

Wallace Baptiste Oral History Interview

BRUCE PETTY: Today is Monday. Why don't you tell me about as far back as you remember? Do you remember much about your grandparents, your parents?

WALLACE BAPTISTE: I remember my grandfather. My grandfather was Charles Baptiste, Sr. This was in St. James Parish, Louisiana. That's where we were from originally, St. James Parish. I was born in the area. My grandfather had about four homes there, the Baptistes, the [Braziles?], and the Chopins. The quarters called Chopin Quarter is after some of my relatives. That's a sugarcane plantation, sugarcane and rice. I can remember as a youngster, me and my brother [Lawrence?], we were born in St. James Parish, Louisiana. My father and mother had nine other kids during that time. Now, my memory is a little vague at times; I may skip about. My grandfather, Charles Baptiste, had four sons and four daughters. He lost my grandmother at an early age. I don't remember her, but he lost her at a very, very early age. He raised his eight siblings, eight children: four boys and four girls. One of his grandsons, [Everett Piper?], my first cousin, was raised along with the four boys and four girls. He was raised as just another son, but it was his grandson.

BP: As his grandson or nephew?

WB: My grandfather, one of his daughters had a baby, his grandson. He raised him right. She was a young girl, and he raised him as one of the children. He didn't marry again, until after all the kids were raised and his grandson was raised. He married who call our Grandma Maria, and she was born in Mexico somewhere. She had three siblings: Manila, [Acefa?], and I can't think of the youngest girl's name. And later, she had a son for my grandfather, John Baptiste, who is now retired here in California. He's a retired Navy man.

BP: Your father, you say? This is your father?

WB: No, this is one of my grandfather's sons. This is one of my uncles. He's younger than me. My grandfather had this son by his second wife.

BP: She already had three children?

WB: She already had three. John Baptiste, one of my uncles -- my little uncle -- he's younger than me. He's actually a retired Navy man, and a retired bridge worker from here in California.

BP: Was he in World War II as well?

WB: He was in World War II, yeah.

BP: What did he do?

WB: Well, he went into the Navy. He didn't go in as a Messman like I did; he went in as a Boilermaker or something. He was able to go in as a Seaman.

BP: During World War II, or after?

WB: Well, when Eisenhower declared --

BP: Oh, that was after World War II.

WB: He probably was in the Korean War. I know he was in the service, because he served two wars, and it was probably the Korean and Vietnam wars. John Baptiste, he's here; maybe someday you can interview him, if you want. I'm going back the plantation in St. James Parish, Louisiana.

BP: He was a slave at first?

WB: No, my grandfather could have been. I don't know.

BP: He was a sharecropper in Louisiana, or what?

WB: No, my grandfather was with a family called the [Schecksnise?], from France. My grandfather was a caretaker of the plantation. He took care of their family home and all. In fact, where I was born there were four homes, four big houses. I remember them as a kid, about four or five years old. My dad moved from St. James Parish when he married -- I'm getting ahead of myself. That's what I'm thinking about, because my father married my mother, Melissa Preston Baptiste. My mother was a Preston. My dad married my mother, and they had 11 kids together.

BP: How many times was your father married?

WB: One time. I'm one of 11; I was the eldest. I was the first child, Wallace Baptiste. We had my brother, Lawrence; I remember him. But there's two or three siblings, Anatole and Antoinette, and then my brother [Philip?] -- my brother Philip was killed in an automobile accident crossing the Mississippi River Bridge in New Orleans. There was my brother, Bill; my brother, Ray; my sister, Gloria; my sister, [Willamaya?]; my sister, Louise; and I might have left somebody out.

BP: Where were you just before you joined the Navy? Were you working on a farm?

WB: No, I went to Xavier University for two years, Xavier University of New Orleans; the only Black Negro college in the country. They're a Catholic university.

BP: You were born what year?

WB: I was born November 4, 1916 in St. James Parish, Louisiana. My dad moved to Jefferson Parish when I was four years old. We moved the family across the river from the City of New Orleans; like Oakland and San Francisco. That's where we were raised and educated. The first school I attended was in the Odd Fellows Hall. We had no school, and the Odd Fellows Hall -- I don't know how to describe that. But we had four grades: first, second, third, and fourth grade,

all in one room; four teachers, four blackboards, and wonderful discipline; and we learned. Ms. [Speers?] was my first teacher. And then Julius Rosenwald came along. The Rosenwald Foundation founded the school.

BP: That's Jewish; right?

WB: Yeah, he was from Chicago, the Rosenwald Foundation.

BP: You had White teachers?

WB: No, we had Black teachers. What happened was, the Rosenwald School was named in honor of him, because in Jefferson Parish we had no Black schools. The only schools we had were eighth grade, maybe up to 12th grade or something like that.

BP: No, public education?

WB: We didn't have any of that when I was there. My mother and them had to buy old books. Whatever books we had, they had to buy them from what was called Stump's Drugstore. They sold the books. This was before we could get school books from the Jefferson Parish school system. And then finally, when the Rosenwald School was founded, it was outfitted with desks and a 10-room schoolhouse. You'd have thought it was Stanford to us. We had to march from the Odd Fellows Hall to a little town called Jackson Town, which was just within a few miles. We walked that like if it was around the block. And Julius Rosenwald and them were the

founders of Sears Roebuck and all, Sears. This goes way back, I imagine, because it was named Sears. Well, it's Sears now, but Sears and Roebuck. Roebuck, some said he was Black. I don't know that for sure.

NV: This guy, Rosenwald, did he build a lot of schools?

WB: I think he must have, throughout the country.

BP: He must have done a lot of schools like this.

WB: It could have been in Oklahoma and all. I give to Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament. I went to Xavier University.

BP: That's where you got your education, for the most part, was the Rosenwald school?

WB: Rosenwald, yeah. Well, from the Odd Fellows Hall, it was the basics. We had teachers in there, Mrs. [Speers?] and Ms. Foster, Mrs. Porter; and there were two or three other teachers. Professor Lenoir was our first principal, and he was a man from Mississippi, from Alcorn College. We were very primitive. We didn't have a lot of things, because my father had seven of us with \$0.27 an hour at Penick & Ford Corporation.

BP: Penick & Ford?

WB: Penick & Ford. That was a syrup plant.

BP: They made syrup?

WB: Yeah, made Brer Rabbit Syrup.

BP: Brer Rabbit Syrup?

WB: Brer Rabbit, yeah. They still have that on the market now, I believe.

BP: He was making \$0.27 a day?

WB: \$0.27 an hour, yeah. My father already had seven of us. Seven kids and my mother, Melissa Baptiste. She worked for less, \$0.06 an hour.

