

*Admiral Nimitz Historic Site  
National Museum of the Pacific War*

*Center for Pacific War Studies*

*Fredericksburg, Texas*

Interview with

**Mr. Audie J. Lynch**  
(World War II Naval Officer)  
March 1, 2002

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This is Eddie Graham. I am interviewing Audie J. Lynch at the Hilton Inn on the Campus of the University of Houston in Houston, Texas. Today is March 1, 2002, and this is being done for the National Museum of the Pacific War.

**Mr. Graham:** Mr. Lynch when and where were you born?

**Mr. Lynch:** I was born at Scotland, Arkansas, May 15, 1925.

**Mr. Graham:** What were the name of your parents?

**Mr. Lynch:** My father's name was Elvin Warner Lynch. My mother's name was Viola Mae Stroud-Lynch.

**Mr. Graham:** Do you have any children?

**Mr. Lynch:** I have two children.

**Mr. Graham:** Their names?

**Mr. Lynch:** My son is Alan Lynch. He is here with us today. I have a daughter, Rosemary Lynch Adlong.

**Mr. Graham:** Where did you go to school?

**Mr. Lynch:** I went to high school at Scotland, Arkansas. I graduated from there in 1942.

**Mr. Graham:** Where did you go to college?

**Mr. Lynch:** I started college at Arkansas State Teachers College in Conway, Arkansas. Then I spent a year at Southeast Missouri State Teachers College, and that is while I was in the Navy in the V-12 program. That was a pre-officer training program. Then I came back to Arkansas State Teachers College and finished my degree.

**Mr. Graham:** What year?

**Mr. Lynch:** In 1947. I taught school for a year and then I went to school at

Columbia in New York City and got a Master's Degree. I came back and taught in high school, and went to the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville and got a Doctor of Education Degree. That is the extent of my college.

**Mr. Graham:** Good, it sounds like a very fine one. Where were you and what were you doing December 7, 1941?

**Mr. Lynch:** I had been to church that morning, and I came home. A couple of boys came home with me and had lunch. We were out knocking around, playing, and we came in and my dad had the radio on. He said, "The Japs are bombing Pearl Harbor."

**Mr. Graham:** Let's start now, you chose the U.S. Navy. Why did you pick that particular branch?

**Mr. Lynch:** One of the reasons is that I had two older brothers who were in the Navy. I had one brother who had joined in 1934, and another brother who had joined the Navy in 1937. That interested me in the Navy.

**Mr. Graham:** Tell us about how you ended up joining the Navy.

**Mr. Lynch:** I was in college. My 18<sup>th</sup> birthday was approaching on May 15<sup>th</sup>, and young men were being drafted soon after their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday at that time. I knew that would probably be my last semester in college before I had to go into service. I learned about the V-12 program. Later I learned a qualifying test, academic test, was to be given on our college campus. I signed up to take it. Evidently I passed it. By this time I had reached my 18<sup>th</sup> birthday and the Navy told me to go to my Draft Board and volunteer for induction. You had to volunteer to get into the V-12 program. If you were a draftee they would not let you in. I did that and a month after my 18<sup>th</sup> birthday I was sworn into the United States Navy Reserve. I didn't go on active duty until July 2, 1943.

**Mr. Graham:** Please give us a quick, brief description of what training you had up

until you actually went into active duty.

**Mr. Lynch:**

Just college training.

**Mr. Graham:**

ROTC?

**Mr. Lynch:**

We didn't have any ROTC.

**Mr. Graham:**

Then when did you first go into active duty?

**Mr. Lynch:**

July 2, 1943.

**Mr. Graham:**

Where did you report, and what did you do?

**Mr. Lynch:**

I reported to Southeast Missouri State Teachers College. They had a Navy V-12 unit there. That is where the Navy sent me. I was there one year.

**Mr. Graham:**

Was this training?

**Mr. Lynch:**

It was just regular college work except the Navy had certain courses you had to take.

**Mr. Graham:**

What happened after that?

**Mr. Lynch:**

I was sent to Naval Reserve Midshipman School on the Campus of Notre Dame University.

**Mr. Graham:**

How long were you there?

**Mr. Lynch:**

I was there four months. At the end of that time I was given a commission as an Ensign.

**Mr. Graham:**

What was your first assignment?

**Mr. Lynch:**

My first assignment, and my only assignment from that time on, was to the USS Charles Carroll, APA-28. That was an assault transport, part of the amphibious forces.

**Mr. Graham:**

What were your duties there?

**Mr. Lynch:**

I was a junior watch officer. I worked in decoding. I worked in the CIC, or Combat Information Center. I was a mail censor. As I said, I was a junior division officer and stood junior officer of the deck watches.

**Mr. Graham:**

After you were assigned aboard, what activities took place?

