

Joseph Drachnik Oral History

BRUCE PETTY: Today is Tuesday, the 29th of June, the year 2000, and I'm interviewing Captain --

JOSEPH DRACHNIK: Joseph Brennan Drachnik.

BP: -- Drachnik, here in Sacramento, California. The interviewer is Bruce Petty. So you can start off with a brief biographical description, if you like, and then we can move on to your Academy years, and then [after that?].

JD: All right. I am Joseph Drachnik. I was born in Ross, which is near San Rafael and San Francisco, north of San Francisco, on June the 11th, 1919. Family moved before I was a year old to the outskirts of Vacaville, California, and that's where I spent my youth. I went, started at a single-room grammar school, where they had eight rows, with one row for each grade, and one teacher. And after about three years of there, my mother got a job in the town of Vacaville, which was 44 miles away from our little homestead. And I moved then to the Vacaville Union Grammar School. And I was there from about the fourth grade till I graduated. And then around 1932, then I entered Vacaville Union High School, and graduated from there in June of 1937. I was determined to go to college because people... In the first place, this is Depression years, and everybody

was poverty-stricken, but those who were most poverty-stricken were those who didn't have any particular occupation or goal in life, and I was bound and determined I was going rise above that. And I hitchhiked my way down to Berkeley one day with the \$35 in my pocket that I had made (inaudible) 20 cents an hour. I spent a couple of years at the University of California working my way through. I [was just cashed?] an hour a day -- an hour a meal for my meals at the boarding house that I would take care of, janitorial work. It was necessary to dust the floors, or (inaudible) rooms in a rooming house every day for my room. And once in a while I found a little spending money here and there, but there wasn't very much of it. This went on for a year plus, and things were getting tighter and tighter, and it was quite clear that I wasn't going to be able to make the grade and work my way through, and I was going to have to find some other way of doing it. During that summer, I was working on my Congressman's (inaudible) branch. The Congressman's name was Frank Buck, (inaudible). And his foreman was a fellow who was going to dental school at Tulane when -- I don't know if it was World War I or the Spanish Civil War, but anyway -- left school and went off to fight in the war, and never came back to it. And now, I believe in '45 or so, he was a

foreman on a [crew branch?], which probably wasn't as good a living as he would've had with a dentist. And he said to me one day, "Young fella, if I was you, I would hit up the old man here for an appointment with one of these academies." I had no involvement militarily, never thought of it. Then I went back to Cal, struggled along for another few months, and I saw a notice in the paper that the Congressman was going to give a competitive exam for an appointment to the Naval Academy, and that was the only opportunity I had seen in years, so I somehow applied for it. I don't remember the details of that, but I do remember taking the bus up to Vallejo, about 30 miles away. And I was in a classroom with about 130 other people. Then I went back to school and continued my hashing, and cleaning rooms, and trying to study, and going out for track. I didn't want to be nothing but a bookwork. And in February I got a special delivery letter from my Congressman saying he had an appointment for me if I wanted it. We sent him a wire and let him know. Wires cost about 50 cents, so I went around and borrowed 50 cents from somebody, and sent him a telegram that yes, I do please to accept. At the time I was on the track team of University of California, which Brutus Hamilton, who's a great (inaudible) -- Brutus Hamilton was a rather famous coach

there. He died several years ago now, but people just thought very highly of him. And he had kind of taken a liking to me, and he wrote the coach at Annapolis about me. I was running the mile. And then he invited me to go along with the team. The track team was going back to the NCAA Championships, back (inaudible) New York. And so I rode the train back with them to New York. Get into the Naval Academy. I had a \$250 deposit for a uniform (inaudible), so my mother borrowed that, and also, I guess, enough money to pay the \$85 or whatever (inaudible). And so I go back by train to New York, and from there I bus to the Naval Academy, the Naval Academy (inaudible).

BP: What year was that?

JD: That was in 1939, June of 1939.

(break in audio)

BP: All right.

JD: All right, Naval Academy, entirely new life, entirely different method of living, entirely different goals. But I, like all of my contemporaries, adapted to it. For example, my proudest day in my life was when I was (inaudible) high school, and I so admired the student body president, I was bound and determined, by golly, I'm going to get that job. Lo and behold, when I was a senior I got elected student body president. The day I was elected was

the finest day of my life. So I go back to the Naval Academy, and guess what? Every one of the other [680?] people, [who entered by class, I think?], student body president, captain of the football team, and all the other things that went on back at their high school. And this was just, you know, on the end of the Depression in '39. So a significant number of the fellas back there were just like me, were young, ambitious guys who were trying to find a way in the world to get an education. So to make a long story short, the competition was pretty stiff. In fact, competition was probably stiffer than it ever had been before, and in the case (inaudible) we're the only class in history that ever had two (inaudible) Naval operations out of the same class. We were all a bunch of young, poor people, and [at the word?] go, and it went on like that for the next 30 years to [the chief?] Naval operations for (inaudible) and Jim [Howard?]. All right, back to my own career. Three years, three and a half years later -- a few years later we graduated. It was normally a four-year course. In World War I, back in 1918, they had accelerated the course by (inaudible) classes. They did it again starting with the class before mine, the graduating class of '42, in February of 1942, six months early. They had started compressing things back, well, when we entered our

final -- our third year at the Naval Academy. What they did was they cut out all the fun stuff, all the -- well, there was a summer cruise, where you spent a month in airplanes, month in destroyers and other things. They cut that out. They started us at academics as soon as we got back from our summer vacation in July one year, and we studied academics straight through to June of 1942, at which date we graduated, instead of graduating in 1943. [It became?] our class [number?], of course. And later on, they then rearranged the classes back. In 1946 or '47 they split a class; half of them graduated one year, half the next year, and they finally got back to (inaudible). (inaudible) graduation (inaudible). Graduation, we had a couple of weeks leave, and when we had to report for duty, my ship, and that of many other classmates, were based in Pearl Harbor. So we joined a transport in San Francisco on July the 4th, and sailed on about the 6th of July with a large number of my classmates, 40 or 50 or 60. And my little ship to which I was ordered, the *USS Zane*, was Destroyer Minesweeper number 14, a converted World War I destroyer. Its original number was DD-337, if I'm not mistaken. We were supposed to be in Pearl Harbor. We got to Pearl Harbor, and there was nobody there. This was the beginning of the war, very early in the war. Secrecy with

