiral Hart of the Asiatic Fleet was constantly sending the ships out and training general quarters all the time, half the time. These training missions that we went on, we found out that they were very important. There were times, after the war started, when general quarters was sounded, my berthing area was in the forward part of the ship. The after battle dressing station was in the after part of the ship. And when general quarters went, I'm up and out of the bunk, into my clothes, and off to my battle station. People on the starboard side are

going aft, on the port side going forward, sort of a one way deal. And I don't know to this day also, how many times after general quarters sounded that I was on my way and half way there before I even woke up. It was just so mechanical, when general quarters sounded, you were off and going. Like I say, I had to pass the mess hall, the forward mess hall, and then from there on there were various compartments. But all of a sudden, I'd wake up and I'd be half way to my battle station before I even woke up. It was just mechanical. That whole ship was so trained that they knew where to go, how to get there, and what to do when you were needed, what you were supposed to be doing on your battle station. And, as I say, I was in the after battle dressing station. The bomb hit and we lost 48 men and a turret. So we got out of the area, went to Tjilatjap, Java. The south part of Java was sort of a naval base for the Dutch ships. We pulled in there, off loaded our wounded, off loaded our dead. And the Admiral, Admiral Hart, I was crossing the quarterdeck at the time he was inspecting the ship, and his words to Captain Rooks was, "Well, Captain, you only lost a third of your firepower. You have to go back to the north of Java." And so we went through Sunda Strait.

MR. COX: Let me interrupt you, if I might, Pap, I know the gun was knocked out and you lost all these men. Did they replace the men in any way? Were there any replacements on shore?

PAP: No. there wasn't. There was no replacements for those men. If they would have had to man the turret, they would get 'em from the crew some place, because the 8-inch guns were important to that ship. I know when I was in the First Division, my general quarters station was in the shell deck. I would operate the hoist. I had a helper who would roll the shell in the hoist and I would operate the hoist sending the shell up to the turrets. I'd get the word from the turret up above when they needed shells and so forth. I think there was about four or five shells in the hoist, so that when one carrier was empty you'd roll a shell into it, and then I'd operate the hoist.

MR. COX: Now how much did these projectiles weigh?

PAP: These projectiles weighed probably between 75 and 100 pounds.

They were heavy. Now, I might be wrong on the weight. But when you're handling 'em, again, you're so well trained that all of this becomes mechanical, you know. I guess it's the old brain that is so you know what to do and how you do it, that's what you were trained to do. Then, of course, I got transferred from First Division to S Division, and they made a storekeeper out of me. And my job aboard ship, and to this day, I don't know. I was so lucky to have gotten that job in the disbursing office because every man out here now and every man that was on that ship at one time or another passed my table on payday and got their pay.. And my job was to look at the pay

receipt, make sure that it was made out right and everything, and pass it to the disbursing officer. The disbursing officer would look for the amount, dole out the amount, then the pay receipt went to another storekeeper at the end of the table, and he would look at this pay receipt and make sure that this was right. At times those pay receipts got by us, by all three of us, and then it was up to me to go out and find the man, make out another pay receipt, make sure this was paid, and have him tear up the old one. So I was all over that ship.

MR. COX: Every shipmate on that whole ship you'd met at one time or other.

PAP: They went by us every payday, so you probably heard greeting me "Hello, there's Papish. He was in the disbursing office." These people I probably made out papers for an allotment, sending money home. And I figured my job in the disbursing office when I started, there was a 1st class storekeeper by the name of Whithead, called him "Whitey", and he took me under his wing and he taught me practically everything I had to know in that disbursing office. So I took care of the rolls of the apprentice seamen, seamen 2nd class, seaman 1st class, petty officers 3rd class, and some 2nd-class petty officers. We had these rolls in the books and every payday, we'd go through and figure payday, how much the man had coming. So these people knew me pretty well and, of course, I knew them, too. There's

several, in fact, one of the machinist mates, I don't think he said that he had made a couple of 'em at first, but he hadn't, it's been a long time since he's made a reunion here. And I remember seeing his name which was odd to me. His name was Dallas Clark (the best history of Dallas Clark is also on file in the Museum archives), the same name as the paymaster. His name was Clark also. I used to tease the paymaster. I'd be figuring the pay, and I'd say, "Oh, here's that guy from Dallas." (Laughter) He'd turn around and say, "That's Dallas Clark, isn't it Papish?" "Yes, sir." In a reunion we had in the Poconos, one day while Mr. Clark survived and he would come down from New Hampshire where he was retired, and he came down to the reunion. And one day he comes down and his son was with him. And this was something that was just mind boggling, because that son looked just exactly like his Father looked when I went to the disbursing office.

MR. COX: When you were younger?

PAP: When I was younger, and it was so uncanny! I could just see him in a Navy uniform and there he was years ago. I just stood there and shook my head and I said, "Mr. Clark". Other people called him by his first name Preston but I've always "Mr. Clark".

MR. COX: He was your mentor?

PAP: He was and I said to him, "My God, you can't deny that young man.

He's your son through and through because this was the way you looked to me when I first came to the disbursing office." It was so uncanny! It was mind-boggling.

MR. COX: Was this the job you had when you went into Sunda Strait?

PAP: Yes, oh, yes, when we went into Sunda Strait and went through the battle of the Java Sea...

MR. COX: That's the one that took out the gun crew?

