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(Nimitz Museum)

CENTER FOR PACIFIC WAR STUDIES
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Interview with
WARREN DECIORES
U. S. NAVY

*No final sent to
vet due to age
of interview and
by whom
JC
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ORAL INTERVIEW
WARREN DECIORES

Today is Thursday 4 January the year 2001. I am interviewing Mr. Warren Deciores in Fairfield, California. The interviewer is Bruce ^{Pettitt} Pettitt. Tell me when you were born and where you were born.

MR. DECIORES: Oh, boy, you're racking the ole man's mind.

MR. PETTITT: I'm going to make it tough on you.

MR. DECIORES: I'm ninety-two and my memory is pretty fair for the years' service it has provided.

MR. PETTITT: I interviewed a retired admiral, Francis Thomas. He was 95 when I interviewed him.

MR. DECIORES: At my time as an enlisted man and at the time as a commissioned officer and I was very fortunate. I retired as a lieutenant commander and that's equivalent to a major in the air force or army.

MR. PETTITT: Where were you born?

MR. DECIORES: In Lawson County, California, that's the northeastern part of California right along side of Nevada.

MR. PETTITT: What was your father doing up there? Was he in logging or something?

MR. DECIORES: No, there was no logging in that area then. That was a very impoverished poor, desperately poor, area, and pretty near all the work was related to agriculture. My folks were persistent in struggling and finally got out of that area in just about World I time.

MR. PETTITT: How long had they been there? What took them there to begin with? Were they second or third generations?

MR. DECIORES: They came there. My father was born in California, my mother in New Mexico, and my grandparents all came there by covered wagon. They were pioneers. The original planner or un-planner of this tribe of ours came from the Alsace Loraine country in those days. Germany had owned them for awhile and France and they were Huguenots so they had to get out of there. Some of them went into Holland and Great Britain, England. This old first fellow of mine, I'll think of his name, he joined the British military to come over here and straighten out the colonists. He could see that they were losing and he hid out for just about two years. Then he came back into prominence and joined the colonists. He later became a segment in the army that developed into the president's body guard. At the close of the war, he was granted a large track of land in Virginia. At that time Virginia was all one state. It wasn't Virginia and West Virginia. Of course, I've been back in that area. I had a distant cousin that collected a lot of material on that tribe of ours and he traced it back to the Roman soldiers. Some of them were Roman soldiers.

MR. PETTITT: The family name is Deciores.

MR. DECIORES: That's how that name kind of gets in there.

MR. PETTITT: Deciores, it does sound very ancient. It does sound like a Greco-Roman name, Deciores, yes.

MR. DECIORES: So that's how we got over here. How come I got around to where I was born was my grandparents were pioneers, came in by covered wagon.

MR. PETTITT: And you enlisted in the navy when?

MR. DECIORES: December 3, 1928. My folks were living in San Jose and I was sworn in the navy in San Francisco.

MR. PETTITT: You're how old now?

MR. DECIORES: Nineteen. When I graduated from high school I could sense there was no work available. So I went down to the offices of the military recruiting places and there was no advertising in those days. I was accepted in the navy. They didn't want anybody. There was no appropriation but for some unknown reason to me, I was accepted. So I shipped in the navy and went down to San Diego for training. So I had quite an illustrious career but I never tried to make myself very prominent. I knew that enlisted man went in the military to work and that's the only reason he was there. He wasn't there to be a big showoff and up before the public. Get in there and do your work and behave yourself if you wanted to advance. And I wanted to advance. You didn't advance very rapidly in those days and finally we started to prepare for war.

MR. PETTITT: About when?

MR. DECIORES: And things opened up and I advanced rather rapidly in comparison to what we did before.

MR. PETTITT: What year would you say we started preparing?

MR. DECIORES: About 1938. Roosevelt came into power and he knew we were going to have war. He sat on his ass with ole pipe-smoker, the secretary of, I remember him as a pipe smoker.

MR. PETTITT: I remember General Mac Arthur was a pipe smoker. Secretary of State Cordell Hull?

