

ORAL INTERVIEW

JOHN KIDD

This is William G. Cox and today is March the 2nd, year 2002. I'm doing an oral history this morning for the National Museum of the Pacific War located in Fredericksburg, Texas. This oral history is being done in the Hilton University Hotel, Houston, Texas, for the POWs that were associated with the USS HOUSTON. This morning I am visiting with Mr. John F. Kidd who was on Admiral Hart's staff. "Good morning, Mr. Kidd. How are you today?"

MR. KIDD: Fine, sir, thank you.

MR. COX: Would you tell us a little bit about where you were born, where you went to school, and so on?

MR. KIDD: Be happy to. I was born in Tyler, Texas. My Father's name was Byron Frost Kidd and my Mother's maiden name was Ruby Belle Johnson, both residents of Tyler. And I was born in Tyler February the 10th, 1922. My Father and Mother were separated and divorced. At the age of two, I was moved to Houston and we lived with her brother here in Houston. He was working on the railroad as a mailman and we lived here in Houston. And she worked at a store here in Houston. She met my stepfather who was also from Tyler, and at the time was in dental school and he graduated and they later were married. So I lived here in Houston most of my life until I decided to move up with my grandparents in Tyler, and that's what I did. My stepfather was a dentist in Houston, Texas, by the name of Dr. William Hill. He practiced dentistry for some sixty years, quite prominent, was the president of the Dental Association State of Texas, etc. And I might

add, one of the best dentists I've ever had. I went to school here in Houston all my life, and then I went to Tyler in 1938, age of 16. I got permission from my Mother to enlist in the Navy, against her objections. She finally consented, since I wasn't living with her anymore in Houston, for me to go into the Navy. I had to have an affidavit from her saying I was 17 and not 16, keeping in mind I hadn't even shaved yet. I went over to Marshall, Texas, to enlist in the Navy and took their tests, etc., and fortunately passed the tests for enlistment and got into the Navy and it took over a year to get into the Navy. In fact, when I went into the Navy, I was 17, and I could have enlisted at the time for three years and a half and been eligible for discharge. But they changed the law when I got ready for enlistment. The minimum time you could sign up for if you were over 17, which I officially was due to a document I gave 'em I was eighteen, then I could only sign up a minimum of six years. So I had to sign up for six years. I was one of the first that signed that long-term contract for six years. Went to San Diego and boot camp and while in boot camp Hitler invaded Poland. And I started immediately thinking, aha, the safest place for me is on the west coast, not on the east coast, so I'll have to stay on the west coast. So I knew a fellow that was aboard the USS NEVADA, which was a battleship. He was from Tyler. His name was Gilmer Hefner. Ole Gilmer and I were pretty good friends, passing acquaintances, so to speak, and I told them that he was my cousin. Well, I guess he was. If you had gone back far enough in history, we probably were related somewhere along the line. His family had homesteaded Tyler and so had mine, so consequently they had been friends for many years. So I told the Navy that I wanted to go to the NEVADA because I could be with my cousin. So they had that policy in effect at that time so I was the only man out of the complete training camp and Navy recruiting department that went to the

NEVADA, one man. So I got aboard the NEVADA, and I had more time to do than anybody else on that darn ship. The first thing, I got in trouble with one of the chiefs there, chief petty officer, he asked me something and I said “Yes, sir and no, sir” and he wanted to know if I was a smart ass. And I said, “No, sir.” And he said you don’t have to say “sir” to me. I said, “Well, sir, I was raised where you always say “sir” to your elders.” And he thought I was being smart. I almost got in serious trouble real quick, but I finally made him believe that I was telling the truth. That was the truth. So consequently I was placed in the First Division and I couldn’t say that I liked that duty because of the fact that the First Division was the deck division. You had to get up early in the morning and go out there barefooted and with a holey stone and sand and you holey-stoned the teakwood decks. In Long Beach, California, early in the morning it’s cold! And a sucker standing up there with a four-inch fire hose pouring cold salt water on your feet while you’re holey-stoning, it’ll freeze you to death. I decided that I had to get out of that tour of duty. So after being on the NEVADA there for approximately a year, it wasn’t a year either, about six months, I was assigned to number one gun turret, and we were going to go out for gunnery practice. I happened to notice on the bulletin board a notice that they were wanting volunteers for the Asiatic Fleet. I asked a couple of guys, “Where in the world is the Asiatic Fleet?” And, of course, some of the comic answers I got, “Well, dummy, it’s in Asia.” So I went to the personnel office and got a form and filled it out to be transferred to the Asiatic Fleet. Now, thinking Hitler’s at war in Europe, I’m going to China then I’m a long way away from him and I don’t have to worry about any war. So I take it up to my division officer and give it to him and he disapproves it. I couldn’t understand that and I asked him why. He said, “Well, because you’re in a position and we’re going out to

gunnery practice, and to lose you may create a problem for our gunnery drill. And I thought, well, that's a hell of a note. So I mulled that over in my mind and talked to Gilmer about it, and Gilmer said, "Tell you what you do. Put in a request for captain's mast. I said, "Okay, I'll do that." So before I went down to the personnel officer again to get a form to fill out for captain's mast, I thought well, why don't I just go up and see the captain now. So, keeping in mind at that time I was a Seaman 2nd. There's only one step below a Seaman 2nd, and that's an apprentice seaman. I was making a total of \$36.00 a month. So I go up to officers' country which is just adjacent to the 1st Division quarters. And I opened the door and walked into officers' country, and I walked right up to where the skipper's quarters were, who was a four-striper, mind you. This Marine hollered "Halt!" And I looked up and of course he's armed, and I looked up and he's standing there, and he says, "What are you doing up here?" I said, "I'm here to see the Captain." Well, his doorway was open but the drapes were pulled across it, and he could hear the conversation. He said, "What do you want to see the Captain for?" I said, "Well, I want to talk to him because I want to go to the Asiatic Fleet." And so the Captain heard all of this, and he said, "What's going on out there? Bring that man in here." And so the Marine guard opened back the drape and I walked through into the Captain's quarters. Here sat this four striper. He says, "Lad, what can I do to help you?" And I said, "Well, I'd like to go to the Asiatic Fleet." He said, "Well, put in a request." I said, "I did and it was disapproved." "Who disapproved it?" I said, "The Division officer." He says, "What reason?" I told him and he says, "Well, you got your request with you? And I says, "Yes, Sir." I handed it to him and he scratched his name out and wrote over it "approved" and wrote his name, Rockwell. And I said, "Well, thank you very much, Captain." He says, "Now you go

down to personnel and get this processed right away because we are gonna be getting under way tomorrow morning and you need to get off this ship.” I said, “Aye, aye, Sir.” So I go down to personnel office and they cut my orders. I go down and pack my sea bag and I’m out of there at sundown on leave going to Tyler, Texas, before I go to the Orient. So I hitchhiked back to Tyler, Texas. And I arrived in Tyler, Texas, and spend a week there with my Grandparents and my Father and to see my Mother, she comes up from Houston. And it was time for me then to go catch my ship in San Francisco. Back in those days they had these share expense deals where people would be driving out west somewhere and they would share expenses. You could ride with ’em and pay part of the cost of them going out there. So I got a guy that was going out to San Francisco. I’m sorry, to Los Angeles. So my Dad took me up to Dallas to meet with him. I got with him in his car and helped drive out to Los Angeles. I get to Los Angeles, and I have an Aunt and Uncle there, so I had seen them before and visited them before while on liberty. So I went to see ’em. I told them that I had to go on up to San Francisco, so I caught a bus and went to San Francisco because my specific orders said I should meet the USS CANOPUS at pier seven on a certain date. I got to San Francisco, got off the bus, went down to pier seven, looked and there was no CANOPUS anywhere. I don’t know where in hell to go. So I thought, well, something’s wrong. Instead of going to the recruiting station in San Francisco, I get back on the bus and go back to Los Angeles. I called my Uncle and said, “What do I do now?” And he says, “Well, hell, let’s go down to the recruiting station”, and so we did. And they were very sympathetic about the whole deal, said well there was a screw-up some way. They found out that the CANOPUS was up in, I’m sorry, it wasn’t the CANOPUS, it was the HENDERSON. The HENDERSON was up in dry dock and just got completed