BP: Doing what?

WB: She was working at the [Lance?] cotton mill, all night for a dollar a night.

BP: That still bothers you. Why does it bother you, now?

WB: What they went through to raise us -- my father and mother were really hard-working people. In fact, we still have the home my father built, a double house. I got a sister and brother that live there now, and I spent some time there just a few months ago.

BP: It bothers you that they had to work so hard to support you?

WB: Day and night. Those people were good people, good spirit. I worked from sun up. I rode bicycles in New Orleans from 5:30 in the morning. I'd cross the river; I lived across the river, and I'd go in and put the bread up. The baker would leave the bread upstairs, and I'd go and get the bread, bring it down, and put it into the store for the [Sunseras?].

BP: Sunseras?

WB: They were an Italian family from Italy. There were two families, the [Farrells?] and the Sunseras. We were delivery boys when I was a youngster. When I'd go to work in the morning, I'd leave home at five-thirty, quarter-to-six in the morning, catch the ferry, and go. I'd make about \$0.75 a day. That was in the grueling hot sun in New Orleans, from early in the morning until about six-thirty, seven o'clock in the evening.

BP: When did you have time to go to school?

WB: I went to school during the school year, then I'd work during the summertime. We were in a farm area, and we picked beans. And my brother and them, they liked tomatoes and things like that. We'd pick beans all day. They would pick us up early in the morning, the Italian families, Gambinos and so forth -- large farms -- they'd pick us up early in the morning and drive us out to the fields. Then, we'd pick the beans all day. Sometimes we'd make about \$0.70, but then they'd bust a [heifer?]. They put the whole croker sack of beans and put a sticker on it. By four o'clock, we'd get about \$0.35, \$0.40, something like that.

BP: Did you feel like you'd been cheated?

WB: Well, I'll tell you what, I think of so many good years, even in the Navy; I have no regrets, and I'd do it again. I'd gone to college two years, and I could pass the aptitude tests. I went into the Navy and I served faithfully, like I was saying. I think we laid around waiting for the brothers that's coming today, because we had Four-Stripers and Admirals. (inaudible) we came from very humiliating.

BP: Why did you leave college and go into the Navy?

WB: It was during the Depression. At that time, my father was with family, but things were heavy. When I went into the CCC, I would send some money back home. The CCC is what we should have had many years ago.

BP: When did you go into the CCC, what year?

WB: I went in around 1930. I went and finished high school in '34, '35, and in 1936 I went into the CCC.

BP: This is before college?

WB: No, this is after college; because I finished high school, then went to college for two years. And then from there I went into the CCC. I was taking teacher's training and, in fact, I was practically finishing the two-year educational setup. See, at that time they would give Blacks a certificate, and then you could go forward; go on and get your degree. With a two-year education you could teach.

All the Whites in Louisiana, they do four years; so the salaries were different, too, see? When I think about it, we were inferior to the Caucasian teachers, because we only had two years. Some would go to what they call "normal school" to finish their education. When they came out, they would give them a teacher certificate. And then they taught, and went to school at night during the summer. Some of them, even the principal of my school when I was at Rosenwald, years later he was finishing. Although, we had one professor, a Black professor, [CH?] Washington, had finished from New Orleans University, and he had a degree. He went on to Leesville, Louisiana, to another high school. Our school wasn't accredited, see. We went up to the eighth grade, then they tried to take us to the 12th grade.

But we didn't have the accreditation of the Caucasian schools in the first place, the other schools in different areas. Even when I finished high school, I had to go back to an accredited high school in New Orleans. When I finished from the Rosenwald, graduated and all, I had to go back to a high school, McDonogh 35 in New Orleans, to get my accreditation to go to the university. In fact, I got put out, and I had to go back and get my credit and all; because I wasn't from an accredited high school. When I

went to New Orleans and went to the university, I was accepted. And then my school wasn't accredited, so I had to go back to a school in New Orleans and get accreditation.

BP: How long did that take?

WB: That took me about a semester, or a little better. I was fortunate enough that I had a good background. I went back to the university, and I was supposed to get a diploma, a two-year educational setup. That's how I ended up in the CCC. One day, I was in New Orleans and they were going to ship out a lot of these guys to the Civilian Conservation Corps, to Shreveport, Louisiana. I went to this school; they were short of (overlapping dialog; inaudible). Yeah, they were short. The guys that they had, some of them had different diseases and things. I went, volunteered to go; I got examined and all. My dad and them didn't know. I did, and I went back home and told them I was leaving that night, around about ten, eleven o'clock. I was going to Shreveport, Louisiana, CCC. My father said, "Well, okay." When I went into the CCC, I went in as an Assistant Litter. The guy looked at my record and everything, and had me call (inaudible) for the guys when they were going to the dentist and all.

BP: This was an all-Black outfit?

WB: Oh, right, yeah.

BP: No, Whites?

WB: We had an incident, and this was under the Army. The Army, Captain McNair -- I think he ended up being a top General in World War II. The camp was a beautiful place, (inaudible). I ended up being the Assistant Educational Advisor under Mr. Cummings. He was from Bossier City -- very fine man. He was Caucasian.

BP: He was from Louisiana?

WB: It's in the northern part of Louisiana, across from Shreveport.

BP: I'll look it up on a map.

WB: Look it up, you'll see it. It's across the Red River. People could go out there and use that sand to make bricks. The sand was beautiful. I remember when we used to have a camp, a hunting camp -- Barksdale Field. I was in a hospital at Barksdale Field. That's one of the biggest Air Force bases, Barksdale. Barksdale Field, probably, because that's in the northern part of Louisiana, right out of Shreveport. Anyway, Mr. Cummings was from Bossier City. We had a camp in Keithville, Louisiana, which was out from a little town called Hollywood. And then we got to Shreveport, which was about the second largest city in Louisiana at that time.

BP: How long did you stay there before you went to --

WB: Fourteen and a half months.

BP: Why did you leave that to go into the Navy?

WB: I decided to go back home. In the meantime, when I went back home, I lived across the river from New Orleans. I went down to Custom House, and that's where I decided to go into the Navy.

BP: Any special reason?

WB: Well, I tried to get a job, and I got a job at Celotex. That's where my brother nearly lost his life and all.

BP: He lost his life?

WB: Well, he didn't at the time. Almost took one of his arms off.

BP: By a machine?

WB: He was disabled some. What they did, they gave him a little soft job and all, no compensation. I went to work there, I got a job, and after a week some boys had been killed in the vats.

BP: It was a dangerous place to work?

WB: Oh, man, killed a lot of us. We had the (inaudible) fertilizer plant every year, so a few men would get killed.

BP: The machinery?