MR. DECIORES: I think that's who this fellow was. I'll think of his name maybe. I can always recall the names once in a while just really to refresh my memory. So I had what I consider an illustrious career, very interesting. People here tell some of the stories of my experiences as a sailor and I've been encouraged to get a recorder and write a book and I don't care. Nobody gives a damn what you did or who you were, it's what you are now.

MR. PETTITT: There's a real renewed interest though in World War II right now. In fact, some very good books have come out that have been very popular with the public.

MR. DECIORES: I really liked the navy.

MR. PETTITT: Were you a corps man from beginning to end?

MR. DECIORES: I was listed as an apprentice seaman, and I was chosen for the hospital corps school. I went to about four months' hospital corps training program in a school.

MR. PETTITT: What year was that?

MR. DECIORES: I graduated in about June, 1929. I went to this old hospital on Mare Island for my basic training duty. I acquired a reputation as a good worker and I got to work in the operating room which I thoroughly enjoyed. I'll always claim that I was one of the best minor surgery first aid-men in the navy and I was a damn good operating room technician. Later on I moved back of a typewriter and I could rattle those keys pretty well. From there on I started into administration.

MR. PETTITT: Did you serve mostly on ships in those early days?

MR. DECIORES: About half the time probably on ship duty and half time ashore. I have quite a record for sea duty for a hospital corpsman. A lot of them wanted to stay on shore duty. I made it possible for some of them because I did a hell of a lot of sea duty

and I liked sea duty. Those line captains, especially Academy ones, were damn good personnel people. They knew how to handle discipline. Medical doctors became commanding officers of their hospitals. They were the old father-type men, every sob should be excused once for killing his mother.

MR. PETTITT: That's how they thought?

MR. DECIORES: That's what I considered. These are all my ideas, not theirs. They were nice good people. They were good to me and they were good doctors, especially the ones I worked with in the operating room. If you want to hear my contribution, it would be really prior to the World War because after we're in the war and I went to sea, it was routine duty. Our ship did a hell of a good job, and we were in every theater of operation that our country had relative to the war. And we did a damn good job.

MR. PETTITT: Did you spend any time in the Marianas?

MR. DECIORES: We were there, and prior to the war, I did about two years duty on Guam. I was an outdoor guy and I was on an out station called Agate(sp?), and I patrolled our district or examined it. I knew it and I got to see the ending part of Guam and some of the beauty that some people never saw. By the way, do you have a business card?

MR. PETTITT: Yes, I do.

MR. DECIORES: I have a very difficult time with names even including my own.

Thank you.

MR. PETTITT: Did you get to know any of the natives very well on Guam?

MR. DECIORES: Outstanding, they were the loveliest people I've ever lived with, and I didn't take advantage of them and they were most considerate of me. I was on an

outstation for one year, delivered native babies, saved a couple of lives, did some good first aid work with shark bites on one man.

MR. PETTITT: Remember any names of the people?

MR. DECIORES: All I know is they were Chamoris(sp?), we used to call them Chamoris in those days. They are Guamanions now.

MR. PETTITT: The Chamoris on Saipan called themselves Chamoris.

MR. DECIORES: Anyway, are you interested in what the sailors do in general or comment about war with Japan?

MR. PETTITT: I'd like to hear what you have to say about it. What years were you in Guam?

MR. DECIORES: When old Roosevelt came into office and the war clouds gathered in Europe, those sailors have a strange sense of knowing the behavior of man. So the word got around that if we have troubles in Europe, we're going to have trouble with the Japs. They called them Japs then and we were encouraged to call them Japs during the war. I have to be very careful to say Japanese around select company. And sometimes these ??? intellectuals I'll call them Japs. And I wasn't a prisoner of war but I had several friends that were prisoners of war and they didn't live long after the war. It amuses me about these fat people in the United States. They have glandular troubles. We had some fat sailors. I don't know whether they had glandular troubles, but the loafers were always hanging around the galley. When some of them became prisoners of war, their glandular trouble was promptly cured because they lost a hell of a lot of weight. That I can attest to because I saw some of them after they were liberated, in fact, we picked up a whole prison camp in the Philippines on that hospital ship and brought them back to the United