in dry dock and would be down at pier seven in three days. So I was to go back up to San Francisco and get on the HENDERSON. Well, when I get back to San Francisco and boarded the HENDERSON, the first thing happened to me, I'm under arrest for being AWOL. However, I had been there, and so the captain realized that it wasn't really my fault. I was just inexperienced and didn't know what to do, so I went back to the closest place I knew of someone who could help me. So consequently he said, "All right, you're restricted aboard ship as long as we remain here in San Francisco", which was three days. And he said "That's it. It will not appear in your record, but if you do this again, you look behind you over there, son, and you'll see Alcatraz. That's where you'll end up." So I stayed aboard ship until I got to Honolulu and then I went ashore on liberty. When I got to Manila, I was transferred to USS BLACKHAWK. And I was still in the First Division. As soon as I got aboard the BLACKHAWK, dang, there went that scrubbing again. And I said "Man, this has gotta cease." So we were up on the quarter deck one morning, and we would always be up there by six o'clock in the morning before chow. I'm up there holey-stoning the hell out of this quarter deck along with the rest of the gang. This guy with a hose is washing the sand off all of 'em and what have you. I look around and in the portholes I could see into this office, and here were a bunch of yardbirds sleeping on the desk in there. They had these desks built against the bulkhead and went all the way around the office. And they'd put their bunk, their bedding, the mattress up on top of the desk at night and slept on the desk, and then roll the mattress up and store the mattress away and went to work every day at that same desk. They're in there sleeping and I'm out there getting my feet wet. So I thought, boy, that would be a good job. Now, I'd like that. So they had a chief in charge and when the old chief finally came up from the chief

quarters and held reveille around there, I went over and asked him, I said, "Chief, do you need any help?" He said, "Yeh, we do." He says, "Can you type?" I said, "Yes sir, I can type." He says, "Good. What's your name?" And I told him and he said, "I'll get you transferred." So the next day I had orders to report in to Comdesron 29 flag office as a yeoman striker, and that's the way I started my career as a yeoman in the Navy right there aboard the BLACKHAWK. Then we left and went to China, toured all of China, and Chingwangtao, Chefoo. We tied up all summer long in Chefoo. That's where we spent the summer. The BLACKHAWK was Flag Off. for the Destroyers Squadrons. Liberty was from 1:00 o'clock in the afternoon until 9:00 o'clock at night. You've never in your life seen people drink so much booze as a bunch of sailors when they're ashore and they've got that short time for liberty. They had taxi dances there, white Russian girls would come in there with big fifteen-piece orchestras, etc. The exchange was 21 dollars in their money to one dollar in our money, and taxi dances cost you one of their dollars. You'd get to dance with a gal. And a cocktail cost two dollars, so basically that's ten cents. That's the reason why it flowed so well. Then when we finished there, we only had one episode there. Keeping in mind China was still fighting the Japs and the Japs were fighting the Chinamen. The Japs had control of all of the coastline of China at that time, and this was in 1940. We would go ashore. We had to pass through all of the Japanese garrison. They were set up at the waterfront and dock area with the sentries armed to the hilt. When we'd come back to dock to go back aboard ship at the dock there, the ships were anchored out in the bay there. We would get in the motor launch and go out to our ship. This one chief was intoxicated, and he decided he would fix one of these Jap sentries up. The Jap was in his pillbox there, surrounded with sand bags, The chief hops up on there and

urinates on this Jap guard. Well, of course, that just created all kinds of international situations there. The Japanese commander came out to the ship and complained and the whole bit, and of course, being in the commodore's office, I knew all that was going on and everything. Anyway, this chief was given a court martial and sent back to the US. So he got out of there and that winter we went back down into Manila and back down to Subic Bay, that was where you spent most of the time when you weren't on maneuvers. You'd sit down there and the destroyers would tie up to the tender for repairs, etc. And so we had a guy in there, a yeoman, he was a sharp man, and he got transferred over to Admiral Hart's office. When he got to Admiral Hart's office, they were looking for more help, and he said, "Well, I know this yeoman over there and I'll see if he wants to come over." He came out to the ship and talked to me. He says, "Now, man, this is plush duty." I said, "What do you mean?" He says, "Well, you're living ashore, you're eating civilian food three times a day paid for by the Navy, you're living in civilian quarters paid for by the Navy, and you're working in the office downtown at the Marsman Building. You can't beat it. Every night liberty, no sea duty, nothing. Well, it's good." So I said, "I'll go." So I got orders cut to report in to the commander in chief's office in Manila, which I did, got my room set up at the hotel, and eatin' in this Chinese restaurant three meals a day. They had the contract to feed us, and they didn't pay you per diem back in those days. They made that type of a deal and that's the way you ate. He was right. The food was excellent. So I went in there and I was the file yeoman for awhile, and then I was advanced and put on the radio. We had radio communications, verbal communications. Anything that was of urgency that had to have the word passed immediately, we used just strictly open air communication, radio. We had the word, in fact, I was awakened, you

know, were you ever in the Philippines?

MR. COX: No, sir.

MR. KIDD: Well, they have a delicacy, the Philipinos called it a delicacy, I sure as hell didn't. No American would. They call 'em belutes. You know what a belute is?

MR. COX: I'm not sure.

MR. KIDD: It's an egg that is fermented, and I call 'em rotten but they call 'em fermented. It's in the shell and they store it until it fermented and then they peck a hole in the bottom of it and suck the contents out. Yuck! But they sell this on the open street, and the sonabitch walks along there and hollers, "Belutes, belutes, belutes." And they'd come by where the hotel was, and half the time it would be waking us up in the morning. We didn't need to set an alarm clock because that sucker would come by selling belutes. So instead of him hollering belutes, well, he was hollering Honolulu bomb, Honolulu bomb. And that's what I woke up to. I ran out on the balcony there in my shorts and hollered down to him to throw up a paper. He threw up a paper and I threw him some money down, 'cause I was on the second floor. He threw the paper up, and the headlines about three inches tall said, "Honolulu bombed by the Japanese." That was the first word we had of it. Now, of course, people on duty at the office knew about it but they were still on duty. But they hadn't bothered to call the hotel and tell us. And so, of course, we got dressed immediately and went down to the office and started a watch system going in and ships were being dispatched already when we got there and everything. And Admiral Hart was there in the office by the time we got down there because they had notified him immediately. So we were on a watch basis there, and then they bombed Caveti. We had a captain there, and I don't remember his name, but he told us to go out and commandeer

cars because we had to haul those wounded men that would be coming over by motor launch from Caveti to the hospital. We had a dispatch driver there that had a motorcycle with a sidecar, so I got in the sidecar, and we went charging down Bowie Boulevard. I spotted this 1940 Ford four-door sedan. We pulled him over, gave him a receipt for his car, and kicked his butt out, took his car. And we went down to the dock and waited the arrival of the first motor launch. And they came in and it was crimson in color from the blood. And we got the guys some of them out of there and put in the car and took them to the hospital. That's what we were using was civilian cars. There wasn't enough ambulances to go around. That was really the first taste that I had of what the war could do to someone. We had watched this bombing from upstairs from the office windows. We could look out and see the planes drop their load on Caveti across the bay from us. We got pretty well lined-out there to stand our watches, etc., and Admiral Hart had requested permission to bomb Formosa, which was disapproved by Mac Arthur. This is after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, mind you, and the bombing of Caveti. They still wouldn't allow the Navy to bomb Formosa.

MR. COX: Where the Japanese were?

MR. KIDD: Where the Japs were. Where their planes were operating out of. So consequently, we got a message then that they had a flotilla of ships landing troops on the northern shores of Luzon, the island Manila is on. What we wanted to do is to send our submarines up there to attack these landing ships. Of course, at that time Mac Arthur had already been made supreme commander. He was number one boy, and consequently Admiral Hart was junior to him. So Hart requested authority to send the submarines up and attack the landing force. Disapproved. We will allow them to land, and then we

will annihilate them was the exact return that we got on the message. And that didn't make sense, but his theory was, so we were explained later, where they were landing there wasn't any good roads to transport any of the equipment or anything over. But you know what they did, they disassembled all of their heavy stuff, packed it over themselves, and then reassembled it on the other side of the damn mountains and launched their attack.

MR. COX: On good roads.