predominant things of today are considered to be very low-level for security were all given the equivalent of today's top secret. Nobody would tell us where the ships went. People, frankly, didn't know where they went. They had sailed for parts unknown. I hung around Honolulu for about a week, attached to the local base command, [including in?] the [DOQ?], and they were trying to figure out what to do with [us people?]. And one day I got two sets of orders. I was ordered to report to the base commander for duty on (inaudible) operating on a harbor. And a couple of hours later I got a message, orders from the Pentagon (inaudible) to board a transport. And so I said, "Well, that sounds a lot more adventuresome than sitting around Pearl Harbor." So I boarded the transport. The transport's name was *Betelgeuse*.

BP: Say it again?

JD: *Betelgeuse*, B-E-T-E-L-G-E-U-S-E. It was a... Well, she was around for a long, long time. I think she wound up in the (inaudible), [probably wasn't decommissioned?] -- it was probably 40 years after the war that she finally got [decommissioned?]. Those old transports were real workhorses. Later in my career I was chief of staff of the Amphibious Force, the Atlantic Fleet, and half of our force in 1969, '70 was still comprised of these old ships that

had been the workhorses during the war. So we embarked, and along with 20 or 30, I believe, of my classmates again on this transport heading south. We didn't know where the hell we were going, and nobody would tell us. We could figure out we were going south. Eventually we got to the Equator, and they have a great ceremony, turn you from a pollywog to a shellback crossing the line. And we got an indoctrination like nobody else ever did, because we were aboard a transport that had elements of the first Marine division to have invaded Guadalcanal. They were a bunch of old seadogs, (inaudible) Marines. Here we were a bunch of wet-behind-the-ears [infants?] who'd just [graduated?] (inaudible). We got through that, and then one day -- and I guess it was probably three weeks from Honolulu down to the Coral Sea, over to (inaudible). They had a briefing, an intelligence briefing. And the upshot of it was we were going to Guadalcanal, which was some island in the Solomons. The only people who had ever heard of it before were Osa Johnson, who was the famous explorer back in those days, and they'd had an article in *National Geographic*, which was the basis of about all they knew about Guadalcanal, [our briefing officers?].

BP: (inaudible) Johnson, he was part of the crew?

JD: Osa Johnson was a woman, I believe.

BP: Oh.

JD: No, no.

BP: So she wasn't on the ship, then.

JD: No. She was a guy like you: she was an explorer and writer. I'm not sure what she...

BP: Okay.

JD: I think Osa was the wife's name. I don't remember the husband's. Maybe that was the husband's name. But anyway, they were quite famous in those days.

BP: So in other words, your intelligence [collection?] was based on...

JD: On the article in *National Geographic* written by Johnson, who had been the only person who'd been there since Sinbad the Sailor. Sinbad the Sailor had some travels around that part of the world. That was a long time ago. On August the 5th, I believe it was, in the morning we get up and see off in the horizon -- and you know at sea, because of the curvature of the Earth, you don't see all of the ship; all you can see is just the mast. We look out there and we saw an ocean full of masts, and eventually we come up to (inaudible). Most of the United States Navy's ships were ready to invade Guadalcanal, lying to the south of Guadalcanal. They put us in Higgins boats, and transferred us to our ships, (inaudible) transferred (inaudible) ships,

which had been out there for some time now, probably from Pearl Harbor [and south?]. Badly in need of a paint job, rust streaks all over it, [lolling in the sea?], and it looked like a [hell of a lot to lose?]. (laughter) They had a full complement of officers aboard, no room for me, so they welded a bunk in the ward room, and that was my home, which I didn't see much of anyway because I was on the watch post all the time. The thing that impressed me most, I think, when I went aboard was on the [boardroom?] table, were whole bunches of publications and charts and things, and they were all marked "secret," and they were just lying around for anybody to look at. And just out of the Naval Academy, things like this are stressed, and we were trained if you have anything that was secret, nobody even saw it or could read the word "secret" on it. It was kept locked up in a safe. That was the beginning of [life?]. I don't remember what I did for the next day and a half. I do remember it was... Yeah, day and a half later, early in the morning we invade Guadalcanal. We had a mission of do a little minesweeping. We mine-swept Tulagi harbor. Of course, we had a shore bombarding mission in the hills around there. And we did our shore bombarding, and we started a grass fire, and (inaudible) nobody knows. I should say an aside, that a couple of

articles in here -- there are several of them, one about a battle [at Silar?] Channel, principal adventure we had down there. But some dissertations here on other things, one of them written by a fella named by the name of [Armstone?], who I believe... (break in audio) (inaudible).

BP: Yeah, no, I... It looks like, to me, a very smooth transcription.

JD: Well, where was I?

BP: You had just bombarded the hill in Tulagi.

JD: Yes.

BP: Started a grass fire. (break in audio)

JD: Now, I guess you wanted names, I think.

BP: Well, wherever they pop in your narrative. I don't want to --

JD: Our skipper was one of the finest captains I think I ever served under, and [it would seem to be with him?] my very first tour of duty. His name was Lieutenant Commander Peyton L. [Worth?], P-E-Y-T-O-N. He was out of the class of '31. He was lieutenant commander, but truly a [memorable?] guy in my opinion. He spent innumerable hours, 36 hours at a stretch, I think, up on the bridge, making sure that everything was under control. And, of course, most of the rest of us were up a good part of that time, too, general quarters, (inaudible) air attacks

(inaudible). We also had an executive officer by the name of [Seamus Hathaway?], Lieutenant -- and another one, Lieutenant Murphy. I ran into Lieutenant Murphy again 25 years later, when he was intelligence officer for the staff, the gunnery officer of the flagship. We invaded Guadalcanal I guess -- I think it was on the 7th.

BP: Of August?