States. When those fellows told me the treatment they were given, I have no damn sympathy for any abusive person, I don't give a damn who he is. And those Japs thought they were going to win the war and I did, too, when they hit Pearl Harbor. I said, "Boy, we're headed down the drain." How we won that war, the Japs must have been more confused than we were. And these 4-Fers working at defense plants and going to bible school. We had more people going to be priests and preachers going to school than you could shake a stick at.

MR. PETTITT: They were already in the navy?

MR. DECIORES: You're damn right.

MR. PETTITT: What years were you in Guam?

MR. DECIORES: Part of 1935, '36 and '37, and then I went to Parris Island, South Carolina. And those natives were the most fine persons and honest people I've ever lived in their neighborhood in any place in the world. I suppose it has all changed now because the Japs have come in there and started businesses and whenever you have Japs you have a cunning business man. I don't give a damn who he is.

MR. PETTITT: Yes, they are still very nice people.

MR. DECIORES: They're good people and they're industrious. Leading up to a thing I'll tell you about, a fellow had a place they used to call Shuna Hara's Gas Kitchen on Guam. A good man and we used to go down there once in awhile and have Shuna Hara's Chinese food. He was a good man, good business man. So one time this little 1st class petty officer, some of these men that I'm going to use their names were real good men. This guy's name was Ralph Nettnett.

MR. PETTITT: How do you spell that name?

MR. DECIORES: He was a 1st class petty officer, a hospital corpsman, and he asked ole Shuna Hara, "Shuna Hara are we ever going to have war with Japan?" Very intelligent man, he was in the officer category of the Japanese navy. There was about five or six of them there in Guam. The business men in the capitol of Guam, ??? He answered this way, very political answer, "You have a nice pet dog and you keep him in the back yard. Every day you go out there with a big club and you beat that dog and he keeps backing and backing and someday you will back him into a corner and he's going to come out and he's going to bite you." And that's what started me, the word "sanctions" wasn't used in those days, but I found out right then that sanctions don't work because we put Japan in that category with scrap metal, oil, steel for construction for their navy. How did they get it? They went right down through Java and that way and took it, rubber, oil, and they built a hell of a war machine. They made a big mistake when they hit Pearl Harbor. They didn't have an invasion force to come with them, been nothing to it. So I see we're going to have sanctions against that and it doesn't accomplish a damn thing. It really jitters a person that's dependent upon industry and commerce and business to survive. Going all over the world today with this hot air Clinton campaign. Well, here comes Mr. Bob and I'll see how long this will be. So that was my education to come along and then you help me to remember when I come back and I'll tell you about these Japanese that were situated in Guam in strategic places. One of them had the name of Okinawa, he was out there in Agate. I acquired about four or five fighting cocks, and in the evening, nice weather, we'd take a rooster down to the little place in the center of a little town and we'd train the fighting cocks. So one time I said, "Okinawa," So Aqui Walkein Carbelitto(sp?) He said "Warren, he doesn't know how to speak English. He doesn't

understand you.” I said, “Kein, the hell he doesn’t. That Jap knows every word you and I say. He probably speaks better English than either one of us.” And I really believe that. He was out there in Agate. There was a point out there in that district of Agat where you could look out on the ocean, Aliefen(sp?). In fact, the natives used to go up there at night with a big net to catch fish and the flying bass, natives called them (sp?), once in a while they would catch one. You could look out and really see. The marine patrolmen that had the district and I used to walk that district,. Once in awhile, we’d see Japanese men of war out there. Those Japs knew Guam Island for invasion places better than we did, I do think. Along about that time came along a bill in Congress to improve the Island of Guam. A guy from the State of New York, Hamilton Fish, whose last name was Fish, and I still see that name once in awhile in politics. He talked so much about the money but what they really had planned to do, our country, was to fortify that island especially the harbor. I think it was called Apra Harbor and there were about three little ships that used to supply the Island of Guam. I did a little duty on one of them, the USS GOLDSTAR. It would go to Japan and China and get supplies and bring them back to Guam and the Philippines. Then after you were on the island, the military people about a year, you could go on what they called “a health cruise”. I was on that ship for several months. I was on it when they went to the Philippines for repair and overhaul.