MR. KIDD: On good roads, absolutely! So we were allowed later to send up the submarines and we had a couple of 'em sunk up there. That basically was the method it was handled. Then on December the 25th, Christmas day, Mac Arthur declared Manila an open city. I was dispatched into Bataan. I was the junior man in the department there, and I was sent into Bataan at Mariveles, and I was taken down by a PT boat. I don't know if it was the same one that took Mac Arthur out later or not, I have no idea. But he took me down there and I went into Mariveles. I was supposed to be over there to drive Commander Cheek, who was the intelligence officer on Hart's staff, for him to come over for his naval inspections of the operations in Bataan. Well, we got to Mariveles which used to be a military base, and it was as flat as any floor. There wasn't a building standing anywhere, they were blown completely apart. Nothing standing. Over to the right, camouflaged, looking inland to the right side of the mountain was the USS CANOPUS that was tied up there. That's a submarine tender, and it was tied up and all camouflaged, you could hardly tell it was a ship. From the air, I'm sure you couldn't because they never really bombed it. So I know they didn't know it was there. I asked this jg that was the skipper of the PT boat, "Where am I supposed to report? Who am I supposed to report to?" He said, "Hell, find somebody." I said, "Where am I gonna find 'em?" He said, "Get out and look!

There's gotta be some people out there somewhere." I said, "Oh, okay." So sure enough I found the shore patrol. They had been in Manila and evacuated, and had a department of their own in this open city. So I went up there and they were bivouacked in the storm culvert underneath the road that dead-ended into the side of the mountain around from the CANOPUS. I said, "Hey, you need another hand?" They said, "Sure, hell yes, come on!" And I knew some of the guys anyway, having been stationed there. So I stayed there with them and we slept there in that damn culvert. A Japanese dive bomber came in there one time, tried to bomb us cause we had some vehicles parked at dead end of the road. He dive bombed in there and he dropped a big one, and luckily it hit in the creek bed that ran down from the side of the mountain there. It blew a hole that you could put this room in ,twice as big as this room, in that soft mud and stuff and had a lot of green water in it after it blew a hole there, but didn't hurt anything other than that it just shook us up a little bit. We were shooting at him and I said, "Well, we can claim that one." The Lt. said, "No, you can't claim that one either. He just went into the side of the mountain." I said, "But the reason he hit the side of the mountain, we hit him with the damn guns that we were shooting at him with." But we didn't get any credit at shooting him down. Anyway, we laughed about it. He did, he smacked the side of the mountain and blew up. We didn't have any food, period, no water and it was critical. So, consequently, we were eating monkeys, shooting 'em out of the trees and cooking 'em. We got a hind quarter of a Calvary horse that they had slaughtered that they were eating. We got the hind quarter of that and we roasted some of that over open fire. That's what we were eating. This was about the 26th of December, and by the 30th, we knew we had to do something or we were going to starve to death. We had three straight-bodied trucks. And the Lt., E. N. Little

was his name, I understand he was later tried by general court martial when he got back to the US and kicked out of the Navy. But that's all hearsay so I don't know that to be factual. Anyway, he asked for volunteers to go back into Manila by road in the trucks and bring us out some supplies, since we didn't have any. So I was dumb enough to volunteer again and took one of the trucks. And being junior man, I was following these other two trucks, and I got hit by a tank just as I got across the bridge over on Bataan. I got across this bridge and just as I got the front end off, he clipped the very back section of my truck and knocked a few pieces of the bed off of it back there. It was wood, but it didn't hurt it bad, jarred the hell out of it. Nobody had any lights on, you couldn't run with lights on because the damn planes would shoot at you. So you're running in the dark with no lights, he didn't see me and I didn't see him until he was right up on me, and bang that was it.

MR. COX: Was this a Japanese or US tank?

MR. KIDD: A US tank. So we go on down the road and we get into Manila. But the Lt. said, "Now you men you've got to remember that Manila is an open city, and when you get into the outskirts of Manila, you're going to see a guard shack there. You're gonna have to stop there and you have to turn in your firearms. You cannot take those firearms into an open city. That's against international law." So the Lt. walked on away. I turned around and asked this 1st. class petty officer there, boatswain mate, I said, "Hey, Bos'un, are you gonna turn in your guns to somebody you don't know at a guard shack?" He looked at me and says, "Hell, no!" I said, "Well, I'm not either." He said, "I didn't expect you to. Forget it." There was no guard shack anyway. There wasn't anybody there to take the arms if you wanted to turn 'em in. I never heard of that anyway, but we went in. We got in, an uneventful trip, we made it in there. We went down to the Navy cold storage and

they loaded those three trucks down with everything they could stack on 'em. We didn't have any springs left. It was riding right down on the axle. You hit a bump it didn't bounce, it just bumped, that was it. And we started back out and as we were leaving the city that next day, New Year's day, the Japanese were marching in on the other street, one block over. We could see 'em. We were going out of town, they were coming into town. Luckily, we got by 'em without being shot at or anything, because it said USN on the doors of the damn trucks, and they were all painted that Navy color, gray. So we headed back out and as we got out to San Fernando, the San Fernando River out there, the Japanese tanks were up on the hillside out from the city and had been shelling the city. They saw the three trucks coming along and they started trying to hit us. We got there and we saw these guys running back and forth on the bridge, and the lead truck stopped and asked if it was alright for us to cross, and they said "Hell, yes! Get across, get across." So we got across because they were gonna blow up the damn bridge. We liked not to made it, but we got across the bridge and we got over into San Fernando after dark. So we stopped. We opened a can of v

Vienna sausage and some pork and beans and a loaf of bread and sat there and ate that meal. Then we drove back to our bivouac down there. We gave some of the food to the CANOPUS and we kept some of it. We stayed there and I hauled military troops all around in Bataan, Army. I didn't see any combat other than gettin' shot at, strafed and stuff like that. But I wasn't in the front lines fightin'. One particular instance, I picked up a bunch of troops. They were moving 'em. I don't know who they were or what they were, I just went up and picked 'em up. I had this Lt. sitting in the cab with me and we took 'em down south of Mariveles on this mountain. They had gone in there with a

bulldozer and cleared the trees out to make a road up there. You know how they normally do in the mountains, they run you around the mountain and go up like this, you know, a gradual upgrade. This road just went straight up the mountain. I put it in the lowest gear that was on that damn thing, first gear, and started up that mountain. The bulldozer just cleared a damn path is all that happened, it wasn't a road,. And I got up as high as it would go and it would just sit there and spin. It wouldn't go any higher. And I told the Lt., "You're going to have to unload your men, this is as high as this dude's gonna go, it's not gonna go any higher." He says, "Okay." I said, "Would you help me back this thing around?" Because there was bushes, trees and everything and this thing wasn't any wider than this room that they cleared with the bulldozer. He says, "Hell, just put it in neutral and take your foot off the brake, it'll get down." So he laughed, and said, "Sure, I'll help you." Anyway, the guy helped me back into the brush to get it turned around and head back down. I got out of there. And I've often wondered what happened to those men, if they made it through the surrender and got out of there and got with the guerillas, or if they were captured.

MR. COX: They were Army men?

MR. KIDD: They were Army men. See, they had a whole group of aviators and their support personnel that came over in October/November before the war started. Their planes were on the transport coming behind them which was diverted and sent into Australia. And they were there and they made infantrymen out of all of 'em.

MR. COX: So they were isolated.

MR. KIDD: They were isolated, they had nothing to fly. We didn't have any planes left because they lined them all up to protect them from sabotage on the Clark field and the

bombers came in and got 'em all at one time. That was the end of that. There wasn't any planes.

MR. COX: Just like at Pearl.

MR. KIDD: Yeh, absolutely, same identical thing. So consequently they made infantrymen out of all these people. Well, hell, here I am as an infantryman, too. I'm out there in the boondocks, and I'm a damn clerk in an office. I don't know anything about infantry. I don't know anything about how to engage the enemy. I know how to hunt. I was a damn good shot, so I wasn't afraid about that, but that plane coming over when I'm going down the road driving, that sonofabitch coming down and strafing you, that's something else. There's no way you're going to do anything about that but try to get out of his way. So, anyway, we didn't have any food but we had the availability of dynamite and stuff like that out of the Navy tunnel there. And we would make our own grenades out of number two soup cans. And we'd pack anything we'd get, even including rock, in there if we didn't have any metal. And then pour hot tar over the top of it and stick a three-inch fuse down in it with a cap on it. You light that sucker, you had better get rid of it 'cause it's gonna go off pdq. They'd throw a grenade back at you if you threw a grenade at 'em. All of that stuff was WWI stuff and it wasn't worth a toot. A lot of it wouldn't even explode, the grenades wouldn't. So we made some of our own, but we also used 'em for fishin'. We got some fresh fish that way. So we'd light the fuse, and, just before it went off, we'd throw it over in the drink. She'd blow and the fish would come to the surface and we'd get 'em. Other than that, we were doing pretty fair. And then the big push came and Bataan was falling. We knew it, so we had to be evacuated out of there and we were the evacuees. We were gonna do the evacuating ourselves. We had to get rid of the

munitions that were in the Navy tunnel. They had a Lt., wasn't our Lt., there was another Lt. that had been an engineer. And they had commissioned him at the outbreak of the war as a full Lt. He came up and told us how many boxes of this dynamite that we'd been using for fishing and stuff, to stack in the entranceway of this tunnel to blow it up. Now this thing was in granite, so you know how tough and hard granite is. So we put, I forget how many cases of that dynamite, and this stuff is so volatile that the nitro is leaking out of it. It's that old. We're fixing to stack all that up there and put the fuse to it, run the fuse part way down the hillside because this was up high, and we'd light it and we'd take off for the dock area because we had a motorlaunch down there. We already drove our trucks off into the drink, off the end of the pier. So we were gonna take the motorlaunch and go to Corregidor. Well, when that sucker blew, it blew everything and all of that dynamite back in that tunnel, way back in there, it ignited. Of course, it was so volatile, that's all it took. That concussion set it off and that was it.