**Mr. Lynch:** I went aboard the ship in Norfolk, Virginia. It was fresh out of the European Theater and had participated in five invasions in the two previous years, so the ship underwent an extensive overhaul in the navy yard at Norfolk. When we were through there, the ship was sent to the Pacific area. After we left the States, my first stop was at Espiritu Santos, New Hebrides, down below the equator. We spent the next 3-4 months in training for the Okinawa invasion.

**Mr. Graham:** What happened after that?

**Mr. Lynch:** We had a lot of dry runs down there. We practiced landings. We were training for the actual invasion. I was actually a boat officer too. Most of the people who were boat officers had special training for that. I did not, so I learned what I knew about being a boat officer during that three months that we were training for the invasion. The ship I was on carried Marines to the invasion points. We had a number of LCVP's, Landing Craft Personnel. These LCVP's would carry thirty fully equipped soldiers or Marines, and then we also had four LCM's, Landing Craft Medium. They would carry about 50 soldiers fully equipped, or it could carry a small tank or large truck. The soldiers would disembark from our ship into these landing craft, and then the landing craft would take them to the beach.

**Mr. Graham:** You've finished your training, what happens now?

**Mr. Lynch:** We took aboard 1,500 Marines and headed for Okinawa. Staging area for the Okinawa invasion was a little place called Ulithi Atoll. Really what it was was a coral island and when we arrived there, there were so many ships there I was never able to see land. We were that far out, but the fleet gathered there and we were told that this was the largest armada, or largest fleet, that had ever been gathered in the history of the world. From that point we took off for Okinawa.

**Mr. Graham:** Tell us what happened after you got to Okinawa.

**Mr. Lynch:** We arrived there the morning of April 1<sup>st</sup> before daylight. I remember very well going topside on the ship. It was still dark and there was tracer fire in the air. The first thing I saw was a Japanese plane shot down. It gave me kind of a funny feeling. I knew we were fighting Japanese, but my thought at the time was, "There is a man in that plane." It hit the water and burned. That was kind of an eery feeling. Later on the ship anchored, probably 7-8 miles out from the beach. As I said, I was a boat officer and I was in one of these LCVP's. We loaded the craft with about 30 of these men with all of their equipment, their backpacks, their rifles, etc., and we circled. The LCVP's went in a circle waiting for a signal to head to the beach. We were to hit the beach in the second wave. The first wave was to hit the beach at 7:30 and we were to hit the beach 2-3 minutes after that. Incidentally, this was on Easter Sunday, April Fools Day, 1945.

**Mr. Graham:** When the men were hitting the beach, did you receive any fire on your ship from the island?

**Mr. Lynch:** The only fire that I saw was mortar fire after we got close to the beach. You could see the shells falling out in the water and exploding, but I never saw them hit anything. Probably the initial invasion of Okinawa was one of the easiest invasions that they ever made. The Japanese evidently knew that we were coming. Well, there were two things: they had a fake invasion on the eastern side of the island the night before and we were landing on the west side. Evidently they had pulled a lot of their defenders to the other side of the island. The Marines and the Army went in without any difficulty. The Japanese commander, the general who was in charge of the troops on Okinawa, withdrew his troops to the southern part of the island. This is where the real fighting took place that ended up being one of the bloodiest battles of the Pacific war. It was probably bloodier than Iwo Jima. I

was not involved in that. That was the Marines and the Army. Well, basically it was the Army. I do remember in that battle our commanding general, General Buckner, was killed. I believe he was the highest ranking officer killed in the Pacific war.

**Mr. Graham:**

How long did you stay there involved in that?

**Mr. Lynch:**

We were offshore there in Okinawa for five days. The first night we were there our ship got underway. There was a high concentration of ships in the area. The only reason I can think of that we got underway was to reduce the concentration of ships there. So we were underway during the night and came back the next morning. One of the big problems the Navy faced at Okinawa was the kamikazes. I remember one night while we were there I was with an LCVP crew, and we patrolled the area around our ship being on the lookout for suicide boats. Evidently the Japanese had small boats that were armed with a warhead and they would just drive them into a ship. They had no concern for their life. It was an honor for them to die for the Emperor. The same was true of the kamikaze pilots. We didn't detect any suicide boats, but we did receive orders over the radio to make smoke as Japanese planes were trying to get to the fleet. We carried a bunch of smoke bombs. We later learned that we were told to make smoke, and it wasn't just our ship, it was ships in the area. We set off these smoke bombs and the fleet was covered with a cloud of smoke. That was to protect them from the Japanese suicide planes. Some did get through that night. I was told that a suicide plane hit an LST. That is a sea-going landing craft. Those are really flat bottom boats. They could go to the beach, let a front ramp down. Tanks and trucks could drive off of them. This ship was loaded with ammunition. You can imagine what happened when the suicide plane hit that. It was completely destroyed. I do recall another suicide

plane hit the battleship New Jersey, but because of the armor that they had it did hardly any damage. It damaged the paint more than anything. We were there for five days. I recall that on the fifth day, as we were leaving, of course we were at general quarters, everybody was at their battle stations and we later learned up to 500 kamikaze planes had attempted to break through and get to the fleet. There was a ring of ships, destroyers and destroyer escorts, aircraft carriers, ringing the island. They were supposed to stop them from coming in and they did stop most of them. I guess that is the sum total of my experiences there.