PAP: No, the gun crew and when we got hit by the bomb, it was the 4th of February. This was before the battle of the Java Sea. We had another cruiser with us, the BOISE, and I don't know to this day some of the people of the HOUSTON were referring to another ship, and it was a modern ship. It had radar. We didn't have radar. And we thought, oh, man, this is gonna be good. We've got another ship with us. On a mission, we were sent up as a covering, the HOUSTON and the BOISE went up to cover the destroyers that were going up. What these destroyers did was something else. These old four pipers, the Japs were coming down in transports in columns. These destroyers attacked, went up the middle of the column and fired their torpedoes, going up to the top and then down the sides and torpedoing these ships. It was uncanny. This was in the books, but the BOISE got in too close when we were laying back, got in too close to land, ripped her plates and

they sent her back. Sometime you might talk to a HOUSTON man and, oh, yeh, that's the reluctant dragon. (Laughter) We've all got names. Of course, the MARBLEHEAD was with us, too, a light cruiser. All in all, we made ourselves known. And the Japanese, this is why the HOUSTON is the ghost of the Java coast, because in certain areas that we were in, Tokyo Rose would come on the air and say, "We sank the HOUSTON". She first sank the HOUSTON up in Illo Illo, on the island of Panay, where we were at anchor when war broke out. And that night, she comes on the air "We sank the HOUSTON." (Laughter) Everybody's just looking at each other and I think that Tokyo Rose, if I'm not mistaken, sank us seven times before we did get sunk. So we used to call her "The Ghost of the Java Coast." Of course, at the time that we got the bomb hit, the MARBLEHEAD got a bomb hit, too. She was hit in the after part of the ship and knocked out her steering apparatus. So they sent her back to the States. They were steering the ship by the engines. They couldn't operate the rudder. This was an odd situation, too. Later on, in my Navy career, I was sent to the University of Colorado for my shore duty. After being prisoner of war, they gave us shore duty nearest our home. I was fortunate enough to get the University of Colorado, the V-12 and the NROTC unit in Colorado.

MR. COX: That's the Naval Officers Training Corp.

PAP: And, the Captain there was the professor of Naval Science, Captain Van Bergen. They had sent him to the University of Colorado, and he called me in the office one day, and he said, "Papish, you were on the HOUSTON." I said, "Yes, sir, I was." He said, "Well, I was on the MARBLEHEAD." He got many decorations but later on we found out why he was sent to the University of Colorado, because Fitzsimmons Hospital is about 40, 45 miles away from the Boulder campus to the Fitzsimmons Hospital. Fitzsimmons Hospital was originally set up to take care of gassed people, people who got gassed in WWI. And they were more or less trained as far as gas patients were concerned. Captain Van Burgen was sent there because he went down to rescue these people from the after steering down there, and he saved a few lives. But in the process a barrel had broken open or something was broken open and the mixture with the salt water produced a gas. And we find out that's why he was sent there, because he was gassed. And they were taking care of him at Fitzsimmons while he was acting professor of Naval Science, at the Navy ROTC unit. He was something else. He was a captain that you would call a real Navy captain. And the HOUSTON was fortunate enough, well while I was on it, to have these various captains. Captain Oldendorf, who is famous in WWII of crossing the T, a maneuver where you can bring all the guns you have to bear and they can't bear on you. Captain Oldendorf was

a real captain, too, and Captain Rooks. You can talk to anybody in the crew who would follow that man through hell, and we did. He was something else. A little story about Captain Oldendorf, who later became Admiral Oldendorf. I was in a the First Division, and the First Division took care of some of the off-search quarters and things like that, like the “head“. I was captain of the forward “head“, the officers’ “head“.

MR. COX: Meaning the bathroom.

PAP: Yes, that was my cleaning station. And so I had that thing spic and span for every inspection. This one time he came by and I came to attention. He came down the passageway with his entourage and I come to attention. I salute him and I say, “Paul Papish. Forward ‘head’ ready for inspection.”

So he went in there, white glove deal, you know. But I had big-dealed some enamel paint out of the paint locker, and I had that thing really looking sharp. And he went around, he came up and he says, “Very good, Papish. Excellent, in fact.” He exited the “head” there, went down about four or five paces.

He stopped the inspection party, he turned around and he came back to me, and he leaned over and in my ear he says, “But it’s still a shit house.”

(Laughter) If there was a time where I had the wind taken out of my sails, I will always remember that. I was really pleased with the way it looked when he inspected it, but when he came back and he leaned over and just kinda

whispered in my ear, “Very good, Papish, but it’s still a shit house.”

MR. COX: That was something great, that gave you something to remember all these years. If he’d said it was nice, you would have forgot it. A wonderful story.

PAP: He was something else. Like I say, the captains we had were training captains to make sure, sure trained their crews.

MR. COX: Tell me a little bit, you mentioned about the Java Sea. Tell me a little about that battle. This is the battle that took place before the...

PAP: Well, there wasn’t too much that we were witnessing. This was kinda of a, and it went into the nighttime.

MR. COX: Basically a night action?

PAP: Yes, basically. We started out and Admiral Helfrich, who was put in command after they relieved Admiral Hart, and they put the Dutch admiral in charge of the fleet, ABDAFLOAT.

MR. COX: Now ABDA, will you tell the listener what that means?

PAP: ABDA was American, British, Dutch and Australian. ABDA that was the fleet. That was the name of the fleet. Just the first initial of each Naval allied vessel that was in that. Admiral Helfrich thought that he had the Japanese on the run, and he says, “Let’s go get ‘em.” He went to get ‘em, but in the process of gettin’ ‘em, he got torpedoed and sunk. We lost a lot of

ships in that battle of the Java Sea. The HOUSTON and the PERTH survived the battle.

MR. COX: And did you get damage during that particular battle also, Pap?

PAP: The only damage that we did sustain was a couple of hits. The machinist mate tells us, that we were lucky because one of the shells didn't go off because it went into an oil tank on the ship, a fuel tank. And it didn't go off. Another one, the shell came in and it hit up on the focsle and came out of the side of the ship and didn't explode. They mended some of it and they tell us, people who knew, told us that that shell was still in the tank. And, so, we refueled...

MR. COX: Did you go into port to refuel?

PAP: Yes, into Batavia, which is now Jakarta. We fueled and the captain had a hard time getting those people to fuel the ship. With various threats, I guess, and everything else, we got the fuel and we proceeded through Sunda Strait. There is something that is quite fishy about the whole thing is that the Dutch sent out planes. Well, the word came back, there wasn't any shipping within 100 miles of the Strait. Well, we were just approaching the Strait, so from there what they said we had clear sailing through the Strait, and then into get repairs someplace, and just get out of there. Well, we didn't get out of there. We sailed right into the landing force of Java. And, of course, the

HOUSTON and the PERTH were fortunate in the respect that any place that they shot, there was only two of us, but anything they can bring to bear on the Japanese ships we were hitting. But we were also running out of ammunition and we hadn't provisioned ship or didn't have any ammunition. I think the last star shell that they fired from the ship was into a Japanese search light. Somebody says, "Put that God damn light out." And they fired point blank into that search light. The guys that were on the five-inch gun, say that they could hear screaming and hollering on the ship there after the hit.