MR. COX: That was what you wanted to do.

MR. KIDD: Yeh. Well, we didn't know that was what was going to happen, though, because it blew the whole top of that mountain off. And it blew boulders bigger than automobiles miles to sea, and it blew us completely flat, just knocked us flat when it went off. We got in the motorlaunch and rocks falling. We were luckier than all get out. It didn't hurt us at all, just scared the devil out of us. We got in the motor-launch and took off for Corregidor. We got over to Corregidor. I thought, well, now, here I'm going out to Monkey Point. That's where my guys are from our Flag office. Well I go out to Monkey Point and they tell me it is full. They can't take me. Have you ever felt like you wasn't wanted anywhere? That's the way I felt. So, I said, "Okay. Where do I go?"

They said, "Report into Queen's Tunnel." So I go down to Queen's Tunnel which is the Navy tunnel, next door to Malinta Tunnel, Army tunnel. Malinta's Tunnel is big enough you could drive in, they had two streetcar tracks through it and a streetcar ran through it. So consequently, I go into Queen's Tunnel and they told me, "No, all of the survivors are to report topside." Now Corregidor has three mountains on it, a small one out Monkey Point, Malinta Hill they call it, that's where the tunnels were located, and then topside which is where the batteries were located up there on top. They had the howitzers and all that artillery up there. We were to report to topside and report into the Fourth Marine Naval Reserve Battalion. I said, "Wait a minute. wait a minute! Dammit I'm not a Marine and I'm not in the Naval Reserve, I'm in the USN." "We know that. That's just the name of the unit you're reporting to, dummy. Get up there and you report to Captain Moore." Well, of course, to me a captain hadn't been in an admiral's office, and we had captains running everywhere, four stripes, man, that's a captain in the Navy. This ended up to be a captain in the Army, Captain Moore, one nice fellow. He was really a nice guy. I go up there and I said, "I don't know what I'm doing here, Captain, but they told me to report to you up here." He says, "Well, you're here to defend Corregidor when the Japs land."

I said, "Oh." "Yeh, there's a whole bunch of you around here." I said, "Well, where do we go?" You know, I am standing in the graveled street on the side of the mountain almost right up to the top of the mountain lacking about 25 feet from our circle, just turn and you'd be up on top of the mountain. I could look over and see Bataan Peninsula across the bay. I says, "Where are we supposed to go?" He says, "Right here, this is it. You gotta mess kit?" I said "Yeh." "You got a mess kit knife?" I said, "Yeh. He says,

Go right over there on the side of that mountain right there and dig you a hole, foxhole.” I said, “A what?” “A foxhole.” And I kept thinking oh, my God, my uncles told me about this, you know, and I said, “Okay.” So I said, “Where’s the shovels?” He says, I’m not joking you. Use your mess kit lid and your knife, and we don’t have shovels.” So six of us got together and we got us a big hole about the width this bed is here, and we were in about as far as this bed is long into this mountain. We dug it out with a mess kit lid and our mess kit knives. Got it back in there and in about three days we had our hole made. We could sit up in it, crawl in there and sit up in it, and that was as high as it was. We didn’t want it too high. All the time the Japanese artillery were firing on us continuously. But we were close enough to the water and high enough they’d miss us and go out into the bay and explode. They were shooting at those gun turrets up above us, batteries up there, and they finally hit one of the magazines. Now they had to get within twelve inches of the top of the mountain in order to get through a window in the back of the magazine. All these forts were made to defend seaworthy, and their rear end was not fortified. So these shells were coming from Bataan over to Corregidore through the back door, so to speak. And they finally got it cleared off enough to where they were able to get one through into the magazine. It blew and it blew mortars that were in concrete to sea for miles. People said they saw it occur. We were directly below it, and it shoved a steel helmet down on my head and drew the blood, cut across the top of my head up here. That wall and that place hit my head that hard. I was leaning up against it when it blew. I started trying to get out of there and this one guy grabbed me by my belt and pulled me back in because all that debris was falling down on the side of that mountain. I could just visualize getting covered up in there and couldn’t get out and suffocating. But he held me and said, “Don’t

go out there, don't go out there, there's shells falling." I mean you could hear the biggest noise, and these were big shells that they were using. I guess they were ten or twelve inch mortars up there. These were shells falling down there. They wouldn't let me get out and finally the debris quit falling and then we got out. You couldn't see anything, it was dark from all the dust and dirt and stuff. None of our people were hurt, but, of course, there were a lot of people killed in that fort up there. They estimated at one point there that it was the Emperor's birthday, they said, I don't know if it was or not. It was the last of April. They estimated 129 box-car loads of projectiles alone hit on Corregidor in one day.

MR. COX: Was Mac Arthur gone from...

MR. KIDD: Oh, yes, long gone.

MR. COX: So Wainwright was in charge?

MR. KIDD: Yeh. Consequently, the barrage started that morning at daylight and it went until about 12:30 and then they quit for thirty minutes. And I said they're eating chow probably. And then it started again that afternoon about 1:00 o'clock and continued until dark. We had one battery that could fire back without any problems at all, and that was a 155 sitting down in the bottom side between these two mountain tops. It's sitting down there and it was enclosed in sand bags, and the instant they'd quit shooting at us over there on Bataan, those damn scouts down there, "Pull the string on that dude, fire at 'em." See, and God damn, they'd just start shooting back at us all over again.

MR. COX: You said, "scouts". Were these Philippinos?

MR. KIDD: Philippino scouts, yeh. We used to call 'em "troublemakers". As soon as the Japs would get tired and quit firing, they'd shoot at 'em, and it would make 'em start all

over again. We were in a bull's-eye, they weren't. Well, anyway, they tried for ever and never did hit that battery down there. When the Japs landed there, we went out to engage the enemy. Now here are a bunch of sailors, we don't know doodly squat about infantry tactics. We went out to engage the enemy and Captain Moore says, "Artillery fire out on the edge of Malinta Hill down on that side towards Monkey Point. We'll go down and go through Malinta Hill, that way we won't be exposed to the artillery fire going around the mountain facing Bataan." Okay, so we go inside the Malinta Tunnel, which was Mac Arthur's tunnel. And they have a hospital in there and everything and it's a huge place. We stopped, and he said we'd just wait until the artillery lets up. That's the way we know that the Japs are already on the island and they're advancing this way, because they won't fire on their own men. So then we can go out and engage them. Okay. We got guys standing there with white hats on, etc. that the Navy wear, no helmets, nothing, and know doodly squat, probably been to a firing range like me one time out of boot camp and that was it. I looked over to my right and there's some bunks secured to the bulkhead over there on the wall of the tunnel. Guys laying up in their bunks. I hollered over there, "Hey, you guys better get off your butts and get out here. The Japs are landing out here on Monkey Point. Get your gun and come on. Give us some help." "We can't." I said, "What do you mean you can't?" They said, "We're noncombatants." I said, "What in the hell is that? Noncombatants." They said, "We're quartermaster corps." I said, "Well, I'm a yeoman. What do you think I'm doing here?" He said, "We're Army. We're noncombatants." I said, "If you look real good, we've probably got a chaplain back there with a BAR if you just look close enough." They didn't get out of their rack. They stayed right there in their rack. We left. We finally went out when they quit firing. We

lost some men out there, and then we got word to surrender. And we came back into the tunnels. And they kept us there on Corregidor for oh, about seven or eight days, and then we left there and went to Cabanatuan #3, which was an old Philippine army barracks set up.

MR. COX: So that's north of Manila, then.