**Mr. Graham:** What happened after that?

**Mr. Lynch:** We left there to return to San Francisco by way of Saipan. In the San Francisco area we picked up a load of aviation gasoline. It was in barrels. Every hold of our ship was filled with barrels of aviation gasoline and we transported it to Eniwetok. That is just a small dot in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. One of the things that I remember about that is that when we arrived at Eniwetok the ship received orders to return to San Francisco as soon as we unloaded the gasoline. I don't recall how many days it took to load the ship of the gasoline, but you've never seen sailors work like they did unloading that ship. They were anxious to get back to San Francisco. It was a good "liberty" town. They unloaded that ship in about 36 hours. They worked around the clock. They volunteered to do it. They asked for permission to work all night. We got it unloaded and headed back to San Francisco. We spent some time, up until late August of that year, 1945, ferrying troops and supplies westward and we were bringing some back to the States who were being relieved of their duties. We were down south of the Equator, and we were ordered back to San Francisco for some repairs to the ship and some alterations to it in



preparation for the invasion of Japan. I understood that was to be in October of that year. Everybody was a little bit leery of invading Japan because the Japanese had the reputation of fighting to the death. Not many Japanese prisoners were taken. We had just left a little place in the Admiralty Islands called Manus, heading to San Francisco. We started hearing reports about some sort of a super weapon, a super bomb that had been dropped on Japan. It wasn't called an Atomic Bomb, it was called a super weapon. Then a second one was dropped. We later learned that these were Atomic Bombs. We started hearing talk about the possibility of a Japanese surrender. They did surrender later that month. The Emperor accepted the unconditional surrender terms. Everyone was pretty happy about that because they didn't relish the idea of invading Japan. I recall that after the war many people criticized President Truman for allowing the dropping of the Atomic Bomb because of the large number of deaths, injuries, etc, but I don't think you could find a sailor, or a Marine, out there who was opposed to it. They estimated that if we had to invade Japan the United States would suffer at least a million casualties and there would be a lot more Japanese killed. So they were happy it was dropped, and I was one of those that was happy. I couldn't criticize the President for allowing it to be dropped.

**Mr. Graham:**

Was that basically about all of the action that you saw?

**Mr. Lynch:**

Yes. After the Japanese surrendered, we made several round trips across the Pacific bringing troops back to the States who were going to be separated from the service. We carried supplies to the west. We made a couple of trips to Japan, China, and the Phillipines. We could carry 1,500 troops. Our ship was a small troop transport, but we could carry 1,500. I guess we made 4-5 round trips across the Pacific bringing troops back to the States after the war was over.

**Mr. Graham:** How did you finish out your career with the Navy as far as World War II is concerned?

**Mr. Lynch:** As I said, our time was spent ferrying troops back. My last trip was to Shanghai, China. This was kind of an unusual experience because we were going to be carrying civilians to China. Some of these were Chinese people. Some were American. For example, we had one man on the ship, he and his family, and he was going to be Counsel in one of the Chinese cities. So we were carrying civilians, and that was an interesting trip. I got acquainted with one Chinese family, a lady who had two small children, and everybody fell in love with those two little children. Her husband was already over there and she was going to meet him. Also, during this trip, for the first time, we had a woman who was a member of our complement. Since we were carrying civilians, women and children, our skipper requested that a female nurse be assigned to the ship. That is the only time I had the pleasure of serving with a woman. After that trip I was separated from the Carroll and sent to Millington, Tennessee. There is a Naval Air Station there and I was separated from the service.

**Mr. Graham:** Let's go back. I have two questions I would like to ask you. You had quite a few experiences. Since then, do you recall any particular happening, experiences, etc., that still stick in your mind?

**Mr. Lynch:** Yes. One experience I had was at the Okinawa invasion. I had the privilege of meeting Ernie Pyle, famous war correspondent. He was on our ship. I was in charge of the LCVP that carried him to the beach on the fourth day of the invasion. He had gone over earlier and then came back to the ship to do his writing and transmitting the stories back to the States. On April 4, the fourth day of the invasion, he left the ship for good. I had the privilege of being in charge of the LCVP that took him ashore. The day before he had given me an 8 X

10 autographed picture, which I still treasure. I wouldn't take anything for it. Pyle was killed about ten days later by a Japanese sniper.