MR. COX: They heard this coming from the Japanese ship?

PAP: Yes, and it was...

MR. COX: Now at this time, you were once again attending to the wounded in this particular battle?

PAP: The word went out to abandon ship the first time, so everybody's starting and someone came along and said belay that last word and so no abandon ship. So then the second time it came, I mean, this was it. We had no ammunition aboard the ship. So the Japs kinda got in a semi-circle and just started...

MR. COX: Hammering away at you.

PAP: Yes, and as some of the people say to this day, they only sank us because of the weight of the shells they fired at us.

MR. COX: (Laughter) You had so many shells on board it took you down.

PAP: I sat on a bit there, and I was trying to decide whether I wanted to go over the side or not. So I finally decided, well, I guess this has been my home for the last, well, ever since the 4th of June 1939, when I joined her in Bremerton. It was my home and kinda hard to decide whether you wanted to leave home or not. And I sat there, and why I wasn't hit by something, shrapnel or any thing else, but I sat there, and finally decided to go over the side. I went over the side right at the propeller guard, and how I managed to go through I don't know because these bits were right up above the propeller guard. So I had my life jacket on and the old tin helmet and I just jumped off. And the only thing that I can figure, if you'll see that model ship back there where the propeller guard is, there's those struts, steel struts, I mean it's the framework, and I must've gone right through that. And a few inches one way or the other I could have had a broken neck, a broken back or something, but I just went right through. Then I see this raft, this aviation raft, up ahead of me and I thought, ah, this is something. One of those orange aviation rafts, this was inflated, and when I hit the water nobody was on it or anything. The ship had a list and was under way a little bit, but this raft floated right back to me. I had the flash-proof clothing on and I had my life jacket and I thought, oh, this flash-proof clothing has got to go. So I got on that raft and I sat there

on that raft, and I don't know whether it was tied to something or what, it seemed to go just with the ship. I took off my life jacket, I took off this flash-proof clothing which is kinda heavy denim, and when you have all those clothes on you're not swimming very well. I got my life jacket off, I got the flash-proof clothing off and deep sixed it, and about that time right there by one of the hangers was a plane. There was this pow!, a kinda fireworks shell. And I was there, and I felt places on my body because I had the life jacket off, and I must have got some of the shrapnel from the hit. And that hit also, I don't know how it was possible, but maybe it was another shell, that went through the life raft and that thing just folded immediately. And I was getting my life jacket on and getting out of there. So I got my life jacket on and got out of there. Then I started swimming, and getting away from the ship because that's ingrained into you. If you get out of a sinking ship, get away from because it's gonna take you down with it. So I got out of there and this action was just like daytime. These star shells and all, and every time I hear the "Star Spangled Banner", I think of that battle. Rockets red glare, the bombs bursting in air, and gave proof through the night that our flag was still there. And it was, at the main mast as the ship was going down. That's the last time I saw the American flag. Little did I think when I was in the water that I wouldn't see that flag again for three and a half years. It means an

awful lot to me, the flag, and I honor the flag. I've told people, they say, "What do you attribute your surviving to?" I tell you what I attribute it to. "First of all, it's my faith in God, my faith in my country, and my faith in myself. All three brought me through all those trying days, three and a half years.

MR. COX: Once this life raft you had was starting to sink, you started swimming. Were you by yourself?

PAP: Yes, I was by myself, and I finally came to a raft. And they had some wounded on the raft. And, of course, the wounded always ride in the center of the raft. If you're able, you're hanging on to the line around the raft. I found this raft around daylight. And here was this raft and these guys. I swam up to the raft, and I got hold of it there. And I looked at the guy next to me, and I says "Punchy". I was in the First Division with him before I got transferred to S Division. We worked together up there on the focsle, and his name is Parham, and he was from Texas. And he would tell a joke and he would take about five minutes to get up to the punch line. He talked so slow. (Laughter) He was something else. We called him "Punchie", too, because he was a sparring partner for all Asiatic heavyweights on the ship. And he used to spar with them, so we called him "Punchie". He's still alive, he's still around. Last I knew, he lived between Dallas and Fort Worth...

MR. COX: Grand Prairie.

PAP: Yes, Grand Prairie. The last couple of reunions that we've had, he comes around because we hold them there, the ones that we hold in Irving. Of course, he's close, so he drives up. And we shoot the breeze and everything.

MR. COX: You got on board the raft. How long were you in that raft before you were picked up by the Japanese?

PAP: Well, this is the way it happened. Daylight and we're hanging on to the raft and the Zeroes are coming in. The Zeroes are coming in and strafing. I think we lost a lot of people in that manner.

MR. COX: Strafing the sailors in the water?

PAP: In the water. I looked over at Punchie, and I said, "Punchie, if we're gonna get out of this, we'd better start swimming, get away from the raft, because they're ain't gonna go after one guy." He says, "I think you're right, Pap. Let's go." And there was a ship's cook hanging on there by the name of Red Reynolds, and all three of us left the raft and took out on our own. I was swimming, swimming in and out of squalls, which was God sent.

MR. COX: Rain squalls.

PAP: Rain squalls. I finally made the beach, but it was a fight all the way because the currents in Sunda Strait were treacherous, and, of course, maybe I

got in on a tide change or something else like that. But anyway, I had to give it one last effort. I could see the beach, and I was gonna get there. I finally made the beach and then ran up on the beach about fifty yards and just collapsed. And I was so exhausted I slept through the night. I estimated from the time that the ship went down until I made the beach was four o'clock in the afternoon. I left the ship about midnight or somewhere in that vicinity, and that's my estimate.

MR. COX: About 16 hours.