MR. KIDD: Yes, we went by rail up there. They packed us in that rail car like sardines, couldn't sit down, there wasn't any room. And then we marched about twenty miles to the camp.

MR. COX: Do you remember the name of the town where the camp was?

MR. KIDD: Cabanatuan that was it. That was in June that we went in there. And in September I left for Japan on ship along with a bunch of other prisoners.

MR. COX: When they moved you from Cabanatuan, what port did they take you to put you on the ship?

MR. KIDD: Manila. We went back to Manila. They had a Philippine prison there, and I can't think of the name of it right now, I know it as well as I do my own, but I can't think of it. They put us in there overnight, and the next day, they loaded us on the ship. Now, they loaded us in the hold of the ship. It had been a cargo ship, and they just built some shelves in there and that's what they used to load us into. They had the hold completely filled with us. There was no room to lay down or sit down. Stand up was what you had to do, you're packed in there that tight. And they had a five-gallon bucket over to one side there that was your toilet. And that was it. So we got underway and was the only ship. We were off the coast of Formosa. U. S. Navy made a torpedo run on us but missed. Of course, the ship was unmarked. Luckily, one of the first to go out and when they made the torpedo run, I happened to be topside because they would allow three men out of the hold at

one time if you had to go up to defecate or something, you couldn't do it in the bucket. You did it in your pants, a lot of guys did. Keep in mind, they didn't give you anything to drink to speak of. Guys were drinking their own urine. You've never seen anything like this. Guys had dysentery and messing their pants up and everything else, and it was unbelievable. And, of course, it's hot, too. But I was up topside and on the deck, and I heard this Jap screaming, hollering like hell, on the wing of the bridge. I'm behind the bridge, bow's up forward and I'm right in the midships. I look up and I see this guy out on the wing of the bridge and he's pointing to the starboard side of the ship. I look over that direction and I could see the wakes coming. And, oh my God, torpedoes. And the skipper is turning into them and he makes a turn and those things sonofabitches just pass right alongside us. I'm standing right at the edge of the ship because they had made a latrine over the side of the ship there. And I'm standing right there at the latrine, and I see those torpedoes go right by. They missed us. And we went in to anchor, we were right outside of Formosa Harbor. And we went into Formosa Harbor and dropped the anchor and we stayed there for a good while. That was in September, because we arrived in Tokyo Thanksgiving eve, the day before Thanksgiving, early morning, and they got us off the ship and divided us into groups and my group went to a prison camp called Yodagawa, Bunsho, between Osaka and Kobe. And we went down there by rail, and we arrived there that afternoon. It was cold, it was freezing. They had us line up in columns of four out front, and we were all standing out there, a long line of us. This Jap, with a cheese knife on his hip, standing up there with his polished boots and making this speech. The interpreter was interpreting for him, and said we were very, very fortunate and very lucky to be guests of the emperor and we should work hard to repay him for his generosity to

allow us to live. We were to work there at Yodagawa in the steel mill. Then they took us inside of the living quarters, which was nothing more than a building that they had built some shelves in and no heat, nothing, and gave us a blanket and that was it. That was where we were to live. And we worked every day in the steel mill. From there, of course, everybody was just about sick, anyway. We lost basically a third of our camp in the first four months we were there.

MR. COX: While you were working in those steel mills, I'm sure they must have been bombed. Did you witness some of those bombings?

MR. KIDD: There was no bombing at that time at all. We didn't have anything. Doolittle had already bombed them at one time. There was no bombing until May of '45 that I saw that actually bombed Osaka. Now B-29's went over us earlier than that, in '44, but there was no bombing on Osaka area until May of '45. And then I got sick and I was sent down to a place to die. I was friends and staying with a M. Sgt. in the Marine Corps who had been in Shanghai, and he had been transferred out of Shanghai. All the Marines were brought out of Shanghai and brought down to the Philippines.

MR. COX: Tell us a little bit about your jobs and your duties in the steel mills.

MR. KIDD: Basically, I worked in the part where they were die-casting, making the cast dies to pour molten metal into to make parts for machinery. What part we were making I have no idea. And then some of the guys were moving pig iron, scrap iron, into the furnace area and stuff like that. Some of them were carrying coke on a yayho pole. Do you know what a yayho pole is?

MR. COX: No, describe it.

MR. KIDD: It is a long pole that goes on your shoulder and it has a basket on both ends of

it. They load it down and you get up underneath it and raise it up and carry it that way. That's called a "yayho".

MR. COX: Just bounce along with it.

MR. KIDD: Bounce along with it. It's up off the ground.

MR. COX: How much would that weight loaded up?

MR. KIDD: It depends on what you got in it. But anywhere from 150 to 200 pounds. It plays hell with your shoulder muscles, I'll put it like that. Other than that, that basically was it. Andy Anderson, as I said, was a Master Sgt. in the Marine Corps, and he and I became good friends 'cause he was from Pampa, Texas. He was sick and I was sick. I had pneumonia and he had pneumonia. And it was colder than hell, we were about to freeze to death anyway. A canteen cup of water would freeze setting at your head at night. You only had one blanket. So we decided we'd just sleep together and put two blankets over us and try to stay warm that way. And so we did. We couldn't work anymore, so they cut our rations in half. They were starving us to death when they were feeding us full rations.

MR. COX: So what would your full ration represent?

MR. KIDD: It would represent a bowl of rice.

MR. COX: So you got a half bowl of rice?

MR. KIDD: Got half a bowl of rice. So we couldn't work anymore and some of the guys had beriberi and I had beriberi and pneumonia, and so did Andy. Andy and I talked about different ways you could fix bread. We didn't talk about girls or anything like that, it was all about how to fix food. That's what you talked about.

MR. COX: Did you have bread at any time?

MR. KIDD: Oh, hell no. I hadn't seen any bread in a year. We talked about fixin' all different kinds of food one evening and went to sleep that night. I woke up the next morning, and I said something to him because he hadn't moved. I poked him and he didn't move and I said, "Andy, wake up!" He had died that night. Andy was about six foot, six foot two, somewhere around there, a big man. And, of course, he wasn't big then, he was a rack of bones. They put him in this casket, they called it a casket if you want for a better word. It was nothing more than a pine box. They make 'em for the Japanese. Well, he didn't fit in it, his legs wouldn't straighten out, so his knees kicked up and the lid wouldn't go down. So they set him up on the table over there directly across from where I was sleeping and where the other sick guys were. I'd lay there at night and I'd hear the rats get in there and chew on him. He lay there for three days before they took him out. They didn't get him a longer box, they just came over there and broke his legs and folded them back over and put the lid down and carried him out. That was quite impressive.

MR. COX: Now was this considered to be a hospital that you were in?

MR. KIDD: That was the camp that we were in.

MR. COX: The same facilities?

MR. KIDD: The same room basically, just off to the side a little bit. I saw guys there getting their toes cut off with toenail clippers with no anesthetic. Gangrene set in so the doctor just cut off their toes. That was that dry beriberi. What happened was because of gangrene they'd get a bucket and let the ice freeze and then break the ice and stick their bare feet down in there to kill the pain because it was hurting so damn bad. Of course, that caused their feet to become infected and gangrene set in and they either did that or lose a leg. They figured we were gonna die anyway, so they sent me and a bunch of the other

guys over to this “hospital”. It was called Ichioka in Osaka. And we went to Ichioka and that was where they sent all the prisoners around the Osaka area to die. And they did die there, a lot of them did. So we got there and I began to get a little bit better. One sunny day there in May, the first part of May, it warmed up and we were sitting outside there. And we had our shirt front open mashing lice that was crawling on the shirt. We were popping the lice in there, didn’t have anything to kill ’em with. And all of a sudden this Jap officer came in with his cheese knife on and his shiny boots and this pressed uniform on and two guards with him with fixed bayonets. He was going along and pointing out the guys that he wanted. A British doctor was in charge there. C. E. Jackson was his name, one helluva nice guy! They got us inside the building and they told us that we had been selected for an experimental operation. Everybody there had beriberi and I was swelled up, my belly was swelled all out and my legs were swelled. I couldn’t sit down. I weighed 88 pounds. The next morning they took us down in the dump truck to the city hospital. At the city hospital there, they sat us outside the operating room. The guy from Victoria was first and I was second to be operated on. They took him in and operated on him. In about an hour and ten minutes they came back out to get me. And you just get up and follow them in there. I went in there and I walked up to this table and I looked down and here is all this blood on the table and blood on the instruments and on the table next to it. Of course, having my stepfather a dentist, I knew all about being sanitary and sterilization and all of that stuff. And I’m looking there and that’s the same stuff they’re going to use on me with no sterilization whatsoever. And I see Simon McCloud laying on the marble floor over in the corner and they told me to get up on the table. I got up on the table. They gave me a spinal, they hit a nerve and my legs shot out and I grabbed my legs