JD: Of August. (break in audio) We invaded on the 7th. All right, and then the Japanese retaliation started, I think, on the 8th. I remember particularly the air raid. First, we were alerted of it by coast watchers, Australian guys who were situated kind of (inaudible) on islands up north, with one fella up near [one of the airfields?]. And he kept us informed, and we heard the news. Several times we would hear something like "Forty Bettys escorted by 30 Zeroes are headed your way, ETA 35 minutes." So we'd get a message like that and the whole fleet gets underway, whatever they were doing. (inaudible) maneuvering [you're?] in better shape. And here this cloud of Bettys come over in big V formations, Zeroes. You look up and you see little [booths?] of sunlight off of airplanes. They were very, very high. The visibility down there was amazing. It was clear and beautiful, bright sunny day, cumulous clouds here and there, so you could see forever.

And I remember watching one day, way, way up there at 30,000 feet or whatever -- (inaudible) high, [I guess?], in those days -- 15,000, puff of black smoke.

BP: Then the plane would come down?

JD: Yeah, (inaudible) down (inaudible) smoke, (inaudible). On this particular day, our fighter carriers south of Guadalcanal took care of the escort fighter Zeroes pretty well, and that left the Bettys with no protection, and so they came down to the surface. And we had one coming straight at us. My battle station was on the active gun mount. We had a three-inch, .50-caliber gun, which was the heaviest gun we carried onboard the destroyer, and a 20-millimeter. And that gun -- that plane comes right at us. Betty, let me first say, was similar to what we call a Beechcraft. It was a twin engine bomber. And here those things headed directly for me, and I was looking down the barrel of a machine gun at wings, and I could clearly see the two Japanese pilots. He was almost level with me. He was pretty low on the water. And as he came by, we cut its tail off, (inaudible). It then skidded into a landing. It didn't crash. He ditched. What follows I did not see personally, but -- because I was back on the fantail, and you're busy with your own thing. There's a lot going on. You're not looking at what's happened. You're standing

aside for other things. When this Jap crashed, the skipper decided it would be a good thing to try and salvage a piece of it, as somebody promised, and head over there, point the bow of the ship up between the wings of the plane. Well, somebody crawled out of the plane -- the pilot, I suppose -- and he was standing on the wing with his arms folded. The ship came up to it, and the people on the ship were yelling at him to get ready to come aboard. And the ship got very close. He pulled a pistol out and he started shooting at people on the bridge. So one of the 20-millimeter guns opened up on it, and cut it to pieces, and sank (inaudible). End of story. Closest I ever got to any Jap during the war. And again, I didn't see it because I was minding my own business back there, but I heard the details of it from other people, and [that was covered?] (inaudible).

BP: Okay.

JD: Back to the war. (break in audio) That air attack... That night we were patrolling off Lunga Point. Lunga Point was the landing beach [fairly up?] the [marine?] shore of Guadalcanal. And I had the midwatch. I was the junior officer (inaudible) aboard, so they gave me the midwatch, and this was my second watch aboard. The captain came over to me... All right, this was the time of the first Battle

of Savo Island, [or something?]. Three of our cruisers -- Japs stormed down past Savo Island, caught them all unaware, sank the Australian cruiser, *Canberra*.

BP: (inaudible)?

JD: Yes, yes, I think so. We were maybe ten miles away from that. Of course, ten miles isn't that far [for a cruiser?]. [From the point?] we were patrolling that, and [somewhere that?], and then up there watching [the men catch them over the BB6?]. (inaudible) and [Layton?] was the [young?] officer on the very first watch of [his entire?] Navy career, in the middle of a sea battle. [I didn't have much relief?]. We joined in that. I said, "Well, it's more fun than back at the Naval Academy."
(laughter) We spent the next year in and out of Guadalcanal, either up there or en route to it. We managed to reach Guadalcanal either at the same time as or within a couple of days of a major battle they had there. We could see airplane [wheels?], life rafts, and things like that floating around the bay as we came up. The US was stretched very thin at that time. When I got out to the South Pacific -- the US had had 18 heavy cruisers; by the time I got out there, six of them had sunk, six of them were badly damaged, and [only?] what we really had at the forefront were six heavy cruisers (inaudible). We had a

couple of carriers. And so they used us for everything. We used to run from Guadalcanal back to Espiritu Santo, which was the forward base next to Guadalcanal. I don't know how far it was. Two hundred miles. We carried deckloads of ready aviation torpedoes, and drums of [abgab?] on our little ship to support the Marine aircraft from Henderson Field, because there was no other ship down there that could do this kind of stuff. It was the kind of hairy business that (inaudible) [landed within?] 100 yards (inaudible) torpedoes and abgab (inaudible). We managed to live through that. However, we also just towed from Espiritu Santo to Guadalcanal many of the PT boats that had formed the squadrons up there. And the only time I ever felt safe was we had two PT boats on (inaudible) stern, and someone [reported light over her?], and some of the [dock?] (inaudible) [light?]. And the Japs would always come down at random. We would come in at random. Whenever the two of us docked at the same time, we had a battle. So we cut the PT boats loose and then (inaudible) very secure at that point (inaudible) torpedoes [on it?]. We kind of wished we would run into the Japanese fleet at that time. Another time I remember --

BP: [What did they find?] (inaudible)?

JD: [Nothing?].

BP: Nothing. Okay.