PAP: I woke up the next morning and there were other sailors around me, and they were sleeping, too. We got up, there were ten of us, and took our life jackets off and everything, and all I had on was a pair of skivvies. I had taken my clothes off, I took my shoes off, and if it ever happens again to me, I'll never throw my shoes away. Shoes stay. And then we were loose for four days until the natives picked us up and put us alongside the road. A guy, a native, who I guess was a chief, he had command of things. So the people were at the side of the road and he is giving a speech. In the meantime, he's layed us out on the road like so, and he's giving this speech up there, you know, reaches back and he's waving this parang, this knife, in the air. That son-of-a-gun, jumped up in the air, come down astride of me and took that knife and he went from my forehead down to my crotch. And I thought, this

is it, this is it. And the son-of-a-gun did that to all ten of the guys that were laying down there. The guy at the last knew nothing was gonna happen, but, I'll tell you, me being first in line and that's it. They turned us over to the Japanese. Japanese came up. Our party came across what they call a hospital that the Dutch had, the military had, at various places on the island, I think, is what they say. Anyway, we found this place one night, so we put up, and in the process I managed to get a sarong. This was blue cloth of some type...

MR. COX: Heavier skivvies.

PAP: And I covered my skivvies. Panel truck drives up. It had a red cross on it, but what they had done, right around the cross they painted more red, so they had the Japanese fire ball. And I use that term kinda loosely because I'd call it something else.

MR. COX: Go ahead and tell us.

PAP: This is the flamin' ass hole. But anyway, this guy gets out of the truck, and he was in civilian clothes, and he had this fez on his head. And he reaches down and he's waving this pearl-handled pistol. And Papish is standing there, and he puts the pistol to my head, and he says if you have stolen that (he pointed to that sarong), if you killed somebody to get that, he says you must pay with your life. I says, "No, we got it up there." He spoke pretty good English. All the guys agreed because they had picked up various

things too. So he was satisfied. I mean, this is twice. And they took us to a barbed-wire enclosure and they had some Dutch women in there. And those Dutch women cooked us up some rice, and, boy, I mean that was really good. That was the best meal I think I ever had. We had what I call bananas but they weren't bananas. I find out later that they're plantain. And they kinda cooked the plantains and more or less fried it, and we got about two or three plantains and rice, and, man, that was real good, because that's the only thing we had since the ship went down. Everybody was afraid to try some of this jungle stuff, anyway subsist on weeds or something. And then we were in this enclosure and they had these sort of places where people sleep, I guess. And it's on an incline, up against a wall, and you're sleeping on this thing. It's like a bed, it's someplace where you rest, you know.

MR. COX: You're kinda sleeping at a 45 degree angle?

PAP: They told us they go on and go rest and have a sleep. The next morning I wake up and somebody's got me by the heels and drags me off that thing and bounces my butt off the dirt floor and I come up swinging. Nobody could do that to me now, you know. And the next thing I knew, this rifle was right at my head, and I looked up and this Japanese had this bayonet and that gun right on my head. And I thought, this is it, this is it, pretty soon. "Up!" He motioned for me to get out of there, and the guy was gonna stick me with

that bayonet or something, but I was a little quick and I got out of there. They lined us up and they loaded us on the truck, and they took us from, this was in Pandaglang, Java, and they took us to Serang. And that was something else, how anybody could survive. This is where you find “Man’s inhumanity to man”. How another human being treat a human being the way we were treated.

MR. COX: Can you describe some of the treatment they did to you?

PAP: I mean, just the theater itself. We got these dirty old rice balls about two or three times. And I forget, I was captured on the 4th of March of ‘42, and it must have been somewhere around the middle of March and into May when we were held in this theater. It was a theater at one time. It was in Serang, Java, and the theater is still there from some pictures I’ve seen. We were held there, and then, for some reason or another, I was transferred from there to a small jail. They were taking people out of the theater and a few of us wound up in this jail in Serang. And here, again, you wake up one morning and you’re rousted out and lined up against the wall. And this Japanese officer comes. “Who’s officer here?” Mr. Hamlin stepped forward. He says “I’m an officer.” He says “Oh”. In the meantime, the Japs had come out of a truck and set up guns, machine guns. He comes to Mr. Hamlin, and he says, “Who’s the better man Tojo or Roosevelt?” Hamlin

says, "Roosevelt." He jumps back and says something to the guys and they start training the guns on us, and he did this about three times.

MR. COX: Training the guns on you fellas?

PAP: Asking Mr. Hamlin all these questions, who's the better man. And finally, Hamlin came up with a good answer, he says "Roosevelt is my leader." That kinda satisfied the guy. He gave the orders to break down the machine guns, but watch and they were fortunate.

MR. COX: You probably thought that at anytime they might cut loose with 'em.

PAP: So they backed this truck up to the jail, the gate, and they start loading us onto the truck. And I was first in line so many times and getting a bad part of the deal, I thought this time I'm watching this. I get up to the tail gate of that truck, and as the guys were getting on the truck and exposing their rear ends these Japs would swatt 'em across the butt with bamboo pole. "Get up there in that truck." So I'm watching this and I got this figured. So I get up to the truck, about the last one on the truck, and I put my hands on the truck and I boosted myself with my hands and turned my butt onto the tailgate, I got it right across the chest, the head, and I went forward. When we had another reunion, and when they planted the tree in Arlington, we had an Aussie there. We started talking, and I was talking to his wife, and he was talking to

somebody over there and I could at first hear Pandaglang, and then Serang, and I thought, hey, wait a minute. So I excused myself, I said, “Your husband is talking about some place in Java.” She says, “Oh, yes, we were there, and he traced every place he was when he come up off the ship. He was off the PERTH.” And so I went over to him, and I says, “Hey, you were in Pandaglang?” “Yeh.” “You were in Serang?” “Yeh.” I says, “How about that jail in Serang?” “Oh, yeh, I was there.” And he says, “You know, something that I often thought, “There was the crazy Yanks.” He was gonna out sink the Japs, but, boy you really got it. He says, “This Yank was lying there in the bed of a truck. We didn’t know whether he was dead or alive. He finally came through.” I says, I forget what his name was. He says, “Oh, yeh, there was that crazy Yank.” I says, “That was me!” (laughter) “That was a crazy thing you pulled, wasn’t it?” I said, “You betcha.” He says “I’d rather had it on the butt than in the???” We talked about it.

MR. COX: He was a witness to what you went through.