WB: Yeah, the operators.

BP: No, safety devices?

WB: I remember Mr. White, a man that lived across the street from us. In fact, they christened one of my brothers. One day, the two of them, Mr. [Menootz?] and Mr. Bill White were on a platform somewhere way out, and all of a sudden, he trips and falls under the fertilizer. It killed him.

BP: He suffocated, or what?

WB: I imagine so.

BP: Fell into a vat?

WB: Loading stuff in different things. But there were no safety rules or anything. I mean, they killed one, they just put another man up there.

BP: And they don't compensate the families?

WB: I'd never known of any of them getting any compensation.

BP: That's when you decided to join the Navy?

WB: Well, not exactly. I got a job at Celotex. They just pick you out. Oh, no, I missed one part. I got a job one summer with John Manville, building the John Manville Plant. We were in high school then, and this is in Marrero, Louisiana. That's where I was raised. The John Manville Plant, they were building it.

BP: I only want to go briefly on the period before you went in the Navy. Just where you were born, something about your parents, grandparents. And then what I want to do get to the time where you went in the Navy, why you went in the

Navy; because I'm not going to be putting in a lot of detail. This is just a biographical introduction; it'll be very short. And then I want to get the details on when you went into the Navy.

WB: Oh, yeah, well, the Navy, I went into the Navy because of one thing: I wanted to travel. They always said, "Join the Navy and see the world." At that time, they were very strict. Mr. [Ernest Constamin?] was the District attorney around Jefferson Parish.

BP: Mr. [Constamin?]?

WB: Mr. Ernest [Constamin?]. I don't know how to spell that name, but he was the DA, and a very fine man. My father had to have my papers signed.

BP: Ernest [Constance?].

WB: I know it was something like that. This was the Marrero, the town was named after the Marreros.

BP: The Marreros?

WB: Yeah, the Marreros, they were rich as cream. I have to give detail of something a little later. But anyway, my father was building our home, and they wanted to lend him a thousand dollars, and he only wanted \$300. At that time, normal was \$11 per thousand board feet. You get a thousand two-by-fours, two-by-eights for the sheeting and everything like that. \$1,000, and my dad wanted 300. They told him

about the thousand dollars and he said, "Oh, no, Mr. Pete; no, Mr. Leo. I just want \$300." But he had paid for the land. He did all the lumber, bricks and blocks. I even helped nail sheeting on that house. We were a closely-knit family. All the cousins and uncles and everybody helped each other. Anyway, getting back to, like you said, the Navy. When I went into the Navy, the Officers from the Custom House, they came to our home and talked to my mother and dad. We were out there washing at the washboard and tub, and they saw the home. We came from a very neat and clean family. The papers from officials -- you couldn't go in there without any records, and a whole lot of crap. But I really had traveling in mind.

BP: You didn't mind the idea of your being a Steward?

WB: No. In fact, when I went in, I didn't know what the heck I was going to be. I imagined I'd just wear the uniform. I had no future unless I taught school or became a preacher. Maybe I could have went to New Orleans and became a postman or something, but we had very few options. I'd gone to school, and I didn't see no future. When I went to the Custom House, it didn't specify what we were going to be. We had no choice, see? When I went over to the Custom House and signed up, they didn't tell me I was going to be a Seaman, a Fireman, a General, Admiral, or whatever. All

we'd do was sign up for the Navy. When I got there, we just accepted whatever was. We had no choice.

BP: What happened after that? You joined the Navy. That was when, 1938?

WB: February 5, 1938.

BP: Then where did you go?

WB: Norfolk, Virginia. NOB, for the training. Now, listen, January 5, 1938 they got us all prepared to be shipped to Norfolk. We had to report that evening, at night, at twelve o'clock. They put us in a Pullman. It was all Caucasians up front; they didn't even know Blacks were in the port. There was seven of us, Blacks. I was in charge of the group from the Custom House. I had my orders. I had tickets for meals on the train. The Pullman berths had all been prepared for. We had about two nights traveling from New Orleans to Norfolk by train. We went into Portsmouth, Virginia, and at that time, it was Portsmouth River. You crossed by ferry. And then we went and reported to the Monticello Hotel for breakfast. To tell you the truth, what happened going over to Monticello Hotel, when I got there, there was six or seven of us. We went through the front door and a guy said, "What the hell are you niggers doing coming in here?" He said, "What are you doing coming through that door, boys?" They wheeled us

out of there, the main lobby of the hotel. They had us go around to the back, to the freight elevator. They put us on a freight elevator, and they sent us up to the seventh floor, and then they served us breakfast. That was our first entrance. I had never been away from home other than to Shreveport, to the CCC.

BP: You were never treated like that in Louisiana?

WB: Well, in Louisiana, yeah. We had to go to the back door. When I was at Xavier University, me and a guy named [Marshall Bennett?] walked up to Carlton Avenue. We wanted an ice cream cone or something. And we went into the front door, got the cone, and paid for them. And then the guy mentioned to us, while we were eating them in there, the guy said something. And Marshall told him, "We bought it in there, so we'll eat it in there." He said, "Hell, no. You're not going to eat them in there. You've got to get the hell out of here." That was on Carlton Avenue. The university owns all that property now. It was a big turkey farm up there then. I was 21 years old when I left Louisiana. Out of all my years, I never had any abuse, ever -- well, I don't know. One night I was coming from work. I got off on Saturday night, and I was going home on my bicycle and some White boys hit me in the head. The good thing is, it could have been a pipe, but they hit me

in the head with a big, heavy newspaper and knocked me off my bicycle. I was (inaudible) ten, eleven o'clock at night. It was dark; I didn't even have a flashlight, I don't think. They hit me in the head, and I was scrambling to get my bike to the sidewalk. And the thing was in condition, I could make it to the ferry. See, that's what we had, ferries. Thank God they didn't hit me with a pipe or something, because they would have left me dead in the street on (inaudible) Avenue.

Yeah, so a few odds and ends I had. My mother always worried. We were four brothers, and she always told us to be very careful and be on our best behavior. We never had no trouble. My father was well-thought-of in the community and family, the Baptistes, Chopins, and Brazil. We had huge families. There's one of my cousins I've got to mention, by the name of Albert Chopin. In fact, we just buried him less than six months ago. We were living together. His father passed, Old Man Chopin. He raised a family of 11. One of my cousins, she is a Full Lieutenant in the Navy. I saw her at the funeral. She's in Norfolk, Virginia now. One of his daughters was with Disney World; she was with the Hilton chain for years, and so forth. We've seen a lot of good come because of this guy. He

worked from the time he was 13 years old. Fifty-seven years with the corporation, and the only time he missed was when he was fighting in Germany.