JD: There were frequent air raids, as I said. One I remember particularly: we were just coming with -- we were escorting the ships from Espiritu Santo up to Guadalcanal. Going through the channel somewhat restricted maneuverability, and [here comes?] another raid, big formation of bombers, Bettys again, a V-shaped formation 8 or 10,000 feet up there. That didn't worry us too much because we knew where they would be (inaudible) [above?], and so you understand that (inaudible) here, they're going to hit you over there. So you wait till they get to that point and then you do a sharp turn. And, of course, the trick is to turn and hope that the guy in the airplane hasn't outguessed you and [guessed by turning?]. But we avoided at least three bombings that way. And I remember in this particular one they came awful close, and they did damage the stern of one of the transports (inaudible). I think she was [saved?], but (inaudible) for a while. Another incident I remember was shortly after landing. I think it was probably the day of that air attack that I mentioned earlier. One of the -- an ammunition ship in the formation was hit. And [it was bad?]. It was burnt, and it burned for about two days and (inaudible) with the explosions. I don't know what finally came of it but I

think we may have had (inaudible) [torpedo?] get it out of the way. (break in audio) PT boats. I believe we towed the PT-109 up there one time. I do know we had the PT-109 -- this was Kennedy's boat -- alongside, and that [had mentioned?] one of the [longer?] fleets, (inaudible). Most of our crew were very experienced men. This was 1942. They were all career people who weren't Johnny-come-lately draftees, but they knew their [missions?]. (break in audio) A few Filipinos aboard. They were steward [waits?], I think, mostly the Filipinos did in the Navy in those days. In fact, that continued as a trend up until 20 or 40 years after that. They weren't restricted to that duty but they rather preferred it, apparently. We had a Filipino who was a seaman in the [headquarters?] who I understood was 60 years old, but he didn't look it. One of the things about those people: you can't tell how old they are. And we had a black chief steward, who was kind of a fun guy, who was really a husky fellow, and every time he went to general quarters he hung a meat ax on his belt. We used to think that God help any Jap that he might run across (laughter) after that. It also kept the pantry in pretty good shape, because nobody would ever dare go in there to steal any goodies from [the pantry?]. (break in audio) I joined the ship in -- so we invaded Guadalcanal in August

of '42, early August. On August the 26th we had taken up (inaudible) torpedoes (inaudible) shooting squadron, which was then based in Tulagi. We were about to leave when we got asked by General [Vanderbilt?], who was one of the Marines in the Battle of Guadalcanal, [which was very fierce in those days?], the stories told of the battle in the Matanikau River. This was about that time. He asked us to stand by to give him some shore bombardment help in the afternoon. This was in the morning, around ten o'clock, when sighted coming over the horizon there were three Japanese destroyers. There were two ships in our formation. The skipper of the other ship -- the other ship was the *Trevor* -- was a senior captain, and therefore he also had the command. And he opted to make a run for it. We were two old destroyers. The Japs were new destroyers. The Japs had 4.7-inch guns. We had 3-inch guns. Our maximum range was something like 13,000 yards, and [these were?] 15,000. [They had us out-spiced?], because we had removed one of the boilers in the old *Zane* in order to (inaudible), so we only had three boilers. Our maximum speed was 27 knots. I believe this Japanese destroyer probably went 32 or 35. But we hightailed it out to sea and headed down Sealark Channel. Sealark Channel (inaudible) Guadalcanal.

BP: The same channel they call the Slot?

JD: Yeah, it runs into the Slot. We had a running gun battle then for the next 20, 25 minutes. My battle station at this point was down in the forward fire room. I was now in the Engineering Department. My captain was doing what was appropriate rotating on all ships, one to another. So I didn't see this, and probably just as well, because I sat down there and [say my deeds?], and thinking about what might happen if a shell came through the bulkhead. The Japanese were very good gunners but they made a mistake. I was [gunnery officer?]. And the mistake they made was they had aligned their guns so well that the shells landed very close together. It was very, very tight packed. What you wanted, you want to align the guns so [the pattern?] will cover may be 50 to 100 yards. Because during the [time of flight?] of the shell, then the target can't get out from under the pattern, [which you expect?] (inaudible). What the Japs were doing, their pattern was so tight that the shells were landing within 10 or 15 yards of each other. Soon as we saw the landing, we would zig, and the shells would then land where we were. They had (inaudible) a few [straddles?] of ours. And it's interesting that the shells were coming down -- we were [quite extremely close?]. So the shells were coming down at a sharp angle. Put down all

the halyards on the yardarm, except the one holding the American flag, as they went through the rigging and down and missed the ship, into the water.

BP: The shells actually went through your rigging?

JD: That's the only way they could've taken care of those halyards. But one of them landed on one of our 3-inch guns. It hit the (inaudible). And it's an open-mount, [gun here?], and (inaudible) [shield?] (inaudible) [go by?] (inaudible). Just about that time when we thought we were done for, the Japs broke off their attack. They then went over and sank a tug, the [Seminal?], which was (inaudible) support off Lunga Point. We didn't get any air support from Guadalcanal because there were frequent storms there. The Japs [flew?] over, and make holes in the runway with a bomb, and then (inaudible) in the mud. They couldn't get the planes off. They finally did get some planes off, and the planes reported that one of the [stores?] was on fire when they first got out there. We got credit for having hit a ship. Quite amazing, because they were at our extreme range, but we were happy to take credit for it. Interestingly enough, one of these sailors from that ship -
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BP: The Japanese ship?

JD: Japanese ship. The Japanese ship was later sunk in another battle. A sailor was captured, and a POW of ours [got out?], and I think he became a minister or a priest or something. But anyway, he wrote a book, and in the book he mentions that battle (inaudible). His story, though, was more about the time when [he got sunk?]. I don't have that book, but one of the ship's mates, he had sent out copies, [excerpts?] from it. I'm wandering now. Let's get back to business here. (break in audio) After we'd been hit, I was again [with?] the junior officer [aboard?]. The junior officer was [George?]. So we happened to have the division doctor aboard, fortunately, so they appointed me anesthesiologist on the destroyer. The boardroom table is an operating table, operating lab built in [another?] (inaudible) destroyer. So there we were, and so forth. I was (inaudible). The fellow we were treating was [carbosently?], a very burly fellow who had had a one-inch piece of his shin [sticking out?] (inaudible) --

BP: And this is from that shell that hit the [gunner?].

JD: Yes, he was a part of [the gunner?].

BP: Oh, I see.

JD: (inaudible).

BP: [Yeah, okay?].