PAP: And then on the way from Serang to Batavia...

MR. COX: In the truck?

PAP: In the meantime, I got this amoebic dysentery and, man, I tell you every once in awhile somebody would holler “banjo”, “toilet”, and they’d stop the truck and we’d disperse into the hemp and get the job done and then

back on the truck. The Japs had the rifles on us while this was taking place. Man, I tell you that dysentery is something else. It makes a baby out of a grown man. You have no control over your bowels whatsoever. And I finally got into Batavia down there, and we were, I forget how long it was, but we were in there and all of a sudden we were standing in ranks or something. All of a sudden a gate opens up and here comes these soldiers marching in. Man, I said, "We're liberated already." Liberated, hell, this was the 131st. They were captured and they were prisoners, too. Well, Bicycle Camp wasn't exactly a prison, but it was a Dutch base and they used to ride the bicycles instead of horses. We were in Bicycle Camp up until about October of '42 when they loaded us on a ship and took us to Singapore.

MR. COX: Now while you were at this particular camp, did they put you on any work details, Pap?

PAP: Yes.

MR. COX: What type of work details?

PAP: The Dutch had this scorched earth policy, and they set fire to various places and what we were doing was salvaging. In one particular area, they had a lot of tires, Dunlop tire factory, and they had us stacking these tires. What we used to do is get 'em up just so high, and you'd have to stand back and kinda throw 'em on the pile, you know. So I was stacking these tires, and

a Jap would come by. “Not here, over here.” And then I’d have to restack the tires. Another Jap would come by “Here, over here.” He came through about three times, and the last time, I was bending over to pick up a tire and I hear this voice behind me. “What’s the matter, sailor?” I said, “These damn Japs don’t know where in the hell they want these tires.” I was bending over, and I kinda looked back of me, and here was this guy standing there with those toed shoes that the Japanese wore, you know. I straightened up, I looked around here, I looked over here, and he looked at me. He says, “It was me that said that, sailor.” Oh, my god, I’m really in for it now. If you got on the wrong side of them they’d beat the hell out of you. And you’d have to stand there and take it. He said, “I’ll tell you somethin’. You be careful of what you say. Lot of Japanese they speak very good English like me.” He says, “I was a cab driver in New York. I went back to see my family in Japan and they put me in the army.” And that was the first time, I think, I was really treated pretty good because he had a can of Bully beef in his knapsack, and we sat there and ate that. And, man, I tell you that was Spam. I still love Spam. Anyway, we were treated pretty good there. They had us on these working parties putting 55-gallon drums in various places.

MR. COX: Then they made the decision to move you. Now where did they move you, and how did they move you, Pap?

PAP: One day they came in, and they loaded us on ships. We didn't know that it was so many, you know, and they took us down to the docks and loaded us on these ships and I found out later that these were ships that carried the livestock, like the ponies, to pull the ammunition carts and stuff like that. It kinda stunk to high heaven, but, what the heck, and we got under way and we find out later that they were transferring these people out of Java, and these were the people that were going up on the railroad. They pulled into Java. I think, at one point, one of the ships got sunk. I think there was about three ships that they had loaded, three or four ships. And one of our subs got one of 'em. It was something else. You were down in this hole, and there is the ladder there going up topside, and there is a Jap up there with a gun. I mean, you went up there, you know, and he'd kinda push you back down. And this was where we learned some of the language like "benjo". I went up there and I had the dysentery, and I told him "benjo". "Whoof, whoof". He motions me out, and there's a thing built up from the ship. A wooden thing and you sat there, and you did your job in the ocean.

MR. COX: Kinda like a privvy except it was over the deck.

PAP: Yeh, and I got up there but there was a couple of times I just didn't make it. This was where this inhumanity to man starts. You're laying in your own feces and it's not good. And they put us off in Singapore, and, of

course, my having had dysentery and then I got malaria. They put us in the British hospital there. The British had the some of the hospitals still intact, and they took care of the soldiers and people like that. So this doctor put me in the dysentery ward. These people, some of the people who were in good health, they were sending them up country. My shipmates were going up country, and I'm being left behind in this British hospital in Singapore. Little did I know that it was saving my life. And practically every time there was a draft going out, I would be in the hospital or I would be on, I forget how the term is the British used, in other words you're useless, you're not able to go up there. So I stayed in Singapore all the time.

MR. COX: While the others went out on various work groups.

PAP: I'm left behind. There was 69 of us Americans left in Changi on liberation. Like the young man that I visited in Waco, he was in the same cell I was in Changi.

MR. COX: How many were in a cell together?

PAP: There was these cells were built for one person, and there were four of us in the cell. Each cell had a cement block down the middle of it, and then there was the sides. When we went into the jail, they put me in with three soldiers, three 131st Field Artillery soldiers. We shared the cell. The Sgt. Gordon, Cryton Gordon, he had the cement block in the middle to lay down

on because he had an air mattress. He had salvaged an air mattress. And then Herby Morris was on one side of the block, he laid on one side of the block. Van Cleve, who was from Ohio, he was on the other side of the block. That leaves this sailor down at the end over here where the toilets are. And that wasn't very good, but they didn't have those toilets in service anyway. So I got to thinking one day, when I had come in to the jail itself, someplace, someway shape or form, I had gotten a set of springs. They were these round ends, you know, and that wire stuff held together.

MR. COX: Made like mattress springs?

PAP: Yeh, and I thought, man I'm sleeping down at the end of that block there, and I'm figuring and thinking. One day I was out on a working party and somehow or another I got a hold of some chain. I mean the chain was a loop and then a wire, another, you know, like those springs on a mattress. And then I got these chains, and I thought, that's a good idea, Papish. What I did, I got a nail someplace. As I was in the working party I found a big nail, so what I did is I kinda chipped into the wall. Up above was this window to the cell and it was just the bars there. I thought I'm gonna try this. So I told the guys what I was doing. What are you doing up there pounding on that. I said, "Look, I'll explain it to you guys. I got these springs down here and I got these pieces of chain. I'm gonna hang those springs up there. And that's

where I'm gonna sleep."

MR. COX: You hung your bunk.