BP: He was in the Army, then?

WB: Yeah. He was my first cousin. That's my father's sister's son. But anyway, I really enjoyed the Navy. I had some wonderful Officers. Two of the finest Officers I had was an Officer named Mr. [D'Lorio?] -- I wish you would look him up, he came from a big family -- and Mr. [DeLong?]. Mr. [D'Lario?] was from Louisiana, and Mr. [DeLong?] was from Mississippi.

BP: White Officers?

WB: White Officers, finest men. They were Academy youngsters. A lot of the Officers was beautiful, and it wasn't their fault. They didn't recruit us.

BP: This is at your boot camp?

WB: No, these men were aboard the USS *Chandler*.

BP: Well, let's not jump ahead. Let's go back to where you go to boot camp.

WB: Yeah. I tell you, I get ahead of myself. But when I went to boot camp, we ended up in Norfolk. We ended up in Norfolk on February 5, 1938; and it was cold, sleet, rain and everything. We had no bunks, we slept in hammocks hung from the jackstay; our sea bag and the hammock. You had to

scrub your hammocks, sea bag, everything. You went to the wash house at about two-thirty, two o'clock in the morning, scrubbing everything. A lot of underwear I didn't wear, so I could keep it. We had to lay our things out, lay your bags out, in an inspection. You had to have everything laid out and with a square knot. Your drawers, your shorts, your undershirts, and all in one area, which is stenciled showing your name and everything. You laid out your hammock, and then all your clothes, all four lines, every square knot; everything in line and for inspection that's in the bags. We had a little Officer named Lieutenant [Curly?]. I've forgotten our Drill Master's name. And it's sleeting and so forth out there in Norfolk, and we had to get out the sea bags and hammocks, put it on their back, and get on out. A few times that wasn't too pleasant. (laughs) But it would make guys think. That was part of the Navy. I was put up in a 90-day boot camp somewhere. We had to have our (inaudible) and everything.

BP: Where did you go from boot camp? What was your first assignment?

WB: My first assignment was San Diego.

BP: What did you do there?

WB: We got to San Diego, I was aboard the Regal.

BP: The Regal, which was what?

WB: The Regal was an old tender, tied up to the docks in San Diego.

BP: A destroyer or submarine tender?

WB: At the destroyer base. They took recruits in like a distribution center. This was a big ship, had quarters and everything. In fact, the Captain's wife lived aboard there.

BP: So where recruits come before they went to the (overlapping dialog; inaudible)?

WB: They were distributed to the *Melrose* or the *Dobbin*.

BP: Where did you go from there?

WB: I went to the *Altair*, another tender.

BP: And that was, what? A destroyer tender?

WB: A destroyer tender. Then, from that, I went to the *Chandler*.

BP: How long were you on the *Altair*?

WB: Just a short while. I was in the harbor of San Diego then.

BP: And then you were assigned to the *Chandler*? And that was, what, a destroyer?

WB: A destroyer, *Chandler* 206. I was (inaudible) *Chandler*, *Severn*, *Hovey*, and *Long*.

BP: I just interviewed a guy who was on the *Long*.

WB: On the *Long*?

BP: It was a destroyer minesweeper?

WB: Mm-hmm, yeah.

BP: And it was struck by a kamikaze?

WB: Well, he was in my division, probably.

BP: You were on the *Chandler* or the Long?

WB: I was on the *Chandler*. Oh, but you know what? We split up. The Long, I never heard of. What happened to me was, I was transferred -- I'm ahead of myself, now -- from the *Chandler* to the *Hopkins*.

BP: How long were you on the *Chandler*?

WB: I was on the *Chandler*; that was my first ship. I was on the *Chandler* for maybe two years, two and a half years.

BP: I want to hear about your time on the *Chandler*; the Captain, the people you remember, where you went and what you did.

WB: Now, the *Chandler*, when I went aboard the *Chandler*, it was only about eight Officers, and probably 120-some men.

BP: Was it a destroyer or a destroyer minesweeper?

WB: It was a destroyer then. It was full stacker. It was a full stacker with torpedo tubes and a four-inch gun. A four-inch gun, because I was a Gunner.

BP: Gun Captain or a Loader?

WB: I was a Loader on a destroyer's gun, the breech. I'll tell an incident --

BP: Well, let's keep everything in order. Let's talk about when you went on, who your Captain was, if you remember the people. And then we'll (overlapping dialog; inaudible).

WB: I wish I would have taken all those names. I was with some of the finest. Mr. [D'Lario?] was on there, Mr. [DeLong?], and Mr. Morgan.

BP: Who was he?

WB: He was the Exec on the *Chandler*. His hair was white. I remember he had one son. And I had a Captain Campbell.

BP: Captain Campbell was the Captain of the *Chandler*?

WB: Captain of the *Chandler*. And then when he left, we had Captain Tim Roth. He was a Full Commander. I remember we brought his son from Honolulu. Then we had a -- gosh, darn, what this guy (inaudible). He was the Executive (inaudible). Mr. Martin, I know he's a redhead with a big, red mustache.

BP: He was Executive Officer?

WB: He was Executive Officer.

BP: What did you do on the *Chandler*?

WB: I was, when I went aboard the *Chandler*, I went aboard as a (inaudible).

BP: Your assignment was?

WB: Was taking care of these Officers, their bunks, shine their shoes or whatever; keep their laundry together and so forth.

BP: Now, you had two years of college. What did you think about that?

WB: Me and the Officers, we would discuss it; me and Mr. [Boyce?]. I was trying to get back to go to supply school. And I told him, Mr. [Boyce?], (inaudible) 90-day window. They came from college. And from what I saw somehow (inaudible) and Officers from Oklahoma, and different places. They had to teach these other Officers how to use the silver or forks and different things. Some of these boys really came from rural areas, and they were Lieutenants or (inaudible), and so forth. My duty was, I was assigned certain Officers to have their laundry together. Fortunate thing was, I could send my clothes through the laundry with theirs sometimes. I had an experience one day, I was in the (inaudible).

BP: Are we getting ahead of the story?

WB: Yeah. Anyway, I went aboard in San Diego. I was in San Diego for about a year and a half, two years. We'd go out to San Clemente, the gunnery and all. One day I was out there and we were firing. What we'd do, we'd have the target going south and we'd be going north, and we would

fire these four-inch guns. We had different colors if we hit the target. One day we were firing these four-inch guns, and we put this four-inch shell in the breech. And Mr. Wilson, I'll never forget it; he walked past me, he said, "(inaudible)." We thought we were going to give it the deep six, and we ejected the shell out of the breech. And I mean, that shell had a big brass setup and a tip about that long. And Mr. Wilson said, "Don't throw it over the side," he said. "Just lay it down there. I'm going to send it back to the factory."