JD: And so my job was to -- the doctor [got us?] just simply a little colander, strainer, with gauze in it. Hold it over the guy's nose, [can of?] (inaudible), and dip it in. Took two and a half cans of (inaudible) to put the guy out. He was built like an ox. But that was part of the adventure, also, the first time I ever acted as an operating assistant. The [patent?] doctor patched him up, and, of course, he was quite (inaudible). He got shipped off to a hospital first chance they got. I don't have any idea what happened to him, again. Some of the trips we sometimes anchored in Tulagi harbor. I visited the classmates of mine who were with the PT squadron based there. This is the squadron that John F. Kennedy (inaudible). One of the members of that squadron lives here in Sacramento. I mentioned him earlier, Ted Robinson. You know Robinson. He had some fame for the reason that after Kennedy got [cut in two?], Ted Robinson was onboard one of the PT boats that went out there, and that was the PT boat that rescued JFK. He knew JFK, and he has a picture of himself with JFK (inaudible) that they took pictures of themselves with. Two of my classmates were William Godfrey, and another was Bartholomew Connolly. Both of them were buddies of mine at one time; both of them are now deceased. Bill Godfrey died many years ago. Bart Connolly died about five or six years

ago. Connolly, I remember -- well, one of our adventures was we would go up there -- our only liberty in those days is once in a while you'd get off the ship, and I remember we got off the ship in Tulagi harbor, and [went swimming, paddled around?], and very beautiful little coral fish that were there. Another time, went over to the PT boat fellas' encampment. They had been issued Army tents as a place to live, because you can't live aboard a PT boat that was based [in the sea?]. What they did was they traded the tents to the natives of the village there and took over the village, and the natives would happily go off and live in the tents. So they had this [thatch hut?] village. And I remember we had a party there one afternoon there. Torpedo alcohol is a very good quality material, and that and the wild limes from Tulagi harbor made for a pretty interesting potion, and we had more fun (laughter) drinking what we called Tulagi torpedoes. That was back in August, September, October. In December, we were sent down to Sydney, Australia. And first break we'd had, and we were there for about a week or so for recreation and some maintenance for the ship. And I remember going to gunnery school along Botany Bay. It was [at least?] skeet shooting, which is something you do frequently in military training in order to [hit?] some (inaudible) [target?]. I

came back to the ship one night, just about midnight. When I got there, they were [cleaning?] the gangway. The ship had been ordered to proceed immediately to sea to look for a Liberty ship that had been torpedoed somewhere between Australia and New Zealand. That's about a thousand miles from Sydney over to Wellington, New Zealand. If I'd been another five minutes late I would have missed it, but I got there just in time to go aboard, and we sailed with about two thirds of our crew. We [steamed?] for about a day, and then we get to the presumed location, and you just can't imagine how forlorn it is out on the high seas with nothing around but ocean, and it was a bit choppy. And eventually we found a whaleboat. Again, [that's where the?] forlorn (inaudible). Little boat, all by itself, in the middle of nowhere, a thousand miles [from?]. There were 14 members - - the crew was in this whaleboat, 14 of them. What had happened was this Liberty ship had been torpedoed, and so the ship, Liberty ship (inaudible) [that much?], [just in the Sea of Acton?]. There was a hole in it the size of a (inaudible) truck. What had happened was the ship was filled with a load of hides from Australia, [sheep wool?], I suppose, [mutton kind of things?], wool hides and cowhides. And that gave it buoyancy, even though it had (inaudible) hole inside of it. The thing (inaudible) the

crew had abandoned ship to the whaleboat, and then the ship didn't sink, and then they couldn't get back on. And the reason they couldn't get back on was (inaudible) on the side of the ship, and the other was [a fair?] wind was blowing, and it blew the ship past the whaleboat, and there was no way they could get back, and the ship kept drifting off. We finally found it 19 miles from where it had been reported (inaudible). So we took these people aboard, and I remember we gave the captain my cabin. I gave him a pair of my khakis also, because (inaudible) a couple of days. And fixed him all up, and took him on to Wellington, where then we had two days in Port Wellington. And after he left the ship, I found in my cabin a .38-caliber revolver, which I immediately bring to the captain's attention, and the captain took into his custody, and that's the last I ever saw of it. The skipper [also had a?] .38-caliber revolver, but I never saw it.

BP: What happened to the Liberty ship?

JD: The Liberty ship was eventually picked up by some ship out, tow it back in [where it?] (inaudible). (break in audio)
The name of that ship was the *SS Pete H. Burnett*. In February of 1943, we were sent off to land a small party on an island called Anuta, also called Cherry Island.

BP: Anuta?

JD: A-N-U-D-A [*sic*].

BP: Anuta.

JD: It was an island in the Santa Cruz group. We were sent up there -- I think it was a meteorological (inaudible) there, an outfit that could then give us some [help in?] weather conditions. And it was... (break in audio) We had an uneventful voyage to the place. The interesting part of it simply was that it was such a primitive place, it was exactly what you see in movies of the South Pacific, with the uncultured natives that came out in (inaudible), and some of them swam out to the ship. We were as close as we could get, which was probably a quarter of a mile off the beach. And we had a very difficult time there because the only transportation we had, of course, was our whaleboat, and they sent people in, and the whaleboat capsized in the surf, and it was very difficult business, [trying to get a boat on the beach?]. Surf (inaudible). But we did... (break in audio) But I do remember we had these natives -- they looked like [cannibals?] -- aboard, [their loincloths?], and woven hats. One of them was the chief, who we were able to communicate with a bit. He knew a little bit of [English?]. And one of the primary questions was were there any Japs there. And no, there weren't any. They did recognize us, and they indicated that they were

[flying?] towards the American planes that [used to go by?], and they pointed to our flag and said (inaudible). Anyway, not much of a story there, but it was one of the adventures. (break in audio) February of 1943 -- February the 23rd, in fact -- on the 22nd they had started moving up the [chain now?] in Guadalcanal. We landed (inaudible) on the (inaudible) islands and we worked our way up.

BP: And the Marines [were?], the Army?

JD: This is Army. They had set up the night before some landing craft [this island?], about 100 miles, [130?] miles (inaudible) [from Guadalcanal?], and landed a battalion of Army troops. Then they sent us up a couple of destroyers. We had a [couple aboard ours?], and sneak up there in the dark of night, and [this appointed army replaced?] (inaudible) [these guys?] ashore.