PAP: Yes. It's so great of you always down below me, you know, and have to get up at night for Benjo. But I did, I swung that thing. Where I put the holes, I had some kind of hooks, and I'd lay these springs in the hooks, and take chain and run them up to the window. And I could stand in my bunk and I could look out the window. "What are you seeing?" Every time I had to go pee or Benjo, I would holler down there, "Hey, Quaty, I gotta go." He'd move over and I'd jump down out of my bunk. We were on about the third floor of that jail, either the third or fourth, I don't know. But you had to go down, and there were ramps. Man, if you had the urge to go, you'd better time it just right because you'd be going right there. And so they had these bore holes outside, what they called bore holes. They just had these big augers that would go into the ground and make the bore holes. Out of a box up on top of the hole, a hole was cut out, and that was the toilet. They would bore about three, four, or maybe five. They'd bore these holes five in a line, and in back, five more and in back of that five more, so that when one up here was filling, this down here the maggots would take care of. The English thought up all of this stuff. As they filled, they would move the boxes up or move the boxes back to the back. And it was the maggots that was taking

care of the feces and all.

MR. COX: I imagine the odor was very bad, wasn't it?

PAP: Yeh. Well, you get used to it.

MR. COX: Well, let me ask you, Pap, was it hot or cold in your cell and did you have any type of blankets? Did they supply you with any type of cover?

PAP: You were always on the look out for something you could beg, borrow or steal. Quaty big-dealed a kilt from one of the Scottish highlanders, and that thing, when you took the threads out holding it together, that kilt would probably go down one, two, three about four chairs down. That long...

MR. COX: About twelve feet roughly.

PAP: Yeh. So Quaty broke up that kilt and gave us each a piece we could use as a blanket. Well I had big deals someplace. A piece of canvas that I found, and what I did is, I put two of 'em together, I sewed, and then what I did is I packed kapok, or something that I had big-dealed, where I could stuff that in and make a mattress out of that canvas. And then I had this piece of kilt that Quaty gave to use as a blanket. But we only used any covering or blanket during the monsoon season. There was lots of rain.

MR. COX: You mentioned "big deal". Can you explain? You used that terminology several times. Exactly what was a big deal at that time?

PAP: Anything you could get your hands on, beg, borrow or steal. You had

a big deal on something and you was gonna either beg, borrow or steal it.

Then, too, when we were on the outside, they had working party and I was in charge of five or six men. The Japanese had given us a tank, a truck, it was a tank truck but there was no engine in it, there was nothing. The power that you used is manpower. You put men on the front of that thing and they pull it just like horses, you know, and I, being in charge, I was steering. I was the guy. And going up the hill, we'd push it. The guys would push that damn tank up the hill. It was kinda of a slope on the outside of the jail. And we used to go around with that tanker and at various places in the camp were these cans, Dixie cans, or whatever you want to call it, just like these gasoline cans. And we would pee in those things. Well, the next morning, I'd go around to all those stations and empty these pee cans into this tanker. And we would push and pull that thing all over the camp until we had emptied all the pee cans and then we'd take it out to the garden. And when they got it out to the garden, they had these cans that they had made dippers out of and they would dip this urine and put it on the plants. Somebody said that was good nitrogen and good for the plants. And when the plants grew up, well, we'd have some greens, you know.

MR. COX: Pee plants?

PAP: It was pee plants. This one time, we had a mishap on the tanker. We

were pushing this tanker and we got up there to the top of the hill, and, of course, everybody gets on when you're going downhill. And I'm steering, and this day, I mean, for some reason or another, we went around this curve at the end of the jail, and I turned the damn thing over. And piss was flying all over the place, the guys were jumping. (laughter) Now, in the camp outside there are various places that you could get under water, you know, and take a shower, sorta of a shower anyway. My name was mud. Pee was all over these guys and they headed for those showers. They told me, "You really steered pretty good, didn't you?" Wisecup, the Marine that just passed away here, he was a caricaturist, he drew things. I mean he drew one of these books that probably, "This is Hintock" was the title of it, and it was the guys working on the railroad and things like that. And he drew this picture and I couldn't get him to do it again. He has this caricature of this tanker and going over and this piss flying all over the place and here I am. These guys are getting doused with it. At this time, everything was so serious, you know. I look back on it and I can laugh now like heck. But at the time, you don't laugh at things like that. That's a real mishap. And I mean it was just when they were thinking of dedicating this museum in Changi, in Singapore and this Admiral was over there and I was with him. And I gave him this little story and of chief Papish and his pee cart. He says "That's quite a story, but I

don't know whether the ladies out here are gonna kinda take to it. I'll tell the story , probably some of these gentlemen out here would get a big charge out of it, but I don't know whether the ladies will take it."

MR. COX: But it's a true story.

PAP: Oh, yeh.

MR. COX: The thought crossed my mind. How did you turn the truck back up? Did you all have to get out there and turn the truck back up?

PAP: Oh, yeh.

MR. COX: And did the Japanese mistreat you because you turned it over?

PAP: Yeh, I was the one that got it, not the guys. I guess it's the same in the Japanese army. If a guy's in charge of somethin', or if the guys pull somethin' like that, it's the p.o. that pays for it. They stood me at attention in the guard shack and clobbered me a couple of times.

MR. COX: What did they use?

PAP: Everybody thinks that they slap, but before it gets up there the fist is doubled and they get you. They'll beat you on the shoulders, you know, and all around, but I used to kinda get away with it because I was wearing this medal here. But, I lost the loop to it or the loop wore off.

MR. COX: You're talking about the medal that the nun gave you when you were in school?

PAP: Yeh. That wore off, so I got a piece of leather and I sewed the medal inside the leather and then made holes to wrap around for the chain to go through. And every now and then a Jap would come up to me, and say something to me and you'd have to come to attention, kyotshy and all that. And they were curious about it. Well, of course, it was Singapore, and we didn't have any shirts on or anything. And they'd come up to me and they'd look and they'd kinda grab it and look at me, and I'd kinda look back at 'em, you know, like this, and they'd point to that and I'd say, "Death!"

MR. COX: Indicating that it was related to God.