and pulled 'em back up. They finished the spinal and then laid me on my back and started the operation. The spinal lasted, according to Simon, about thirty minutes, and then I started hollering. I could feel everything they were doing. I knew they were going to kill me, so I jerked my arms from underneath me and I started to raise up. Whenever I raised up, they hit me right there above my eye and I got a scar up there from it, and knocked me back on to the table and then took a sheet and tied me down and went on and completed the operation. Of course, I was losing consciousness and passing in and out and didn't know what was going when I was unconscious. Then they sewed me up, and I remember when they sewed me up I thought they were out about to pull my guts outs. Then they took me and laid me over next to Simon. Then they finished with all ten of 'em and took us back that night to our Ichioka hospital. And a crew there unloaded us and took us inside and laid us on the shelf in there with no medication whatsoever, nothing. I started swelling up and running a fever and all that. About seven days later, ten days, somewhere around there, they took the stitches out and I busted wide open. It was infected, smelled like rotten eggs, had lost a lot of blood and everything else that came out, it was somewhere in the neighborhood of a coffee can full of fluid that ran out on my bedding there and my blanket. They had nothing to treat the infection. The first week, out of the ten, six died. All of them were as infected as I was and that left four of us. And the four of us made it back as far as I know. I know of three of us that made it back. The infection was there and they couldn't get anything to treat it with so they just washed me out with plain water every day. It smelled like rotten eggs all the time.

MR. COX: Did they take you back over to the operating room?

MR. KIDD: No, no. Right there where they had us at the beginning, Ichioka. And this

stadium was where it was. It was about a week later that the doctor came in and told me that they had to sew me up or I was gonna die. He said, "We've got two problems." And I said, "Well, what's that?" And he said, "Well, first of all they didn't have any suturing material to sew me up with." I said, "Well, how are you gonna sew me up?" He said, "We've got a needle and thread that you sew your clothing with, and we're gonna use that. But that presents a problem because you're gonna have to help. You're gonna have to hold in your stomach wall so the head of the needle doesn't perforate your stomach wall. If it perforates your stomach wall and that infection gets inside your stomach, you're dead. You're gonna have to help in that respect. Then we'll use the thread as suturing material, and we'll put shirt buttons on it to keep the thread from cutting through the flesh as fast as it normally would." I said, "Well, that's okay." He says, "But we've still got another problem." I said, "What's that?" He says "We don't have any anesthetic to give you. We'll have to do this without any anesthetic." And I said, "Okay." So they did, they did it and they pushed my abdomen together and tied strings on there with shirt buttons. And, of course, I had a cough, naturally, and I was coughing and every time I'd cough that thread would cut through the flesh. And he was sewing through flesh that thick and the stomach lining my stomach was right there. And the muscle on that side slipped all the way around the center of my back. I don't have any muscle on this side of my abdomen at all. Right now, the scar tissue that is there is two and one half inches wide and seven inches long. That's the size of the scar, and that's all I have on this side holding my abdomen and everything in is strictly scar tissue.

MR. COX: Have you determined what was the purpose of the operation? What were they really doing?

MR. KIDD: It was an experimental operation. They were cutting nerve centers to decrease the feeling as far as we know.

MR. COX: You think that had to do with cutting certain nerves then they could do operations or were they for the purpose of disabling legs and that sort of thing?

MR. KIDD: I don't know. We were never told.

MR. COX: I thought maybe some of the Navy hospitals later may have...

MR. KIDD: They have never been able to figure out all that they have done. All they know, they did a partial sympathectomy. The flow of blood in my body is different on the right side than it is on the left side. The temperature is different on the right side than it is on the left side. And it's a partial sympathectomy. The sympathectomy nerve controls the flow of blood in your body.

MR. COX: Where is that nerve located?

MR. KIDD: Right there.

MR. COX: Is that the only one in the body?

MR. KIDD: No, there's another sympathectomy, it spreads out and that's where they went in to get it, in that one spot.

MR. COX: The doctor that was in there, the surgeon, I'll call him a surgeon, I'm assuming he was. Did he have any assistants working with him?

MR. KIDD: He had three helpers in there. One of them is the one that hit me.

MR. COX: Were they Japanese?

MR. KIDD: Oh, yeh, all of 'em were Japs. And he was from the camp 731 out of Manchuria that ran all of these experiments and killed all those Chinese over there. They're the ones that developed the germ warfare deal that they were trying to get in

balloons to send over to the US. They finally sent the balloons over with the bombs attached that blew up and killed those six people up there. I think it was in Washington.

MR. COX: How long was it after they re-sewed you until you were able to get up and move around?

MR. KIDD: About twelve months.

MR. COX: Were you still a POW at that time?

MR. KIDD: Oh, yeh, I was still in Ichioka.

MR. COX: And what did they have you do? Did you have some reassigned duties?

MR. KIDD: I was sent over to Osaka headquarters camp. I only weighed 84 pounds at that time. They sent me over to headquarters camp in Osaka on light duty. I was folding propaganda mail in a room there with some other people that had problems. Then the camp that I was sent to was a camp that was doing stevedore work, unloading ships and warehouses, trains, and things of that nature. The Japanese were looting all these countries that they had conquered and bringing all this material in, food, rice, sugar, and all that kind of stuff. This is what we did was unload ships at that camp, and so we were able to steal some of that food. We'd cook it out on the job and eat it. When the POWs came in when I got there, they said, "God damn, you look like you're hungry." so they just passed me down their bowl of rice. If they're working, they got a complete bowl of rice. I had more rice than I could eat. And I started gaining weight and I started getting some strength. So then they decided they'd send me out on the job as their cook.

MR. COX: About what date and time are we talking about now?

MR. KIDD: I got there the last of '44.

MR. COX: Was that area bombed while you were there?

MR. KIDD: No, not until May 13th, first bombing that Osaka had. That was a night bombing and they were carrier aircraft.

MR. COX: Were they incendiary-type bombs or demolition?

MR. KIDD: Demolition. There was fires but they were demolition. When the big raid hit June 1st, that was all incendiary. They had some demolition but most of incendiary.

MR. COX: Were you in the proximity where those...

MR. KIDD: In the bull's-eye, out on the waterfront.

MR. COX: And what was the result of those types of raids as far as your perspective?

MR. KIDD: We had 644 men in our camp, none of them were killed. There was a couple or three of 'em that was injured, but other than that we were all out on work detail, thank God, because they burned our camp to the ground, too. There was nothing left of our camp. It just destroyed the whole city. You could stand at the waterfront and look into downtown Osaka and there was nothing, nothing standing, three buildings and they were skeletons. They were concrete and they didn't burn, but they burned everything inside of it. And I don't know how many thousand they must have killed.

MR. COX: How did that affect your living conditions at that point, if they could ever deteriorate any further?

MR. KIDD: Well, they couldn't deteriorate much further, except that we didn't have any roof over our head. And they moved us into a camp that had been previously evacuated because of a bombing there, and that was at a ship-building yard. They had some heavy demolition dropped in there at some time or another because they had craters there where the bombs had exploded.

MR. COX: As a result of that activity, the bombing, did the Japanese guards tend to treat

you any differently?

MR. KIDD: No, not at that time.

MR. COX: At what point did you ever notice that the Japanese may have either gotten rougher or maybe lightened up a little bit?

MR. KIDD: Well, at that point, they didn't do either one of the two, they were the same. We didn't work anymore. We stayed there only for two days, three days, then they loaded us on a train. At that stage of the war, the shipping industry had stopped in Osaka. There wasn't anymore shipping coming in there. They had a blockade set up out there and they sunk all of them. They couldn't get 'em in there. What they did, then they moved us up to northern Hanshu, all the way up to the very north tip of Hanshu. They had a bay up there that had a natural closure to it. It was like a gateway out there. They put a submarine net across there where a submarine couldn't get through, and they'd open it up and let the ships in and close the thing up. They were safe from being sunk by torpedoes from submarines.

MR. COX: What duties did they assign you up there?

MR. KIDD: Unloading ships.

MR. COX: This was material coming in for them to eat and supplies...

MR. KIDD: Yeh, all kinds of supplies, including ammunition. They wanted us to unload some ammunition. Now, we had all new troops up there, though, all new guards. None of our old guards went up there with us. We didn't know anything about 'em. They didn't bother us.