BP: Now, you remember the name of the island?

JD: It was Rennell Island. Rennell.

BP: Rennell Island, okay.

JD: R-E-N-N-E-L-L, I believe it was spelled. We anchored in a little cove. This was a group of islands and waterways. We anchored in the proper place, and they couldn't raise anybody ashore, so the captain said to me -- I was, again, on the midwatch -- go get into the boat, and go with (inaudible) landing craft (inaudible). So we put the Army

company in the boat, and I got in with them. The recognition signal was for the three flashes on a red flashlight, answered by [a flash?]. We were going in slowly, dark of night. We cut the engine, and were approaching [then?], and just brought up the (inaudible) beach. And I give the signal with three flashes, and there was no answer, nothing. And so there was an Army second lieutenant in command of the company. And here the two of us (inaudible) and [decided?] we're not getting shot at, at least we can [go in?] and see what, if anything, was going on. So we very quietly approached. [Well, what happened?], [we debarked?] the troops, and (inaudible) [gunmen?].

BP: On [what?]?

JD: On the beach, right where we landed. The guys went out and they woke up the gunmen. They were sound asleep.

BP: Oh. (laughter)

JD: So everything is fine. I go back to the ship, and we go back to Guadalcanal, and then [deep in slumber?], and at seven o'clock in the morning (inaudible) wakes me up, says, "The admiral wants to see you over in Guadalcanal." The admiral is Admiral Turner. Admiral Turner was the commander of the South Pacific forces. He was in command of the landing operation [to land there?]. So what happens

then is I get up and get dressed, all bleary-eyed, a PT boat alongside. The PT boat [charges?] across 15, 20 miles across the sound at 40 knots in this PT boat, and I (inaudible) [right in a row?]. On the other side, there's a jeep waiting for me that takes me through the jungle, wet as hell, [and rocking?] on the very muddy [track?], a little tent village, which was the headquarters for (inaudible) staff there. And the tents had wooden floors and wooden sides, about [four feet high?]. So I thought that was rather interesting. The chief [staff troops got out there?] (inaudible). I said, "No, (inaudible) first [bacon?] I've had in six months." The Army [would eat?] better than the Navy. And he sent me over to Admiral Turner, and Admiral Turner wanted to know (inaudible). What had happened was they landed the battalion there a couple of days before and they didn't have any communication, so they couldn't... (phone ringing) [Forget it?]. They couldn't [hear anything from them?], couldn't [do anything?]. And [I was the only guy in the world?] (inaudible), [so I thought this was?] (inaudible). "The guy [who's running the?] (inaudible) wants to know what's going on on the (inaudible)." So I [described just?] exactly what had happened, and (inaudible) adventures during the war. (break in audio) We escorted the USS

Portland and some transports from Guadalcanal down to New Zealand. The *Portland* had had, I think, either its bow or its stern partly blown off by Jap torpedoes. On the way we ran into a typhoon, which was the worst weather I have ever seen in my 30-year career. It was so rough, you could look out from the destroyer's bridge -- you had to look up at about a 30-degree angle to see the waves. It was one of those storms where everything was [green?]. The water, the spray was blowing in streaks horizontally on the surface. This is the time we thought we were going to be inundated by this wave, simply chugged its way up over and down the other side. And of course, most of these things happened at night. The middle of the night our depth charge racks started coming apart. The safety bars they had had at the tail end of the [whole?] depth charge got dislodged, so (inaudible) the gut charges started roaring over the stern and going boom, (laughter) because [they were carried?] the weather conditions (inaudible). About that time, we lost steering control. Our communications from the bridge to the steering engine went out. So they sent myself and the first lieutenant back to the steering engine room, a small compartment about six feet wide, and about eight feet deep, with a steering engine in the middle of the damn thing, hardly enough room to move, and the two of us were down

there manipulating what they call the -- I don't remember the name of it now -- the trick wheel. There's a wheel on the steering engine (inaudible) steer the ship. (break in audio) Here?

BP: Now, you're going to where? You were escorting the *Portland* down to where?

JD: New Zealand. But the only point of that story was --

BP: The typhoon. And everybody made it through the typhoon, though.

JD: Yeah.

BP: Okay.

JD: [We're on tape?]?

BP: Yeah, [we're on tape?].

JD: Yes, nothing further. We got to Auckland, and (inaudible). And we went then on about our business. In June of 1943, on June the 30th, our ship (inaudible) and another (inaudible), the *Talbot*, embarked a company of Army troops, and our mission was to land them on the little -- the next island up the chain, one of the islands next to Munda Airfield. Munda Airfield was [back?] (inaudible) down there. It was a [radio?] of Guadalcanal. And it was just preliminary to invading that, which they did the next day.

BP: And are they invading Munda?

JD: Yeah.

BP: Okay.

JD: Yes, invading Munda. We were on an island near there -- I'm not sure whether [they joined it?] or not -- called [Mbume?], [M-B-U-M-E?], Mbume Island, a little village called [Sasavere?].

BP: Sasavere.

JD: [S-A-S-A-V-E-R-E?] village, on M-B-U-M-E island, landing port, one of the [advanced ports?], landing on [majority?] (inaudible). Well, we're doing this at three o'clock in the morning (inaudible), [try to?] back off. Managed to back off, and [ran into a pile of coral?]. And here we are, dead in the water. They jettison their anchor and some other stuff, and (inaudible) [eventually arrived?] and towed us off, and then we were headed back to Guadalcanal under tow. This was probably, I guess, eight hours' journey, maybe, from there to Guadalcanal. Not long after we got on the tow, we're heading back, and (inaudible) on its way back, another Japanese air raid. And I remember particularly, again, I'm back in the 3-inch gun-mounted stern. And just off the quarter was two airplanes, a Zero and a Hellcat, I think it was, going around (inaudible), and they couldn't have been more than 2,000 feet up -- you could almost touch them -- chasing each other. I think they both got away, because by that time a Corsair comes