MR. PETTITT: What kind of ship was it?

MR. DECIORES: We had a place called Encubic Bay the Dewey Boating Drydock

PETTITT: What kind of ship was this?

MR. DECIORES: This was a little supply ship, auxiliary ship. They go to Japan to get coal. China they’d go to get produce and just for the military people to have a good

cruise and our people to do a little intelligence work or lack of intelligence whatever you want to call it. That was a comical old ship to be on and I didn't particularly like it because of all of the mixed type of passengers, women with children. It was really a hooligan navy, so I asked if I could go over to the hospital for duty. Those Japanese were really good intelligence people and so when the Japs captured Guam all those people appeared in their navy military uniforms.

Mr. PETTITT: Even the Japanese who had been living on Guam?

MR. DECIORES: The Japanese business men. I knew several corpsmen on Guam that were captured as prisoners of war. I saw a few of them after the war that were interned. One of them I'm going to name. His name was Johnny Ploka, damn good man. He was a qualified navy bomber. During one of his tours in Guam, he married this native girl. The father of this girl was the president of the bank of Guam, and I can't think of his name. But, anyway, so he was captured there and long after World War II, I went back to Guam on this aircraft carrier I was on.

MR. PETTITT: Which one?

MR. DECIORES: The USS VALLEY FORGE. There were two there, the BOXER and the VALLEY FORGE. Some of these corpsmen used to kid me. I was a commissioned officer then and, being a good politician, two aircraft carriers in the navy and I'm on one of them. I must be a good politician because I made it possible for some of those people doing duty in Washington.

MR. PETTITT: May I ask you a couple of questions?

MR. DECIORES: Go right ahead.

MR. PETTITT: Where were you when Pearl Harbor was bombed?

MR. DECIORES: I'd just been transferred off this transport the USS SHELMONT into the naval base in Norfolk, Virginia, for assignment. I was a first class petty officer then.

MR. PETTITT: Where did they assign you from there?

MR. DECIORES: I went to work for a couple of good men. They were building a hospital, I'll say in Norfolk, it was out in the area called LaHeina Road.

MR. PETTITT: LaHeina Road, then you were sent to Hawaii?

MR. DECIORES: Yes, there used to be an old army base there.

MR. PETTITT: That was on Maui?

MR. DECIORES: I knew quite a bit about procurement.

MR. PETTITT: Now this is LaHeina Road in Maui, Hawaii?

MR. DECIORES: No, this was out in Norfolk called Hampton Roads. I was assigned to the headquarters of the 6th Naval District. They had an old man there named Brannon.

He was a lieutenant World War I. I think he was a lieutenant. I don't know if he was called back to active duty or not. Then they had a captain medical corpsman, an old man, and I always referred to him as Grandma Moses. The navy was full of a lot of old people in the commissioned category in those days before the war. They couldn't do a thing and didn't intend to. So when the war came along, they found out they had better get some young people in those top navy jobs, Bull Halsey, Chester Nimitz, howling mad Smith. With the exception of Chester Nimitz, if it hadn't been for the war, nobody would ever have heard of those people. They were fighters but I'll tell you they had guts. I respected those fellows and I'll tell you this, they'd go in and fight.

MR. PETTITT: Did you know any of them personally?

MR. DECIORES: No. I just figured I was there to do a job and I tried to do a good one and I gave them a good shot in the navy. They're taking care of me now.

MR. PETTITT: What year did you retire?

MR. DECIORES: February, 1959.

MR. PETTITT: Thirty years, huh?

MR. DECIORES: A long time ago.

MR. PETTITT: Thirty-one years you had.