PAP: Yeh. And they'd leave it alone. They wouldn't even touch it. So I think I got away with it. This is what is called a miraculous medal. The medal has no miraculous, it's who you're praying to, the God and the blessed Virgin. That's who this miraculous medal is how it came into being. St. Catherine LaBoury, I guess, got the message and what it should look like, and what's on the front and what's on the back, and this stands for this and this stands for that.

MR. COX: It wouldn't be hard to believe that that medal that you've been wearing around your neck helped pull you through.

PAP: You know, I think of that every day. But it's just like I said, I came through. I have my faith. I've been a Catholic all my life, and I have these

various prayers that I say. Like I say, my faith in God, my faith in my country, and the faith in myself. I mean, you can't go wrong as long as you have that, and you've gotta have faith. I mean that's it.

MR. COX: You're right there. I'd like to touch one other subject and I know you've got a time limitation. Tell me about the day that you found out the war was over and you were going to be liberated. Can you kinda describe that?

PAP: Oh, yes. I tell you. In the first place, the OSS, as the story goes, now this is stories that I have heard how it happened. But the OSS people parachuted in. First of all, these little Chinese came down the Peninsula there.

MR. COX: You're in Singapore, right?

PAP: Yes. And came down the Peninsula and you couldn't even talk to 'em, they're carrying them guns. And, the guns when they were at attention, the bayonet was up over their head. But they wouldn't even talk to you. So, as the story goes, the OSS parachuted in. First, they dropped the leaflets, and as I understand it, the leaflets were to the Japanese and so they came in and they went to the camp Commandant. Now the Camp Commandant, the Japanese appointed the General on Singapore and he was in charge of the camp as far as the Japanese were concerned. And anything that, if it wasn't

to their liking, they'd let him know.

MR. COX: Was this an Englishman?

PAP: This was an Englishman, an English General that was in Singapore when it fell. So he was under, well, the Japanese who told him what to do and how to do it and what they wanted and how they wanted it done. There was a huge amount of English prisoners of war on Singapore. So, the story goes that this OSS Major went up to the Camp Commandant, the English General, and said, "General, you have Americans in this camp, and tomorrow we want all those Americans out by the air strip ready to go out. He says they will send planes down tomorrow morning. When these planes are here these people will be loaded and taken back to Calcutta. And the story goes that the General says, "Well, Major, here's the list of people that we want to go out of here first." And they were all English officers. And the Major said, "General, we're coming down here to pick up Americans in American planes, and Americans will go out on these planes, in so many words, and the major told him off. And as the story goes, he says, "My god, you English have so many planes up in Calcutta, we don't know why they can't turn 'em loose and come down here and take your people back. But, we've got American planes coming down and Americans will go out on these planes. If there is any people that might be too sick or something like that, it's up to the people that

we're taking out whether they get a seat on the plane or not." They loaded us up and they loaded a couple three civilians, one lady that was awful sick with beriberi, and she came. Everybody felt we should let her on the plane, you know, and so we load up on this plane. Now, bear in mind that this is Papish's first airplane ride ever. The thing about this was, the plane that came down, right on the back of the plane there, they had these cases of K-rations, and I then K-rationed and one of the crews said, "Just a minute." So he went up, and I guess the Captain said let 'em have 'em. So I'm back there, and what they're doing is each guy is going up in the cockpit, and looking at what's happening up there and everything else, and we get down to the last guy, and the last guy is me. He comes out and he says, "Has everybody been up here to the cockpit now?" And everybody's looking around. I say, "I haven't." "Okay", he says. I said "Wait until I put this meat down here, I'll be right with you." So I went up there and as I saw later, on one side of that plane was the engineer and on the other side there was the navigator, and then there was a crew chief, all had their little places up there, and then the pilot. Well, I go past these guys. I get up there and here's these pilots and I was looking and I grabbed that guy and I shook him, and I said "Guide this damn thing." And this guy said, "This guy's been out of it for three and a half years, looks like more." And I says, "Look, I was in that drink once before,

and I don't wanta be in it again." And the guy kind of shook his head, he looked at me, and he said, "Son, have you ever heard of 'Iron Mike'?" I says "I've never heard of 'Iron Mike' and I haven't heard of any Mikes." And he says "We've got this plane and it's on automatic pilot. We'll get you up there in Calcutta." Well, I tell you that's the...

MR. COX: You didn't think anybody was flying the plane, did you?

PAP: Drive this damn thing. All kinds of little things that happened.

MR. COX: Well, after you got to Calcutta, were you there several days before you brought to stateside?

PAP: It was about a week. I can't exactly put the times down on it.

MR. COX: Did they put in the hospital?

PAP: Yeh, we were in the hospital, had various tests, and for me they had these Indian doctors. I and Wisecup both had amoebic dysentery, and some way shape or form before our liberation, the doctors had gotten hold of something called "emitine". Emitine is something that was supposed to be a cure for amoebic dysentery, so there was ten of these shots available, and the doctors got together. And there were two Americans, two Dutch, two English, and two Indians who had this dysentery. The shots were doled out in that fashion and Wisecup and I got the shots, and I have never been bothered with it since. Wisecup said the last time he came and I saw him at

the reunion, he said it never bothered him again.

MR. COX: It worked.

PAP: Yeh. And then the malaria, of course, they fed us these atabrin and stuff, and had tests and then put us on the plane that went to Karachi. We were in Karachi, or landed in Karachi, and they wouldn't let us off the plane until the pilot came back and says, "We're sorry you people won't be able to get off the plane. We'll refuel and be right out of here. This base is quarantined because of polio, we didn't even know anything about polio or anything like that. But we sure didn't want to be sick again. From there we went to Abadan, Persia, Egypt, we landed in Cairo. Then we went up to another place along the coast, and then they took us to Casablanca. We landed in Casablanca. They put us up for the night there in the Anfa Hotel, which they told us was where Roosevelt, Stalin and who was the three?

MR. COX: Churchill?

PAP: Yeh, had the meeting there, showed us right where it was. Well, we weren't too interested in the meeting, we were interested in the food. And so they fed us. From Casablanca, they put us on the plane and we landed in the Azores. The place in the Azores, St. Thomas. We refueled there, and then we took off and we ran into one of the most hellacious storms that I think I've ever seen. And these were my first rides on airplanes! I had a window seat

and I looked out that window one time and lightning was flashing all around and those wings were going like this.