BP: Send it back to who?

WB: Back to the factory. And we (inaudible) put it back in the magazine and all. We were always fearful as shit.

BP: It might (inaudible), huh?

WB: Yeah. We thought, surely, it was going to. We said, "Well, just give it the deep six." He said, "No, don't throw it over the side." He's a very distinguished (inaudible). We were off of San Clemente. We had night battle practice off San Clemente at night; running and firing at night, gunnery, and with torpedoes. The torpedo tubes, we'd fire them, but we'd be able to pick them up. See, they put the alcohol or whatever in them and it didn't have any live head on it. We would retrieve them; we did a lot of submarine and aircraft. We used to follow the

Enterprise, Saratoga, Lexington, all the older ones, before they got sunk. Most of them were sunk in battles. I stayed there in San Diego. That was our home port, and that was in 1938.

BP: What was liberty like for you in San Diego?

WB: Wonderful.

BP: No, problems?

WB: No. No, problems. They had a lot of Blacks. Not a lot of Blacks, but in San Diego, in certain sections like Imperial Avenue. We'd go out there, it had a sweet shop, a couple restaurants. But I know on Market Street we had what was called the Creole Palace. We had the biggest nightclub. The Black nightclub was run by a Black woman. She didn't look like a Black. She was a woman named Mabel. She was from New Orleans, and she was a Creole woman.

She had these prostitutes in these different hotels she had. She had one that was all White. She had this nightclub called the Creole Palace, and they had the best entertainment and entertainers come there. San Diego was really more of a (inaudible) we'd go to, liberty and all. San Diego was a good liberty town. What happened, though, was there was a Black guy, a guy that was in the Navy. He

got a DCD; he got discharged. I guess he had a bad kind of discharge.

But then he stayed around San Diego, and I guess he got pretty radical out there. He gambled, and then he must have got a little prosperous and everything. He went with Caucasian girls, he met friends after he got kicked out of the Navy. And they used to have the dances that would be in Balboa Park. They had the big bands, like (inaudible) or (inaudible) band. And one night, they had a dance. They had CCC boys, when I first came into the Navy, they had them there. And this guy [Slogan?], whatever the name was, he was a bad-talking guy or something. But he had a little girl, and he carried her, went to the dance with (inaudible) beautiful suit on, and this Caucasian girl was his guest. And this CCC boy asked the girl to dance or something, and he made some type of remark to this boy. And there was a group of them, they surrounded him, and the guys killed him.

BP: They killed the Black guy?

WB: The black guy, another black guy killed him, but we didn't know it. The dance went on. They picked him up, took him out, and laid him on the lawn (inaudible) next day. And after that night, they broke up those mixed dances and

different things. Although, the Creole Palace -- the Officers all came down there, because they had the best shows and all. That was like a Black club that this woman ran.

BP: But Whites came there?

WB: Yes. The Officers and all, they had a good time.

BP: Blacks mostly?

WB: Yeah, and it was on Fourth and Market. They had another, a Japanese restaurant, I've forgotten what they called it. But this Japanese restaurant, we could get, for \$0.35 we'd get the best dinner in the world; a big steak dinner and everything down there at Fourth and Market. But anyway, that was in San Diego. This was 1938.

BP: You spent about two years on the *Chandler*?

WB: Yeah, probably more.

BP: Most of it was right there in San Diego?

WB: San Diego was our home port.

BP: Where did you go?

WB: In 1939, we went on fleet maneuvers to the Atlantic.

That's the time we went through the Panama Canal, through Panama, and to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. That's where the fleet maneuvers were held. And then we were split into two fleets: the blue and the green -- or blue and something. Some of us went off the coast of Africa, (inaudible)

Atlantic. And then we were supposed to meet the two fleets. This is 1939. We were supposed to go to Norfolk, Virginia -- supposed to have a big thing in New York City. We did go to a little town called Yorktown, Virginia, but we never did get there, because the Germans moved to the low countries in Europe.

BP: When they attacked Poland, you mean?

WB: Yeah. That was it. Around that time when they attacked, we had loaned about 28 or 30 old World War I destroyers to Britain. We were convoying them over and different things, and we were given orders to move back after our fleet maneuvers in the Atlantic. We went together when we left Guantanamo Bay. We had the Fleet [silence?] there, the fights and all. We had a really wonderful time there.

BP: The fights? You mean boxing matches?

WB: Boxing matches, all the different championship matches; because we had to get all our water and different things from --

BP: Did they have Blacks and Whites fighting against each other? Or just White sailors were boxing?

WB: I think it was mostly Black boxers. No, I don't remember Whites and Blacks fighting. Even in New Orleans I can remember that they didn't.

BP: They had separate White boxing matches and separate Black -
-

WB: Black, yeah, because (inaudible) some boys (inaudible) brothers were White or whether they were Black, but they passed for White in New Orleans or something. But in the fleet, most of the champions and most of the fighters were Black. I remember Hawkins, I can remember the guy who was the heavyweight champion. But Blacks and Whites didn't fight, I don't remember. In '39 we held fleet maneuvers and everything, and when the Germans moved to, say, Poland, into France or whatever, we were sent back. In fact, we had gone to Galveston. We went up to Sabine Pass, in Texas, and then they gave us a few days to go home. I was right near New Orleans, so I went home. And then I was issued orders. My dad and brother, I'll never forget -- it's one of the moments I remember well. I was on the *Chandler*, and that's when we knew things were beginning (inaudible), so we reported back to the West Coast.

BP: So you were taken from the *Chandler*?

WB: No, no. I stayed with the *Chandler*. We went back to the West Coast, and that's when we went to (inaudible).

BP: But wait a minute, you said you were going to Texas. That was to get on the *Chandler*?

WB: Yeah, I was on the *Chandler*.

BP: So then you got on the *Chandler* in Texas and went back to California?

WB: Yeah, they ordered us back. We stayed with our division, because *Chandler, Severn, Hovey, Long, Zane, [Vale?]*, all of those 12 ships were in the Squad, you see. But I can't remember them all, the (inaudible) and all, because I can remember a good bit of them. I was with display for a while; I'll get to that after. But anyway, when we got back to the West Coast, we were ordered to Mare Island. That's where we were transformed from a destroyer to a minesweeper.

BP: That's when they converted all of these old destroyers to minesweepers. That was '39?

WB: In '39, because we got that from the British, the high-speed mine sweeps and caravans and all. The material we were converted, too. We took off the torpedo tubes.

BP: And one boiler room; right?

WB: Yeah. We had a longer fueling range than most, and they didn't need destroyers. So we ended up with three stacks. We had a (inaudible) fueling range.