MR. DECIORES: I'm so old that people think I helped build the pyramids. When I came in the navy I didn't think I'd ever own anything or have anything. Twenty-two dollars a month but that was a damn sight better than walking the streets looking for work.

MR. PETTITT: That's how much you were paid when you first enlisted.

MR. DECIORES: First went in.

MR. PETTITT: When did you go aboard the hospital ship REFUGE?

MR. DECIORES: Well, I was advanced in rank and finally appointed a warrant officer. That was about 1942 or '43, about the time we went into war. They sent me to a naval hospital up in Portsmouth, Virginia. There were so many people around there that they didn't know who each other was. They didn't know whether they were working there or visitors. Finally I wrote to this lieutenant down in Washington and I said there must be some place for me for sea duty. I worked for him, and a chief warrant officer put me in building that hospital. I gave them a good shot and they were sure good to me. He came back and I was given orders to go down to Baltimore for this ship they converted to a hospital ship. I got on that thing and I went to sea and I stayed pretty quiet because it was

good duty,. Everybody had a job, they knew what they were supposed to do and they did it, wonderful group of people. Our medical unit came from that entire group of outstanding hospital, I can't figure that name, but oh, they were great. We had a staff of nurses and a chief nurse. They knew their job and that chief nurse, by the way, was a little young nurse on the hospital ship I was on, the USS RELIEF, when I was a young hospital corpsman and worked for this ladies sister in the operating room.

MR. PETTITT: They had navy nurses on the hospital ship?

MR. DECIORES: Navy nurses were always on hospital ships all the time I was in the navy.

MR. PETTITT: Do you remember any of their names?

MR. DECIORES: In those days they weren't commissioned.

MR. PETTITT: Oh, they weren't. Do you remember any of their names?

MR. DECIORES: All the ones I worked for, I remembered their names.

MR. PETTITT: The one you just mentioned, what was her name?

MR. DECIORES: Her name was Marinne. She was a topnotch gal.

MR. PETTITT: A career nurse?

MR. DECIORES: You bet.

MR. PETTITT: When did the REFUGE go to the Pacific?

MR. DECIORES: They went every place. We started off we would go to the Mediterranean and bring back patients from there to those hospitals on the east coast. We went up into the north Atlantic. They took us up there to Ireland going to use us on the Normandy invasion. The weather came up so brutal. In fact, they had that battle all planned and old Mr. Eisenhower said, "Well, we'll go through

with it.” And I’ll tell you that was a son of a gun. The sea was so rough they didn’t send us in there because there was no way we could have brought patients aboard. So we went on down the Mediterranean and we were in that group that invaded southern France. Well, what a campaign, and our troops, land-based troops, sailors, soldiers, marines and ships, they swept down through the German army so rapidly they brought those patients aboard. We got underway, had two German soldiers. I guess they decided he was going to live so they put him in stretcher and brought him out to the ship. We headed back to Naples. That harbor was in disarray but our Seabees got in there and established a pier and we unloaded those patients. We had a chief hospital corpsman could speak enough German to get a little history on those fellows. His name was Fitzsgruber, some of those names I’ll never forget. We were in the harbor at Naples for awhile and I knew a lot of people in the navy. I was a guy that got acquainted. I went over to shore and met a fellow I knew and he was a lieutenant junior grade by that time. I said, “Old Timer, do you have any access to any vehicles? Some of us would like to get to go to Pompeii and Rome.” He gave me a note to go over to see a fellow in the transportation pool. We went to Pompeii and we were the only people there. A native guide came along and we gave him some money and he took us around the ruins. That was quite a historical old place. Of course, there was no precious metal in there. I asked this one fellow, we went into kind of a little shop, I said, “Do you have any cameos?” He said, “Yes, but I don’t have any jewelry?” I said, “Let me see some cameos.” Well, they had cameos, trays of them. My wife had a cameo that I think she got from her mother, so I got a cameo for a ring