MR. COX: Were they Japanese or Koreans:

MR. KIDD: Japanese. They didn't mistreat us at all because we weren't there long

enough.

MR. COX: How long were you there?

MR. KIDD: We moved up there, that was June 1st, we were up there by, I'd say, the 6th or 7th of June at the latest. And the war was over in August.

MR. COX: How did you find out that the bomb had been dropped and the war was over?

MR. KIDD: We had gone to work that morning, marched out of our camp and went to work. But prior to that, they had never been bombed. When we got up there, they had never been bombed. We asked, because we had just been through that one down in Osaka. And they said, "No, that they had never been bombed." We didn't know that they had already received orders to execute all of us in the event that the Allies landed on Hanshu. They were to execute us immediately by any means that they could. They said that they hadn't been bombed. We were there three days and then all of a sudden, man, the ships out there in the harbor started blowing up. Well, the Japs thought it was a submarine got through their submarine net out there, and so the submarine chasers were out there running back and forth trying to locate that submarine, depth-charging. They couldn't find any submarine. Well, they finally found a magnetic mine buried in the mud up this river that the planes had flown over and dropped these magnetic mines in, and they'd floated down with the current and floated right out into that bay where all these ships were tied up. And, of course, they were blowing up like crazy out there, sinking those damn ships. (Laughter) We didn't know what it was either. We didn't have any idea.

MR. COX: But it was fun watching.

MR. KIDD: Oh, you bet! But right after that was when they dropped the A-bomb,

shortly thereafter. We'd been marched to work that morning, and we got out there to work and all of a sudden they told us just stay there in the warehouse. And so I was, like I was in Osaka, the chief cook and bottle-washer, so I was going up to get some water to cook some rice. I had to go up to a couple of warehouses up, and I went up there to get some water. I see all these Japs standing there with their head bowed and all that stuff, and I knew damn well that that was the Emperor, because that's the only thing that would make 'em do that. And he, of course, was speaking in Japanese and what little Japanese I knew wasn't the king's English as he spoke. It was what the coolies spoke out there, but I could catch a little bit of it. I didn't know exactly what was going on, so I got my water and went on back to the other warehouse. I got in the warehouse and I said, "Hey, guys, somethin's goin' on. I don't know what the hell it is, but somethin's going on." They said, "What do you mean?" I said, "Well, it's gotta be the Emperor because all those turkeys up there got their heads bowed and standing at attention up there. Who else would they do that for except the emperor?" They said, "Nobody." So we agreed that it must be the emperor and about thirty minutes later in comes our boss, our civilian boss, our hauncho we called him which is Japanese for boss. He came in and said, "The war's over. You will be going home. You will be home by Thanksgiving." We thought he was pulling our leg, and he said, "No, no. It's over. All finish. We're friends. You no work no more, we go back to camp. So we get back to the camp, we don't have any guards there anymore. They're all gone, flew the coop.

MR. COX: How about the food, did it change?

MR. KIDD: We didn't have any food there either.

MR. COX: But you didn't get any additional food?

MR. KIDD: We went out and killed a cow and got that and then a Navy commander came in there the next night. We set up our own guards because we were concerned about no protection. That town's there with people all around. So we set our own guards up. We didn't have any guns or anything. We had some two-by-fours there that they made some clubs out of and this is up in the guard shack and had the flood lights on. This character walks up out front in the glare of those floodlights. And, of course, they challenged him immediately, and they noticed that he was in uniform. They spotted the oak leaves up on his shirt collar and come to find out he was a commander off one of the carriers out there. He had landed the plane over in the airport and walked up there by himself. Now you talk about a guy with guts, he had it. So they told him to come on in, and they asked him, "Are you a free American?" He says, "Yeh, I'm a free American." They went to hollerin' and hoopin'. Of course, a lot of us were already asleep, and they came running in there telling us "Free American is here." And we all ran out there to see him, you know. He got our attention and got us calmed down. He told us to stay right where we were, they would make arrangement to have us taken out of there. He wanted to know where our commander, our Jap commander was, we said we don't have any idea. He said, "Well, you stay right here." Because as soon as the war was over, we had put up a POW sign up on the roofs. We were never allowed to have those on there before. But we put up one immediately after we got back to camp. There was no guards and we made one out of bed sheets and put up on the roof. The next day, Navy planes came in. He was there that night. That morning Navy planes came in, the dive bombers came in, flew over us, dropped their flaps, slowed her down as far they could slow it and shoved out supplies to us out the bomb doors. Then they gave us a message to take cover. So we took cover, all

standing with our mouths hanging open, watching 'em. And this one guy was in the shower taking a shower. And they came across this rice paddy and he released this, the Navy puts their, were you in the Navy?

MR. COX: No.

MR. KIDD: Alright, the Navy puts their flour in metal cans, and they're about like a five gallon can. They're pretty heavy, and that's what they dropped. And I mean with no chutes and this one went through, I was sitting up on the fence watching all of this, and one went right by me and went right through the fence and went through the wall in the shower where this ole boy was in the shower room. It was a big shower room. This damn flour went everywhere. (laughter) He was covered head to toe with flour, and he come out of there and he looked like a ghost.

MR. COX: Now were they dropping those for your attention or for food?

MR. KIDD: For food, that's what they were doing. But can you imagine dropping a damn five-gallon can of flour and your plane going, well, I don't know how fast it was going without falling out of the air. But they'd have full flaps down and have it revved up and slowed down with the wheels down and everything trying to go as slow as they could to throw it out. We managed to get some of it that didn't break because it fell in that rice paddy out there. Then the B-29's came over the next day, and they had all the food on platforms and they had chutes on 'em. And they had C-rations. They dropped, oh, I think three or four, big platforms of food. They didn't have enough chutes on 'em, and those suckers came down like a bomb, and they hit out in those rice paddies and cans and C-rations went in every direction. But, hell, we were able to save a lot of it. And the guys sat there and ate all those C-rations and all had diarrhea from all that rich food. Then

the next day or so, they got hold, how they ever got hold of that camp commander, I don't know. But they did get hold of that former camp commander, and he got hold of the guards, and got 'em back there. And they came out and picked us up and sent us out by train and took down to meet the hospital ship off of the coastlines, Downfautica. We had about a six-hour train ride to go down there where it was. And we got down there, and, of course, we had every nationality imaginable in that camp. We had a chief boatswain mate there who was trying to get a count of how many POWs that we had there. And like I said, we had 644 total. So he was trying to get 'em to count off, you know, and he'd give the order to count off, one, two, three, you hit the Chinese and that blew it right quick. They couldn't count that way. And finally this chief that was in charge of our camp said we can get you a count. So he walks out in front of the group there and he hollers, "Skilskae!" which is attention in Japanese. So everybody snaps to attention and he hollers "Bongo", which is count off in Japanese. And so we started (counting in Japanese), right on down the line all 644 and never made a booboo. See, when you made a booboo and you were doing it with the Japanese, they hit you on top of the head with a damn cane pole. So you could count in Japanese just as good as the Japs could, and I've often said that if we had teachers that taught students like the Japs taught us, they'd be hellacious students. They'd be A-class students.

MR. COX: What port did you go to when you went...

MR. KIDD: Well, from there, I don't know where we met the hospital ships. I have no idea.

MR. COX: Do you remember the name of the hospital ship?

MR. KIDD: No. I don't. They wanted to keep me aboard the hospital ship, and I said

“No way, Jose, I’m gone. I’m out of here.” So they said, “Are you physically able? Are you hurting?” I said, “No.” I wouldn’t tell ’em if I was hurting, I wanted to get home. “No, hell no.” The Japs had issued us all brand new army uniforms to put on. They hadn’t given us a speck of clothes that whole time.

MR. COX: Japanese uniforms?

MR. KIDD: Yeh, but they were brand new. When we got down to meet that ship, we were in complete new Japanese uniforms. We got aboard ship and we had to throw them all over the side. And then they sprayed us down with DDT all over for all the lice that was on us. And then we went down and we took a shower and everything and then the doctors checked us. So then they put us on a British destroyer that same day and shipped us overnight down to Tokyo Bay. And then they segregated us at that point, all the different nationalities--British here, Americans here, Australians here, Dutch here, etc. down the line. We got on an American DE laying there in the harbor, took us over by motorlaunch. I go up the gangway, and when you go aboard a Navy ship, you first salute the colors and then you turn around and you salute the officer of the day, and you state, “Request permission to come aboard, sir” because he is representing the captain. So I turn around to salute the officer of the day, and I looked up and hell it’s one of my roommates off of the BLACKHAWK that I had known back when I was on the BLACKHAWK. Here he is a full Lt. in the Navy now, see. I said, “My God, Howie, is that you?” We ended up in his stateroom that night talking nearly all night. I hadn’t seen him since I left the BLACKHAWK back in ‘41.