along just on our left. He'd been shot up, and this was just opposite us. [The guy below?] (inaudible), and (inaudible) [picked him up?]. We came through that unscathed. However, they had damaged the [flagship?], the [FL Turner flagship?], for that landing, the transport, the *USS McCawley*, M-C-C-A-W-L-E-Y (inaudible) [it was pronounced?]. [M-K-G-C?] (inaudible). They abandoned the ship, the staff and everybody off the ship. The ship was left there derelict, and they fully planned to go back and salvage it the next day. However, the PT squadron had been told that [after the landings?] that there were no US ships kept in the area, and so the PT squadron goes out, and they [sink?] (inaudible). (laughter) Which reminds me of another story that Bart Connolly -- Bartholomew, who I mentioned earlier -- told me one day while we were out drinking Tulagi martinis. They'd gone out one night and saw [this shape?] out there (inaudible) position, so they fired torpedoes at it, and it turned out to be an island. The commodore the next day of the squadron [looked at the report?], and explained where the torpedoes went. Asked him, "Did you hit it?" They couldn't even [report that?]. (laughter) In early July, my relief reported aboard. My relief was an interesting person. His name was Herman Wouk. He became later famous for the stories of *The Caine*

Mutiny, The Winds of War, and a very good writer. I haven't seen him since, but the crew of the *Zane* have a pretty active reunion group, and I understand he attended one of the reunions a few years ago. We started up... Oh, we're now disabled. We had one [screw?] that would operate. They gave us some emergency repairs, and on August the 1st we started the long way home on one [strait?], from Guadalcanal to San Francisco. We got back in the end of August, early September. In September, I got 40, 50 [instructions?]. So I left the *SS Zane* and all of the escapades we had had. The sequence of this is that one of the crew members, Joseph Gunterman, he had been a sonar man second class on the ship.

BP: Gunterman?

JD: Gunterman, G-U-N-T-E-R-M-A-N.

BP: Okay.

JD: Joseph E. He had been a sonar man second class on the *Zane*, now today living in Waterbury, Connecticut. I understand he did very well in real estate. And he undertook to visit Sasavere village, where we had [dropped our anchor?]. And he found that the natives had raised the anchor, and they had it up there on the beach. And they remembered the incident. The chief -- maybe he was still there -- chief had died, and his son was there, and the son

knew all about it, and [if it?] ever happened to them [at Sasavere?]. (laughter) So what he did was he provided the funds, and he and someone else who I don't know and the natives developed a little memorial they would display around the anchor, and there was a picture of that in the [trio?] that I did (inaudible), and there's a plaque that is memorializing our escapades, the *USS Zane*, [on the island of Sasavere?]. I had no contact with POWs in those days. I was aboard the destroyer. We were at sea all the time, didn't have much contact with anybody. And I had no contact whatever with the Japanese, except when [they'd show up with the bombs?]. You asked on the way what was going on back home. I can't say much about that. I'd been cooped up at the Naval Academy for three years, graduated, and then two weeks later I was on my way to Guadalcanal. I last saw my mother on graduation day, and my brother at that time was in Army training somewhere. I'd last seen him in [June of?] 1942. You also asked what my thoughts were as to what I had done during the war at this late date. I think I contributed much or more than most. That old ship, the *Zane*, that I was on contributed more than most other ships to defeating the Japs. I then had two more years of the war on the *Allen M. Sumner*, Destroyer number 692, from October of '43 until our return at the end

of the war in about October of 1945. I think I'd done the best that I could have done by getting through the Naval Academy, and serving as an officer during the war. I'm quite sure that if I hadn't gone that route, then my bones would probably be bleaching on some island in the Pacific. There was little other choice there in those days.

Everybody else was involved in the war. And as I said, if I hadn't done that, then my bones would probably be lying on some beach. And that, I think, is the extent of what you wanted to know. (break in audio) This was probably one year [of deployment?].

BP: So you (inaudible). (break in audio)

JD: I left [to see?] the new construction. I went back to a... First I went to gunnery school in Washington, and I was pulled out of that early and put in charge of the [pre-commissioning?] (inaudible) of the new destroyers (inaudible). After about six weeks of that, the commission had shifted, and then we went over to Brooklyn Navy Yard for some additional outfitting. We rebuilt the bridge, and we did our shakedown training in the Atlantic. I think I was part of the [needle?] at one time. And then we went around the [Suez?] Canal --

BP: Why don't we stop here for a minute?

(break in audio)

JD: Spent the rest of the war on the *Sumner*. (break in audio)
On the *Sumner*, with Halsey's third fleet of carriers [off
of?] (inaudible) Invasion of the Lingayen Gulf, and [we had
quite a size?] in Ormoc Bay one day on that ship and some
others. I left the ship as executive officer some three
years later. During my time on the *Sumner*, we were
(inaudible) for the atom bomb test, and then not long after
that I left there and went to the (inaudible) on the
Hawaiian islands. From there I went to shore duty in
postgraduate school in Monterey, where I was on the staff,
and [established school there?]. And then I went to [the
staff?] -- I went to the flag lieutenant, the commander of
battleship cruisers of (inaudible) fleet, and I happened to
leave duty there the very morning that the *Missouri* ran
aground, and that's another [huge?] story. In August of
1950, I'd been there for eight months. The Korean War
started. All kinds of shakeups occurred. My boss got
transferred. I was transferred to a cruiser, the *USS Des
Moines*, and spent an extra year aboard her. Left her as
gunnery officer for my first -- my second command, a
destroyer (inaudible) fleet. From there, to commander
amphibious force staff, where I was in the operations
department. Then back to Monterey for a three-year
(inaudible) tour. From there to my command of my

destroyer, the *USS Benner*, DDR-807, in the Pacific. [We had?] several Pacific [cruises?]. We had quite a record on that ship. From the *Benner* I then was ordered to [Chief of the Naval?] section of the Military Assistance Group in Vietnam, and I spent an extra year in the war in Vietnam. I left there for the Pentagon, where I was on Secretary McNamara's staff, in a section called... (break in audio) In a section of the Secretary's staff called International Security [Affairs?]. I was the desk officer of Thailand, (inaudible), Australia, New Zealand. And I had a great many -- very interesting experience there with very high-level people. And so (inaudible) desk officer to be the escort for dignitaries who would come to visit, and secretaries from foreign countries. So we met quite a number of very highly-placed people. One of my other proud days was when I went down to meet the limousine of Prime Minister Menzies of Australia. He had been by a year before. I met him at the same place, and then I called McNamara, and went to the session. And the desk officer has to sit there and take notes. So this is the second year, and I'm down there at the Pentagon (inaudible) and a limousine drives up. The door opens. Mr. Menzies gets out and he says, "Hello, Captain Drachnik. How nice to see you

again." (laughter) That, obviously, [from?] the Prime Minister of Australia --

BP: [He remembered your name?].