and two little earrings and matched them up pretty well. Finally got back after the war, I was sent to San Diego and my wife had those little cameos made into a ring and earrings. From there we loaded patients and came back to the United States. Then we went to the Pacific and south Pacific. Out there in the Pacific, we were in the China Sea. We were around the Philippines, Okinawa, the south Pacific you know we had to go down and we had base hospitals. One of them was a little group of islands called Admiralty and we'd bring patients back from the combat area, load them right on board from the combat area. This is where I lost all my desire for any more war. Bring those young boys, gung ho young men, come into the navy they were going to whip the Japs single handed. Poor little guys, burns, gunshot wounds, shrapnel wounds, those soldiers were out in the jungle so we'd hoist them up with stretchers and put them on, their ribs stuck out, it was sad. But it didn't bother me then because I was young and I didn't have much emotion but those poor young men had never had a chance. But that war did one thing that I remember, the advance in surgery, prosthetic surgery, dental surgery, medicine that we never would have had had it not been for that war. Later after the war, I came into shore duty at San Diego. I was attached to the hospital corps school that was a part of the hospital. I'd see those young men with war casualties and lips made, eyebrows, ear lobes, I'd watch them through their rehabilitation. They'd make lips put in a fixed position like this.

MR. PETTITT: With their arm up over their...

MR. DECIORES: Yes, it was fixed there because they grafted tissue off their forearm and made a lip.

MR. PETTITT: And their arm had to stay there for awhile? Now is all this a result of the war? They'd never done this before? This is all innovation because of the war.

MR. DECIORES: Dental people made jaws and even grafted bones and that was most wonderful to me and medicine. Now to get back a little bit before the war when Hitler went on his bad campaign to purify the race, those good professional people, doctors and chemists and scientists, we opened up and got them into our country. They played a very important role. They brought what in those days was called sulfanilamide, the forerunner to penicillin and all that, the atomic bomb.

MR. PETTITT: Some of these immigrant doctors and chemists and scientists that were brought over. Did you ever meet them?

MR. DECIORES: At the naval hospital in Portsmouth, Virginia, I was there and they had two or three of them. I always made it a point when I stood watch to be up where they were. They were fine doctors, spoke better English than we did and intelligent.

MR. PETTITT: And they wanted to get out of Hitler's Europe?

MR. DECIORES: If you wanted to live, you had better get out.

MR. PETTITT: Were a lot of them Jewish?

MR. DECIORES: They did a great job for us. I began to think this war business, I had two young sons and I thought it won't be long until they'll be in draft age.

MR. PETTITT: How old were they during the war?

MR. DECIORES: They were in probably what you call middle school. It doesn't take long to be draft age, I'll tell you that. That would really be something to be called back to active duty and my own sons be in the war and I would be, too. Anyway, the country couldn't stand for any more war when it was over and no one else could so we had some

years of peace, such as it is. There has been hostility ever since Christ was an apprentice seaman, and it's always going to be and this hot air Clinton running around establishing peace. Why doesn't he save his wind to blow to cool off hot soup? But that's the nature of the guy and I don't know whether we've seen enough of him or the last of him or not.

MR. PETTITT: Going back to when you were in the Pacific, do you remember any special instances that stand out in your mind?

MR. DECIORES: Yes, I do. One of them, we went into a little atoll or knoll called Windy and our old skipper was a merchant marine man. He was a captain on tour ships and that type of boat.

MR. PETTITT: Where was this island Windy?

MR. DECIORES: It was in the South Pacific and all I know is our ship received word to go in there and pick up two aviators that had either been shot down or out of fuel. We went in there and that old skipper put that ship in that little cove and we took on those two fellows. He got us out of there and I'll tell you that took a well-qualified man on the bridge to do that job. The only thing you saw in there was out riggers but that was one of the most remarkable things that I saw in navigation during World War II.

MR. PETTITT: To fit a ship that big into a little lagoon and pick up two people, you'd think they would send in a PBV or something to pick them up. Did you get to meet the pilots at all?