**Mr. Graham:** That is a precious memento.

**Mr. Lynch:** That was one of the most treasured mementoes that I have from the war. Lots of interesting experiences.

**Mr. Graham:** Which one stands out most in your mind?

**Mr. Lynch:** One of the things that I observed in both Japan and China was the apparent lack of food. I can remember being in China. The ship would discharge its garbage into containers that were on the pier and the Chinese garbage collectors would come and pick it up. When they picked it up they went through it with a fine tooth comb. They would get meat bones, rotten oranges, things that you wouldn't think about saving, and evidently they were taking that home before they put it in the truck with the other garbage. In Japan – the first time I was in Japan was at Sasebo, Japan. We were tying up at a pier and some sailor threw a cigarette butt over. Those Japanese men literally fought for that cigarette butt. This led to others being thrown to the pier. I never saw them smoke one. They would take the tobacco out of that cigarette butt. Most of them carried a little sack, and they would put that tobacco in the sack, which I assumed they would use later. I did learn later that cigarettes were as good as money over there, which was against regulations to use it that way. I do recall a couple of officers on the ship, friends of mine, they were caught trading cigarettes for goods. They were picked up. Everybody wondered what was going to happen to them, but I guess the only thing that happened to them is that they were restricted to quarters for a period of time. I don't recall how long. They couldn't leave their rooms. We even brought their food to them.

**Mr. Graham:** Let's go to the second question. From what you've said, you've come across a lot of different, interesting people and personalities. Are there any particular people that still stand out in your mind that you think about quite a bit, and if so, why?

**Mr. Lynch:** I remember being in Tientsin, China. It has a different name now and I can't pronounce the name, but at that time it was Tientsin, China. It was upriver from where our ship was anchored. We were going to spend the night up there. We went to a hotel that had been recommended as being all right for service personnel to stay. We went to the desk and the clerk says, "I'm sorry, we don't have any rooms available, but come back in an hour and I'll see if I can help you." This was a white man, he was not a Chinese. We later learned he was Russian. They called him white Russian. He had to leave Russia in 1918. So we went back an hour later and he said, "Well, come with me." We went with him to his apartment. He had a large apartment upstairs in a building and he showed us the facilities he had there. There were six of us. He had three double beds and he said that we could spend the night there and he would give us breakfast for \$2 each. We were impressed with that because it was a nice, clean apartment. We met his wife and two children. They were very pleasant people to deal with. We agreed to take it. We left to see the town, came back about 9:30 or 10 o'clock that night. He was waiting up for us. We talked for a while, went to bed, got up the next morning smelling the coffee and the bacon. The lady served us as good a breakfast as we could have had back in San Francisco – bacon, eggs, jams, jellies, homemade bread. It was delicious. We visited with them for an hour or so. The man had to go on to work. We hung around for 30 or 40 minutes after he left. We decided that \$2 was a small price to pay for what we had received. So we decided to

throw in an extra dollar each and we gave our money to one of the fellows and he was going to pay the lady, which he did. So we left to go downstairs to leave. She caught us before we got to the front door. She told us that we had paid too much. We told her that they had been very nice to us and we appreciated it very much, and we wanted her to have the extra money. She says, "Under no conditions can I take more than the \$2 that we agreed to." That was very impressive to me.

**Mr. Graham:** Very unusual person.

**Mr. Lynch:** Very unusual person and that was impressive to me and to the other fellows.

**Mr. Graham:** Is there anything else that you would like to add that we have missed that still stands out in your mind?

**Mr. Lynch:** One of the things that stands out in my mind – Shanghai, China. It is an inland city. It is on a river and to reach Shanghai you had to go up the Yangtze River for just a few miles and then turn into a river called the Wangpu. This was a very short river. It ran from the Yangtze, through Shanghai, and then ran back out into the ocean somewhere down below Shanghai, not very far. One of the things that was unusual about that, the river flowed in different directions at different times of the day. It was affected by the tides. So, one part of the day the river would flow north, and the other part of the day it would be flowing south. The water could be pretty swift. That was impressive, and another thing about being in Shanghai was the large number of people who lived in little boats out on the river. Someone stated that if the river dried up, there would be a million people without a home because they lived in those boats on the water. I don't see how a family of four or five people could live on one of those little boats.

**Mr. Graham:** Is there anything else that you would like to add?

**Mr. Lynch:** I don't think of anything else.

**Mr. Graham:** On behalf of the National Museum of the Pacific War, the Admiral Nimitz Museum, we want to thank you for your interesting story and I think there are going to be a lot of people who can benefit from it and I think when you get it back and look at it, you are going to be surprised.

**Mr. Lynch:** Well, I hope it will be helpful to someone. It has been my pleasure to be a part of it.

**Mr. Graham:** Thank you very much.

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