JD: Well, he was my biggest fan in those days. He died several years ago. He was out snorkeling on one of the reefs out there and he drowned.

BP: Oh, I remember that. He just disappeared and they never found his body.

JD: Oh, is that?

BP: Yeah, they think maybe a shark got him. I remember that very well.

JD: Let's see... So after a tour on the Secretary's staff -- all these tours last about two years, then you're on to something else. I went to the National War College, a very fine school, in Fort McNair, Virginia. Interestingly enough, at one time each of the services was commanded by one of my classmates: Coast Guard; Army; Air Force; and the CNO of the Navy. I never did get out of this highly competitive operation [before I was?] (inaudible). I went from the National War College to my legion command, which was one of the requirements for advancement in the Navy: you've got to have commanded [at the company level?], and your major command [through most of?] (inaudible) your career. I went to Amphibious Squadron 4, (inaudible) [12?]

ships. You would deploy [16 different groups?], and they had a task force, and had deployed in the Caribbean with five ships and a battalion of 2,000 [Marines?]. Embarked (inaudible) flagship *USS Boxer*, which you can see in that picture over there on the wall. Then we deployed to the Mediterranean, and I toured the Mediterranean as commander of the Task Force 6 fleet, an amphibious ready group. We were ready. We were the same outfit that later [was sent to?] Mogadishu to be part of that squad over there. The battalion of Marines embarked, and about five or six ships -- it was a fleet amphibious landing, artillery and the tanks ready to go. [We put?] those [long spaces?] in those days, [and called it?] (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

BP: Preposition ships.

JD: Well, (inaudible) [fleet?].

BP: (inaudible) those preposition ships outside (inaudible) [same thing?].

JD: Well, it's a slightly different thing. [If you position?] a ship and the ship [was loaded?], you [would set the dock?] (inaudible). These were cast (inaudible) operating fleets that were underway. The 6 fleet was in existence, had been there ever since the end of World War II, until when I retired in '72. It was still there. I was over there in '69, I guess it was. I don't know if the 6 fleet

is still being there or not. I think you still have carrier, or -- I'm sure it's (inaudible), especially since the collapse of the evil empire. I went from my amphibious squadron... (inaudible). (break in audio) (inaudible) squadron. I was [selected as?] Chief of Staff of the Amphibious Force under Admiral [Luther Heinz?], a very fine guy. I had two years there.

BP: H-E-I-N-T?

JD: [H-E-I-N-T-Z-E?]. He died about [ten?] years ago now, unfortunately. And then I went to the Pentagon, where I was in charge of jointly the Marine Corps Study Groups until my retirement on June the 1st of 1972. For what it's worth, after that I went looking for a job. We moved back to California. Someone said there were some pretty good jobs down in Sacramento. I came down and applied. I wound up as a chief of staff to the Lieutenant Governor Ed Reinecke.

BP: How do you spell that name?

JD: R-E-I-N-E-C-K-E, Reinecke.

BP: Reinecke.

JD: That was an interesting year and a half, at which time Ed Reinecke got caught in the backlash of Watergate. They had a trumped up charge that they claimed he had lied to a Judiciary Committee that had been asking him about the

matter of the scandal associated with the Republican National Convention that was held at the del Coronado Hotel in San Diego. The question put to Reinecke was had he negotiated with I.T.T. for the use of the hotel for free for the convention headquarters. At that time there was another scandal involving I.T.T., some gal named Bella Abzug, Congressman from New York who was involved. It was a great scandal. It turned out that the del Coronado Hotel was owned by I.T.T., and Ed Reinecke didn't know it, so when he said no, he hadn't negotiated with them, he was right. But they used that as a reason to eviscerate him. He was then, at that time, a candidate for governor, and they play these kinds of gigs, and that's why I don't spend much time worrying about the mud they throw (inaudible). So Reinecke was forced to resign as Lieutenant Governor when he was indicted by the Judiciary Committee for this. And I was then picked up by (inaudible) on Ronald Reagan's staff, and I am one of the few people around who can say I used to be Ronald Reagan's [cabinet minister?]. After he ended the administration, we were there about four or five months, until January of '45 --

BP: Forty-five?

JD: Well... No, '75.

BP: Seventy-five.

JD: Seventy... November of '74. I went there in March of ['74?]. I left in September of '74. And in November '74, Jerry Brown was elected Governor. He then took over from January the 4th, I guess it was, of '75. It was a Monday. On Friday, we had a staff [concert?] (inaudible) governor's staff, (inaudible) staff. He was a chief of staff. And he said, "Well, fellas, just don't bother to come to work." And that was the end of that crew. I then screwed around for a year, year and a half, trying to figure out what to do next. And it was apparent to me that I (inaudible) what I really wanted to do when I was in high school, and that was I wanted to be a lawyer. And the principal reason I wanted to be a lawyer was the only guy in Vacaville who could afford to buy his son a LaSalle roadster in 193 was the local attorney who was now the judge. So I took the LSAT, enrolled at McGeorge School of Law, and four years later I graduated, and after some trials and tribulations I passed the bar. In 1983, at the age of now 64, I opened a law office in Sacramento, and I was a general practitioner, and practiced for nine years -- [eight?] years, I guess it was -- until '91, when I [knew that second that?] I didn't have to do it to eat, and there's no real excuse to run a private law practice unless you really have to do it to

eat. So I retired at that point, and I've been happy ever since. (laughter)

END OF AUDIO FILE