MR. COX: Flapping like a bird, huh?

PAP: This isn't for me, get me down out of here. So we landed in Bermuda, and that whole crew came out of it and the minute they hit the aisle, they went down. They were so exhausted, they were fighting that, just like one of the guys put it, "We couldn't get up above it, we couldn't get out to the side of it, couldn't get out to either side, couldn't get under it, he says so we had to go right through it. We're lucky if we've got a teacup of fuel in any of those tanks." Then they flew us into Washington, DC.

MR. COX: And how did you feel when you landed in the United States of America?

PAP: Oh, God, I tell you it was just something else. Sailors went to the receiving station in Washington, DC. It was the end of the month, and the Captain or the Admiral in charge when he heard he had prisoners of war and all that, he sent the word down. He says, "Okay, I want you to open up the telephone exchange and these sailors will come in here and they will be able to call anywhere as long as they want. It's on Uncle Sam. They can call home if they want to." They turned us loose in that exchange and I called home. It was really somethin' else. And Mom says, "Well, when will you

be home?" I says, "Mom, I can't tell you that right off the bat. We're here in Washington, DC, and they're taking care of us." Being the end of the month, I knew being a storekeeper, that clothing and small stores closed down for inventory and you don't open it up until it's all inventoried. So whoever was in charge of that receiving station says, "I want these POWs put on leave as fast as you can get them on leave." And they told him, "Well, we can't put 'em in uniform." He says, "Send all of these Sailors over to battleship MAX COHEN, and he'll tailor make the uniforms for this bunch, and we'll put 'em on leave right away. Give 'em two dress jumpers, one pair of shoes, two or three hats, skivvies, and a bag." So we got an extra uniform and all that, and they put us on leave, 90 days leave we had coming. I had enough of this air-plane bit, so I went to the railroad station. And at the railroad station, this was quite a thing. I had my money, they had paid us at the receiving station, they said, "We know you've got at least this much coming, so we'll give you \$500 or \$600 dollars." And then he says, "Well, you're going on 90 days leave, make that a thousand." So they paid us a thousand dollars, and then I said, "No planes." So first off, I did try the planes first. I went up to the ticket guy, and I said, "I'd like to get a plane ticket to Denver, Colorado." He said, "Well, son, I don't know whether I can do you any good but I'll try. In the meantime, go out there where these people have their jeeps and have 'em

take you to the other side of the field, to the Military side of the field, and see if there's any planes going out. They could get you probably on a plane right away if there's one going west. So I went over there and I talked to the Sgt., and he said "Doggone it, I wish I could help you but everything is down west of the Mississippi. They are having storms or something and they are not flying." So I went back to the air lines and here's this guy, he's waving, he saw me in my Sailor suit, waving at me, you know, "Come on, come on. We've got a ticket for you. They're out there waiting for you. We'll take you to Chicago and from there we'll get you to Denver." And I said, "Okay, well, thanks a lot." He says, "Go on out there. They're waiting for you." I handed him the money, he gave me a bunch of change. I put it in my pocket, and he gave me my ticket and I went out there. I went aboard that plane and everybody's looking at me, and the Captain comes out. He says, "Ladies and gentlemen, we've been waiting for this young man. He's been a prisoner of war for three and a half years and he wants to get home." Boy, everybody...

MR. COX: That was wonderful! They all clapped.

PAP: Oh, yeh, they didn't mind waiting. As luck would have it, I get on that plane. It's one of these where when you sit down you are looking up, so we get over Tennessee, Ohio, and along there, and this thing is going up and down. I think we hopped all the way. Please Lord get me out of this. I

don't wanna fly anymore. So we landed in Chicago and I went up to the ticket guy. I says, "Here's the rest of my ticket. If you want to keep the money, you can keep the money, if you want to give me my money back, give me my money." He says, "What's the matter?" I says, "Look, I want to make sure I get home. These plane rides are not for me." I went to the Union Station. In the meantime, well, the big thing is when I went to the train station in Washington, DC, to try and get a ticket, this guy, I goes up there my money in my hand and. I said, "I'd like a ticket to Denver, Colorado." He looked at me, he says, "Well, Sailor, I don't think I can get you a ticket to Denver, Colorado, for a couple of weeks. You know there's been a war on." I says, "I know that there has been a war on. I fought a coupla rounds, I landed in a prison camp for three and a half years, and I want to get home. You get me a ticket or else!" And I was pounding on this, I was drawing this crowd and everybody saying "Give it to him, Sailor!" He pulled the window down, so that's when the guy jumped out of the crowd. He says, "I think you've got a better chance of flying." Oh, hell, I'll fly. But then I went through that ticket agent and then over to the military...

MR. COX: So you got your train in Chicago then. Did you take the train from Chicago to Colorado?

PAP: I learned, you know, that there's been a war on, so I walked over with a

big sad story. I said, “Mr. I haven’t been home for five years. Three and a half years I spent as a prisoner of war.” He said, “Stop right there. The City of Denver pulls out of here at four o’clock, and you’re gonna be on it. You’ll be home tomorrow morning, early.” And so he gave me the ticket, and he says, “Now, you be here at four o’clock. That City of Denver pulls out of here at four o’clock, and you’re gonna be on it.” I got home and something else...

MR. COX: You ended up staying in the Navy then?

PAP: Yep.

MR. COX: You retired after how many years, Pap?

PAP: Twenty and a half, twenty and six months.

MR. COX: Well, you’ve had quite an experience during WWII.

PAP: Oh, yeh. Quite an experience.

MR. COX: Well, let me shake your hand. I want to tell you thank you for what you did for me as an American citizen, Pap.

PAP: We just had a job to do. We did it and we just went home. That’s it. And like you say, I stayed in the Navy. I figured this way, if anything was gonna crop up on me healthwise or anything else, the Navy’s gonna take care of me.

MR. COX: And they have.

PAP: They have.

MR. COX: Well, thank you again for allowing this time for the interview,

Pap.

PAP: You're welcome.

MR. COX: Very good luck to you.

Edited copy January 21, 2003 by Eunice Gary