MR. COX: Now, did they fly you from there to someplace or did you get on a ship?

MR. KIDD: We got on a flight. It was real funny, because what I understand happened

was that Mac Arthur was asked by Nimitz, "How are we going to get our POWs back home?" And Mac Arthur's statement was, as usual, "You take care of the Navy and I'll take care of the Army." And Nimitz said, "That's fine." Nimitz flew every damn one of us home, everyone of us. Some of the Army guys spent thirty days over in Manila. They were sent by ship, and they went ashore and stayed ashore in a base there in Manila.

MR. COX: What was the first place in the States that you landed?

MR. KIDD: Well, the first flight we got on, we landed in Guam, and I had my first taste of coke in four years. We left Guam, and the next stop was Honolulu. In Honolulu, we got \$500.00 and had liberty. We went ashore that night and we were supposed to be back at 9:00 o'clock. Well, at 1:00 o'clock we were picked up by the shore patrol and they took us back to the hospital because we were having a helluva time. And we got back to the hospital. They had already locked one guy up because he got one of the nurses cornered in the linen closet up there, and they locked him up. The rest of 'em were farin' pretty good. That next morning they came in and they wanted to know if I would like to go by PB4Y to San Francisco. They had a plane leaving at 1:00 clock that day and they would take us. And I said, "Sure." So they said, "Okay, you've got a seat." Well, we bumped everybody from the rank of captain off--everybody was kicked off except one admiral. He was still on, and he flew back with us. And the rest of us were put in there. Some of the guys that were there were off of Guam. Handy and Parr were from Guam, captured on Guam. And we flew back to San Francisco. When we got to San Francisco, they gave us another \$500.00 and gave us open gate liberty. Now, we didn't have any Navy uniforms. We were wearing seabee green, so we went ashore with those damn seabee greens and got arrested three times the first night for being out of uniform. But this little

slip of paper I had was signed by the base commander that said, "Open gate liberty, uniform optional at the individual's discretion" and signed by the skipper. Once they'd get you down to shore patrol headquarters and you'd give that to the shore patrol officer, hell, you were released. They'd take you back where they picked you up. But I got arrested three damn times the first night.

MR. COX: I can see where that could be a fun and games routine.

MR. KIDD: (laughter) It was. We could have cared less. We'd have a couple of cocktails and then they'd come in and check the bar. They'd say, "Are you in the military?" "Yeh, hell yeh, I'm in the military." The first bar I went into this barmaid gal said "I have to see your ID card." I said, "I don't have one." "Well, how am I supposed to know how old you are?" Three and a half years in a Jap prison camp and she wanted to know how old I was. (Laughter) I just gave her that slip of paper and it was a mimeographed slip with a blank spot for your name to be written in, and that was it.

MR. COX: How long did they keep you there before they sent you closer to your home?

MR. KIDD: They had notes all over the bed, we had a suite. The three of us got a suite down at the Sir Francis Drake hotel in San Francisco.

MR. COX: That was your barracks?

MR. KIDD: Yeh, that's what we got when we got out of the hospital for liberty. We had this suite down there and, of course, they gave us all the booze we could drink free and wine and anything we wanted was free, including the suite. We were there, I think, three or four days and then they came in and they wanted to send us back to a hospital closest to our home. And so I selected New Orleans rather than Corpus.

MR. COX: Good move.

MR. KIDD: Yeh, New Orleans had more entertainment than Corpus had, I remembered that. So I went to New Orleans. Then they gave everybody some medicine to get rid of the parasites we supposedly had, and then released us and put us on ninety-days convalescent leave.

MR. COX: Now, did you have new uniforms by then?

MR. KIDD: Oh, yeh.

MR. COX: No dungarees?

MR. KIDD: No dungarees. Then when I finished my ninety-day convalescent leave, I went and reported in to the Commandant Eight Naval District headquarters. I got a room down in the French quarters and I walked in there and reported for duty. They gave me my desk and said okay you're sittin' right here. We'll give you your duties in a little bit. So then I worked that day and the next day, and I walked in the next morning, and I was told that I was to see the personnel officer immediately. And I said, "Well, what does he want?" He said, "Well, you'll have to go in there and see him. I don't know what he wants." So I walked in there and I said, "Commander, you want to see me?" He says, "Yeh, you're out of uniform." I said, "I beg your pardon." "I didn't stutter, I said you're out of uniform." Damn, I looked down and I had my pants on and my jumper on and my neckerchief on. I said, "I don't understand, Sir. I'm not out of uniform." He says, "The hell you're not. You're a Chief Petty officer. You go down and get your uniform out of small stores down there. Get in the uniform of the day." I said, "Sir, okay."

MR. COX: You'd gotten a promotion.

MR. KIDD: Yeh, damn quick, too. So I went right down and changed clothes and came back up as a Chief. That's the way I made Chief, real quick. Pronto. So I stayed there

for awhile and then I was given a choice of where I wanted to go for duty. And then I went to Panama City, Florida. I got tired of fishing down there. I caught the biggest trout you ever saw down there, like that and about that big around, seven or eight pounds speckled trout.

MR. COX: You didn't eat it, did you?

MR. KIDD: Oh, are you kiddin'? I fed the whole base. You bet, I was fishin' every night.

MR. COX: That might have been somebody's mama?

MR. KIDD: It might have been, but , boy I tell you, that was the best fishing I ever had in my lifetime. It was under these big arc lamps out on the pier where the minesweepers tied to, and they were on and there was about seventy-five feet from the bank out in the water and those fish would go up there and feed. The bugs would fall and you'd just cast out with dead shrimp and they'd hit it bang.

MR. COX: When you finished up that, were you discharged, maybe you made a career in the Navy?

MR. KIDD: I did make a career in the Navy. I made 15 years and I got ill and so they retired me.

MR. COX: You got a medical discharge?

MR. KIDD: Yeh, I was on temporary retired list for three years and then they retired me outright. I spent four years at the University of Mississippi. And then I was at Naval Air Tech. Training Center, Memphis, Chief in charge of the personnel department there, and from there to recruiting duty in Dallas, Texas. I was on limited duty, I was an L5, no duty involving sea, foreign shore or flying.

MR. COX: That was Naval ROTC in Mississippi?

MR. KIDD: Yeh. I met Bull Halsey there, and he gave me my Army Distinguished Unit badge there. And he said, "Chief, I want to ask you one question." "I said, yes, Sir, Admiral." He says, "I understand you were working for Admiral Hart?" And I said, "That's correct, Sir. He says, "How in the hell can a Navy man get an Army's Distinguished Unit Badge?" I said, "Because I was also in the damn Army of a ???"
(Laughter) He cracked up. He says, "Well, I was just curious how in the hell you got that. What ship you were on when you got it." I said, "I wasn't on any ship. That was the problem. I was in Bataan." "Ah, okay." I told him, "Yeh, and we got bombed by some of your planes off of your task force out there on May the 13th, too. Why did you pick May the 13th to bomb?" He said, "Well, it was as good as any other day, isn't it?" I said, "Yeh, but the 13th?" He was curious as to whether anybody had gotten hurt in our camp. See, none of the camps were marked. I said, "No, everybody was fine."

MR. COX: The years that you've been out of the Navy, have you had a pretty good life?

MR. KIDD: Yeh, pretty good. I've got physical handicaps but pretty good. Still have neuropathy caused from the beriberi, nerve damage galore, and that basically is it. I don't expect to last over a hundred years. I met a guy down here yesterday ninety-one.

MR. COX: Do you think that surgery had something to do with that long longevity?

MR. KIDD: No, hell no! Far from it.

MR. COX: Maybe he cut somethin' out down there.

MR. KIDD: Far from it. No, I don't think so.

MR. COX: Well, Mr. Kidd, it's certainly been a pleasure to work with you today.

MR. KIDD: It's been my pleasure.

MR. COX: I appreciate very much your taking the time, and on behalf of the National Museum of the Pacific War, thank you. And on behalf of myself, I salute you, sir.

MR. KIDD: Well, thank you very much. I appreciate it. Thank you. I hope to get back out to see the new changes you guys have made out there.

MR. COX: You're welcome any time.

Corrected copy typed November 12, 2002 by Eunice Gary