MR. DECIORES: No, I wasn't that kind of a guy. When we'd load patients I'd look at the names of the ones that we had picked up to take back to base hospitals and for evacuation to the United States by air. Once in awhile, I'd see a name that I recognized. There were two in particular. One was a young fellow that was an ensign on this old

four-stack cruiser OMAHA when I was on there. I was a 1st class petty officer. His name was Hart. His father was an admiral out in the Asiatic fleet.

MR. PETTITT: Thomas Hart.

MR. DECIORES: Tommy Hart and he was a tough one. He was a rough guy.

MR. PETTITT: How was the young Hart wounded? Now this guy you are talking about, was he the son of Admiral Hart? Are you saying you knew Admiral Hart when he was a lieutenant? This guy you talked about, was he the son of Admiral Hart?

MR. DECIORES: Yes.

MR. PETTITT: And how was he wounded?

MR. DECIORES: The most even-tempered considerate person that I ever knew as a young officer. He was an ensign on the USS OMAHA. So one day he came to sick bay for something, and I was a pretty good hospital corpsman. I say that because I was given recognition for it. One day I said, "Mr. Hart, is Admiral Tommy Hart any relation to you?" He said, "He's my father." I said, "It's a good thing you told me I'd never suspicioned it. I said, "He was a rough old customer." He says, "Yes, that's what I hear." He was on there, he had leukemia. Our doctors did a good job. We got him back to a base hospital in Admiralty Islands. I guess the word went on ahead to make ready to get him back to the United States because he didn't have long to live. So I'd go up and see him a couple or three times on the trip back. Another one was a fellow that was a chief hospital corpsman and I can't think of his name and he was a prisoner of war. The Japs had a lot of prisoners there at that camp and this fellow was in charge of the burial crew. I went up to see him and I said, "I'm Warren Deciores. How in the hell are you?" I don't know how I made it but I did. He told me about the burial crew, four men that

dug the burial place and brought the deceased out there and lowered him and filled in the grave. The Japs didn't feed them very much so one time he went to this guard or warden or prison guard and said, "My men just can't work any longer. They're just giving out." And he went out there and whipped the hell out of them. He said, "Now they can do it." That was the treatment they received. So anybody starts these Pollyanna people that paid those Japs \$20,000. They didn't pay any of our people a damn cent. I don't think that goes along with war. That was the treatment those men received in that Jap camp. I said, "Do you know what happened to that guy?" He said, "Yes. He was on watch in the guard tower when those army raiders came in. One fellow put a shot in that guard tower, blew that Jap all to hell.

MR. PETTITT: With a rifle he shot the guard?

MR. DECIORES: With whatever kind of firearms they had. They had special ammunition, different kind of gun. So he said, "I know what happened to him." And another fellow was that Johnny Ploke(sp?). I saw him in Guam on that aircraft carrier. I went ashore. Some of the natives were still there. Johnny Ploke had been liberated from the Jap prison camp, came back to Guam. He had a wife and some children there. So I found out he was there. I went around to see him. "Well, Johnny, how did you like the vacation in Japan?" He said, "My God, they took us from here and up to the Philippines and finally Japan and they put me to work in the coal mines, damn few clothes and barefoot. The soles of my feet were black for two years. Those people got their money's worth out of us for work." All that prison labor kept the railroads up. He didn't live so very long. There was another fellow that was on duty when I was there for duty in Guam, a fellow name Jeremiah Cruze. We called him Jerry Cruze. Kind of overweight a

little bit and when he came out of that prison camp he wasn't overweight. He came back to the United States and he came to the Naval Hospital in San Diego. So I went to see him. Later on he was transferred over to the hospital corps school and he was my boss. He was a good man. When he was on the job, he was all job. He and I got along real well, we always did even out in Guam. Now he didn't live very long after he got out but he lost a hell of a lot of weight and he made effort not to ever gain it back. Those fellows really had a rough time. I think he was a prisoner there in Bilibid or Santa Tomas. Those people that came down that Bataan peninsula, that death march, that's exactly what it was. There were a few navy nurses in that thing, and being on this transport, we took some of those gals out there. Once on sick bay on this transport, I got to know some of them.