BP: Then you had minesweeping equipment in place of the boiler that was in there, right?

WB: Yeah, because we had our depth charges on the fantail, too. And then we had those cables, caravans, you know.

BP: Oh, caravans, right.

WB: Yes. We had all of that equipment. And finally, when we went to Hawaii in 1941 --

BP: So you were on the West Coast until 1941?

WB: I stayed on the West. And plus, the whole year of '41 I spent in Hawaii.

BP: After you got out of Mare Island, after the conversion, you went to Hawaii. Is that right?

WB: Let me see. After the conversion, we went to Hawaii. That's where we did all experimenting.

BP: Do you remember what month?

WB: Throughout the year of '41.

BP: So you went over there in January?

WB: Yeah, from the 1st of January of '41, we were over there. All of that time, we spent in the States, almost. That year was '41. And one of the times, it was the month of June, we came back to the States for about 14 days. And the Skipper, the guys that had to be short-timers, said he wasn't canceling anybody the way the situation looked, because they had orders not to. See, I was due out in February '42.

BP: And you stayed?

WB: My enlistment was expired. But some of the guys' enlistments had expired in '39.

BP: And they stayed?

WB: Well, they couldn't get out.

BP: They wouldn't let them out?

WB: Wouldn't let them out, because we had been out there, and we knew the Japanese ships were coming in. At time they were screening them at intervals like a (inaudible) or whatever.

BP: Oil tankers?

WB: Big old Japanese ships that's coming through, going back to the Orient. The Captain said he wasn't going to let guys out.

BP: Who was the Captain then?

WB: I can't remember. I'd have to get the log.

BP: What happened then? Now we're getting into 1941 (overlapping dialog; inaudible) Hawaii.

WB: In '41 we each spent 14 days and went back. We experimented with the *Oglala*, which was an old World War I minelayer -- *Oglala*, wooden ship.

BP: She would lay mines, and you would sweep them?

WB: We'd come on with a caravan. She had the tracks, a big, old, long, wooden ship, because when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, they never did hit it directly; but with the concussion from the ground below or whatever, it just disintegrated.

BP: Oglala. She was next to what, then? She was next to the Arizona?

WB: She was near the *Pennsylvania*, and that group up there where the *Pennsylvania* was tied to the dock.

BP: Oglala was (inaudible)?

WB: Up alongside the dock somewhere. And the bomb, just the concussion -- I don't think it was a direct hit.

BP: It sank her?

WB: Yeah. It was an old, old wooden ship. We ended up, after the bombing of Pearl Harbor --

BP: Let's talk about the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Just don't get us ahead of it. So you're in Pearl Harbor December 7 on the *Chandler*?

WB: No, wait. I'm a little confused here. By this time, I've been transferred. I was transferred to a flagship with the Commodore.

BP: What's the name of the flagship?

WB: *Hopkins*, DMS-18.

BP: That was a DD?

WB: Yeah, USS *Hopkins* was. And the Captain, the Commodore, he had full charge of the whole Squadron.

BP: Commodore who? What was his name?

WB: (inaudible) Isn't that sad?

BP: It was a DD-1, *Hopkins*?

WB: DMS-13. DMS, Destroyer Minesweeper 13.

BP: DMS, I see. Commodore, okay. I can find it out.

WB: Yeah. We used to go from DMS-13, the *Hopkins*, to the Perry, that was DMS-17. DMS-17 was a ship I was on when a bomb fell on it.

BP: So you were not on the *Hopkins* yet?

WB: No.

BP: So you were transferred from the *Chandler* to the *Perry*?

WB: Yeah. That was the Flag, the Flag was transferred. And so I had to go with the Flag.

BP: And you don't remember who he was?

WB: I can't remember. My old buddy...

BP: I can probably find that.

WB: Yeah, you can find that.

BP: What date was that? Do you remember what month?

WB: This was in the month of the bombing. December the seventh, '41.

BP: Take it from there, then.

WB: Well, from then I ended up with the *Hopkins*.

BP: No, you were on the *Perry*.

WB: I'm on the *Perry*? Well, the reason I can remember this, because there were two "Perries." There was a *P-E-A-R-Y* and a *P-E-R-R-Y*. The *P-E-R-R-Y* was in Hawaii, and there was a *P-E-A-R-Y* sunk in the Philippines or something. But

there was a mistake. I was lost for about three or four months. I don't know how that Captain --

BP: This is DMS what?

WB: Well, DMS-17.

BP: Was the *Peary*?

WB: Yeah. And you'll find that; that was in the harbor. It shows when you go aboard there, the *Arizona*, when you go in, and the ships that were in the round.

BP: You were by the *Arizona*?

WB: No, I was closer to the *Medusa*. I wasn't too far from the *Arizona*; but I was there, because I saw the *Nevada*, which almost blocked the harbor; and the *Oklahoma*, which was upside down; and the *Arizona*, which was mined.

BP: Where were you? Can you describe the whole thing? Can we go back? Can you create a picture for me?

WB: Well, we went and dropped depth charges on the (inaudible) sub that was in the harbor.

BP: You were already outside the harbor?

WB: No, I was in the harbor.

BP: Then when they bombed, attacked you, (overlapping dialog; inaudible)

WB: When the attack came, I'll never forget. We had a Lieutenant [Bingle?], and he hollered "All hands!" He just was hysterical. We had a little guy named Chuck who

came running, jumping down in the compartment (inaudible), and he was hysterical. He just sprung down and hit the ladder, man; all the way down to the deck, down in the compartment of the old destroyer. He was screaming with adrenaline, screaming. I ended up on an old, 50-caliber machinegun, a pump, water-cooled. Some guy was firing. That was my battle station, there. And for the water to cool, you had to pump. I don't know how far they shoot, but anyway.

BP: You were not shooting at him?

WB: No. I wasn't shooting.

BP: You were pumping the water?

WB: Pumping the water, yes. It was water cooled. We went through the (inaudible). I think there was one guy, where a machinegun bullet, a 27-caliber, glanced his shoulder or neck. That was the only casualty we had on the ship. But the *Medusa*, we saw when we were trying to get out of the harbor. After we dropped the depth charges, we went on out to sea, to Diamondhead. The greatest thing that happened was they didn't block the channel with the *Nevada*.

BP: I interviewed the Senior Officer on the *Nevada*.

WB: Oh, you did, huh?

BP: He was there, and he ran the ship aground (overlapping dialog; inaudible).

WB: Yeah. I saw something about him when President Bush was in Hawaii for the, what was it, 50th Anniversary? Was he a Line Commander or Officer? Or was he a Chief or something?