MR. PETTITT: Are these navy nurses or army nurses?

MR. DECIORES: Navy. There were a lot of army nurses out there, too. When you knew somebody that was in that category, you had a lot of different feelings. These people on the West coast, when those Japs lobbed a couple of shells over on the beach from a submarine, one down around Ventura and one up around Oregon, these civilians were pretty frightened. That's one of the reasons they incarcerated and put them in concentration camps or whatever you want to call it. I always called them safety camps. If they had been left out on the street, these civilians would have murdered them. They didn't have to go to these concentration or prison camps, they could have gone way inland and wouldn't have gone to what they call a concentration camp, but they didn't elect that. I'll tell you they had better homes up there at Tooley Lake that were built than I lived in an enlisted man on shore duty over there on Mare Island, those old WWI

barracks. So sympathy is something I had and it's always in the dictionary and I tell those young sailors where they could find it. It's always there. I don't have any. That about takes care of my

MR. PETTITT: Was the REFUGE, your hospital ship, involved in the Iwo Jima landing?

MR. DECIORES: No.

MR. PETTITT: Okinawa?

MR. DECIORES: We came into Okinawa not during the combat time but later on and picked up patients and brought them back to, where the hell was it, and then fly them back to the United States.

MR. PETTITT: They were bringing a lot back to Saipan because they had a number of hospitals there.

MR. DECIORES: And then when I went ashore in Guam to see some of those natives I knew, those people had mighty rough time.

MR. PETTITT: How about any section eight cases from combat fatigue? Did you have to deal with any of those? They called them "Section Eight", people who cracked up emotionally. You know the psychological cases from combat.

MR. DECIORES: That's a subject with me. Those psychiatrists really screwed up the navy as far as I'm concerned. An enlisted man didn't want to do anything, he'd go see the psychiatrist. Once he had a psychiatric problem, from then on he had it made.

MR. PETTITT: But how do people like Marines do it being like three or four weeks in combat? Did you ever see situations?

MR. DECIORES: It's bound to affect a person. I knew a hospital corpsman that was with the marines on those invasions. And this one fellow told me, "I got along fine until I

came along and there was a stack of bodies and one of them was my good friend. That really jarred the hell out of me.” You can understand that. I made a good effort to develop a good veneer, show very little emotion in public. I tell you I don’t want anymore of those experiences.

MR. PETTITT: Did any of your sons ever go into the military?

MR. DECIORES: Yes, the draft law was still in effect. The big expression then for these great educators was, “They haven’t found themselves.” Well these sons of mine would bring that home from school. “Our counselor”. I said, “You’re going to find yourself. You’re going to finish high school and graduate, but at the end of your senior year, you’re going to enlist in the army.” They didn’t want a career and that’s where you’re going to find yourself. Now parents are always concerned to have things better for their children than they had and I agree with that most of all. The military is a lot better now than when I went in as a lad. “I want you to have your share of it.” I knew the requirements of going into the Reserve for two years or three years, and I told them I recommend that you go in for the three years. You complete that, you’re all through. You go in for two years, you go two years active duty and, I think, about five years in the reserve units. That is very unpleasant. Well the older one, three years, he just felt that he was giving too much of his time away and they had one of that great counselors that could tell these students just what they wanted to hear. Oh, he was a great guy, and as an educator, I don’t know what he ever taught anybody, and I knew him fairly well. Anyway, the one that went in two years, they worked him only for a fare-you-well when he came back and was in that Reserve. The agreement was I’ll be retired out of the navy, but I’ll get a job and go to work and make sure that you can go to college to get a degree.

You're not going up there for any social time or big romantic affairs, it's for an education and I'll work. The money I make will get you through college. Well, the older one was a good student and he did very well in college. The younger one was a great social guy. He went to what they called in those days, Junior College, which is now community college. I never saw a book or a damn thing but he was of legal age. This politician very easy, eighteen (Tape goes blank)

Transcribed June 28, 2006 by Eunice Gary