BP: He was a Lieutenant Commander.

WB: Oh, he was?

BP: He graduated from the Academy in 1925. He's 95 years old. He's still alive, he lives in Ohio. He's a Retired Admiral now.

WB: Yeah, I saw this Lieutenant again when he came back. Only (inaudible) when I was in Pacific. I'm getting ahead of myself now.

BP: Can we get back to Pearl Harbor? Then we get to that. Just tell me about what happened, and then what happened, and we'll get there.

WB: Well, in the meantime, what happened to us was, we pulled out and went out to Diamondhead. And the wooden chairs and -- man, it was really an upsetting moment.

BP: The wooden chairs? What was that?

WB: In the wood room and all, they did same thing. They would catch afire, and we couldn't have any wood. We had to safeguard their (inaudible) -- cords and all. We had orders to blow them up and get rid of all the wooden things.

BP: So you threw everything overboard?

WB: Threw a lot of that stuff overboard, cleared the deck and everything in case -- Well, we heard so many rumors that the Japanese were landing at Ford Island and different areas. We were actually bewildered. We just knew they were about to take us over. We got so damn many rumors. We floated around out at Diamondhead running submarine screens and everything. Two days later, we came back into the harbor, because we had to fuel. That's one of the sights I remember. A lot of the men had lost all their uniforms off, everything. The harbor was full of rubbish, it probably had everything in it, black oil. The men were mute. Nobody said anything. We were all sad. We didn't know which way to go or what to do. So then we're given orders that we were on convoy duty for the next few months. We went to [Ever?] Island. We had an incident one night. An Officer woke me up, and we were near the big island of Midway. As we came up on deck, we see this caravan or periscope. Again, we had better sight. I don't know how that came about. Anyway, about midnight -- can we stop for a second?

(break in audio)

WB: Anyway, he said it was a sub. He had the midnight watch. And I said, "Well, I can't see no better than nobody else,

I don't believe." But anyway, we spent several months
convoying ships and supplies to different islands.

BP: Like Midway and (inaudible)?

WB: No. It was just all the Hawaiian Islands, like the Big
Island, Hilo. I was going to Hilo, going to the
plantations and different things, and delivering supplies.
We convoyed the ships, because they always felt there could
have been depth subs lurking around.

BP: Never went back to California, then?

WB: Well, see, it was a while before we were designated to come
back to Mare Island. We went back to Mare Island for the
transformation, where we got antiaircraft guns.

BP: You were already a DMS, though.

WB: Yeah, we were DMS, but then they put the 40mm and three-
inch guns. Yeah, it was three-inch guns that we could set
the fuse and fire at aircrafts. We were sent back to Mare
Island after a few months of convoying in Hawaii. I
miscalculate something. It was in 1941, the bombing. And
then in 1942 we came back to the States. I don't know
exactly when we came back to the States. All these DMSes
were transformed -- not transformed, but they put on
[Porter?] ack-ack guns, as we called it. After we left
Mare Island, all was squared away. But one incident I was
able to remember, is during the time we were there, we had

a Commander. He was from Atlanta, Georgia. They had a party for him. His family was there, very fine family. And I think he was on the Zane.

BP: What was his name?

WB: I can't recall his name, but I can tell you what happened. He went to the Flag with Admiral Callahan, and he was off the Zane. In fact, he was killed the night San Francisco was hit. The whole bridge was wiped out. I always remembered him, because they had a party for him, and his family, his wife and kids were from Atlanta. Very fine. He was Full Commander then. He had just made it, I think. And I remember when they had a little going off for him, because Chief Bell, one of my old buddies, we went there; all of us, together. Bell's passed now. He would have been a heck of an interview. In fact, I see his wife once in a while. Anyway, after we were given antiaircraft guns we left Mare Island; the Squadron, after they all were outfitted and everything. We talked of going north, up here in the Aleutians. That's where my brother sailed. We were three brothers, and one brother in the Seabees.

BP: A black Seabee (inaudible)?

WB: Yeah, my brother Bill.

BP: Is he still around?

WB: Yeah, he's back in Louisiana now. He used to live out here, my brother Bill. My youngest brother, Ray, was a Seaman though. He just passed. He was 74 years old, and he passed about a year or two ago. I was in the Messman Branch. But anyway, getting back to leaving Mare Island, we thought we were going to the Aleutians. For some reason, (inaudible) South Pacific. When we got to Diamondhead, we shoved off for the Bay Area, here. We never did go to Hawaii. We went to Diamondhead, and we split. That's the last we saw, like I told you. Like you said, you'd interviewed somebody on another ship, the guys that went up to the Aleutians.

BP: [DeLong?] was one of them?

WB: [DeLong?]? Probably, because I don't think [DeLong?] was with us in the South Pacific.

BP: Not until later.

WB: Never did. (overlapping dialog; inaudible).

BP: [DeLong?] I think was hit by a kamikaze at Lingayen Gulf. The USS *Long* was hit by a kamikaze, and then some of the men went over to the *Hovey*. Some other men went over to an Australian cruiser, I think it was. And the *Hovey* got sunk.

WB: Yeah, so much of my memory is gone, but I retain so much. I was in a battle when the *Canberra* -- that's an Australian

cruiser -- was hit. The *Quincy*, the *Vincennes*, and *Astoria* -- but the *Astoria* wasn't sunk until the next day, because we tried to salvage the *Astoria*. We put our cables on, because we had about 160 wounded men on there.

BP: We're getting ahead, right?

WB: Yeah, we're way ahead.

BP: Now we're back to Hawaii, and where do you go from there?

WB: From Hawaii, we're on our way to the South Pacific. We hit day and night maneuvers, we're picking up a ship here, and a ship there. And by the time we get down to probably the Panamanian area, the ships were coming through the lock, joining us in the Pacific.

BP: Why would you go back to Panama if you're already in (overlapping dialog; inaudible)?

WB: No, we didn't go to Panama. We were in the Pacific. We were going from the South Pacific. We're going down through Panama, below the Equator. When we got below the Equator, this Mr. [Dutton?], who was a Lieutenant, he gives us the word. We didn't know what we were going to attack. Mr. [Dutton?] gives us the word, and they laid out the whole thing out to us. We were going to attack another (inaudible) Solomons, another (inaudible) Guadalcanal, another (inaudible) Tulagi, Guadalcanal. We were like the old destroyers. Here we are at Guadalcanal, behind us is

the newer destroyers. Behind us are the light cruisers, the heavy cruisers, and the battleships. We're the suicide. We were the suicide. We knew what was going on here; Admiral could tell, too. Everything, any misfire, anything, when we hit the islands. We were softening up, and the Marines went ashore.

BP: Mr. [Dutton?] was your Captain?

WB: He was a Lieutenant. I'm on the DMS-13 now.

BP: You're on the *Hopkins*?

WB: On the *Hopkins*, yeah.

BP: When did you leave the Perry?

WB: I didn't stay on the Perry. I was on the *Hopkins*, I was on the [Hanalega?], I was on several ships when we were in the South Pacific, and even when we went to Australia.

BP: You were on the Perry only briefly, then?

WB: Just briefly, yes.

BP: And then you went to the *Hopkins*?

WB: I went to the *Hopkins*. The *Hopkins* was my ship. After the *Chandler*, the *Hopkins* was my main ship. The *Hopkins* was the flagship, DMS; because at one time, when the *Hopkins* went to New Zealand and all, we moved to the [Honolega?].

BP: [Hanalea?].

WB: In the meantime, every day we're jammed by a group of ships, a group of ships. So then Mr. [Dutton?] told us

what our mission was. We finally found out that we was after Guadalcanal, Tulagi, and then I was invading Kolombangara. I might have heard of that one. The Japanese had a gun on a track in there. I spent many unrestful nights in the Solomons, because, Savo Island sat right out in the center; and then Guadalcanal's over here. Tulagi was over here. Tulagi had a John Manville yacht that was kept in Tulagi. They had a freshwater deal back in there. The yacht was like a tender for these PT boats. It was PT boats. That's what I saw. John F. Kennedy was in New Caledonia and all down there. So that's where I was, in New Caledonia. I was in...

BP: Espiritu Santo?

WB: Espiritu Santo was a big base. Admiral Halsey used to say, "If you go, kill Japs, kill Japs, kill the damn Japs."
(inaudible) We would leave Espiritu Santos, and we'd go back; we convoyed, carried all kind of food to the Marines. We even carried 55 gallons of fuel on our ships. We were really suicide set. If just a 55 or 50-caliber machinegun bullet hit, it would blow us up. When we went to the Solomons, and from then on, it was hell.

BP: Did you get any battles in the Solomons?

WB: Yeah, that's what I'm saying. I was in a battle with the Quincy and Vincennes, that night. They put everybody on

the *Oakland*. I was in the battle when the Sullivan brothers -- I was in there that night.

BP: On the *Juneau*?

WB: The *Juneau* was hit. My brother was trying to get with me then. We had (inaudible) brothers, and about three or four sets of brothers on the ship with us. And they immediately transferred them.

BP: You had a brother on your ship with you?

WB: No, he was trying to get on, but my brother ended up in the Aleutians.

BP: On what ship?

WB: I don't know. I didn't know my brother. We spent some time at my dad's, at the home. He told me he had frostbite, and a whole lot of stuff. He was in the Aleutians, but I didn't know it, because we had never talked about the service hardly when we'd see each other. At intervals, we'd go to family. Then my mother passed, and dad and everybody. Anyway, getting back to the South Pacific, I spent nearly 14 months down there.

BP: Can you remember any specific battles you were in and what you did?

WB: I was in the battle of *Kolombangara*.

BP: Can you tell me anything about that?

WB: Because what happened, we pulled the Marines off of the island out there at midnight. I met the Doctor.

BP: What island did you pull them off of?

WB: This is in the Solomons.

BP: Yeah, but what island? You said you pulled them off of Guadalcanal or Vella Lavella?

WB: No, we pulled them off of Kolombangara. The Japanese had a gun, and we pulled a bunch of Marines off there with gangrene on their legs and their arms and all. I was there when the St. Louis was hit. There's something else I'm missing. I'm drawing a blank. Oh, yeah, I was there when the Jarvis -- we were in a deal where the Japanese suiciders came in. We shot down 25 planes during that day.

BP: Your ship did?

WB: During the day they came, twin-motor bombers. And that day, the Jarvis was hit. We picked up two men out of the drink, but they were full of black oil. And the Skipper said, "We don't have any food. We can't keep them." This was in the Solomons.

BP: These were Japanese you pulled out, or Americans?

WB: No, it was Americans. They wanted to stay aboard with us at the *Hopkins*, but the Captain said, "No, we have to get rid of them. We have to send them back." That was the saddest thing. They didn't find out until after the war

was over that the Jarvis was sunk out in the Solomons as soon as they got out of the harbor that evening. The Japanese sub sunk them.

BP: The Jarvis sank?

WB: The Jarvis, yeah. I was in there with that. We used to have what was called "Washboard Charlie" every night. The P-38s, that was something to see them go up there and knock out some Japanese, couple planes, I guess, scouting or whatever at night. And "Washboard Charlie" would just drop a bomb here and there, and just agitate all night. That's when we were in the Solomons, and staying back there where we had the tenders, John Manville tender. I was in there when the Chicago was hit one night. We had a whole lot of narrow escapes. One night, the Japanese fleet was coming down from Bougainville, but they gave us the wrong timing, because they timed it wrong. So when they came down, we were at Savo Island sitting in the center. They came down there either side of Savo, (inaudible). They could shoot down there. They could come in on the side of Savo, over to Guadalcanal, and over here at Tulagi. And then they could fire pointblank. And then one night they gave us orders that everybody was on radio silence. It was a whole lot of hectic. I used to run back and forth to Espiritu Santo. That's how we convoyed ships, back and forth. We

brought food to the Marines at Thanksgiving; the Thanksgiving of '42. We brought the food and different things to the Marines in 1940 and '42. And then we delivered fuel. We had to drop the setup off in the water and float it in, but the Japanese were the greeters.

Now I'll tell you another one. I was with Roosevelt's oldest son, James Roosevelt, and the Carlson Raiders. They were brought on the ship. They were supposed to muster about 900 Marines for the northern tip of Guadalcanal one night, and that fell through, because the Japanese came in there with 4,000 soldiers, and they knew the tide. We got word, and we had Old Man Carlson was negotiating with our Captain. James Roosevelt was the President's oldest son, and we were bored, because he talked a lot to us. He used to talk about his father. He was a Secretary to his father, during the time his father was President. Old Man Carlson found out, because he looked like he was a real sick man by that time. He had been in the jungles and all down there. James was quite talkative to the Captain. There were a few things I can remember. Our vats went bad, our food refrigeration system went out. Most food we got was (inaudible) from other ships. So we went alongside -- I can't tell what battleship it was now -- we went along,

and our guardrail hit the (inaudible) of this battleship. It knocked a big hole in our fantail. They shouldered that up and kept us afloat, but we didn't have any food. We ate Spam, or whatever meat we had. (inaudible) Our vats were bad, and it looked like everything went wrong. We had no water to shower.

END OF AUDIO FILE