

Bob Addobate Oral History Interview

BRUCE PETTY: Today is Friday, 18 May, the year 2001. I'm in Sacramento, California. I'm interviewing Mr. Bob Addobate, and the interviewer is Bruce Petty. (break in audio) And when you were born, where you were born, what year?

BOB ADDOBATE: I was born in 1922, October 19, in Canonsburg. C-A-N-O-N-S-B-U-R-G, Pennsylvania.

BP: Okay. You graduated from high school before you went in the Navy?

BA: I joined the Navy the day after I graduated from high school. I went to Newport, Rhode Island.

BP: When was that? What year?

BA: In June 1941. And I went to boot camp in Newport. After graduating from boot camp, I picked up the *Solace*, USS *Solace*, a hospital ship in the Brooklyn Navy Yard.

BP: Now, was there a special reason why you went into the Navy? Just you wanted to join?

BA: I joined the Navy to eat. There were 11 of us, and times were really tough. A little coal mining town right around Pittsburgh. No. I always say that I joined the Navy to eat, but that's not too farfetched.

BP: Not too farfetched?

BA: With 11 of us.

BP: Your father was a coal miner?

BA: No. My father was a white collar guy. Went to work every morning dressed up in a suit and a hankie in his coat pocket. He was an accountant in a [tinplate wheel?] in this town. But like I said, times were so bad.

BP: With 11 kids to feed?

BA: Nine kids and then the parents. You know.

BP: Nine kids. Okay, 11 people in the family.

BA: Yeah. So, I went aboard the *Solace* in the Brooklyn Navy Yard. And, let's see, we got underway. Put her in commission, put the ship in commission. I was --

BP: I was not (inaudible).

BA: Mm-hmm. I was a plank owner. And, let's see, we got underway probably in September. From Brooklyn, we went down to Norfolk, Virginia. Stayed there a few days, and from there went to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. We were just in there for probably a couple days. From there we went to Panama, went through the canal, and went around to Long Beach, California. And we got underway from Long Beach. We got into Pearl on October 27th, which I think is Navy Day. I'm not sure about that. So really, we were just in Pearl for maybe five or six weeks before the attack on Pearl.

BP: You were just an ordinary seaman? I mean, you were a seaman now?

BA: I was a seaman.

BP: Striking Corps?

BA: Seaman second, actually. I was just a seaman second.

BP: Okay. Were you a Striking Corps of certain rank at that time?

BA: I was a -- well, I [scraped?] for signalman shortly after the attack. That's what I ended up, being a signalman on the *Solace*.

BP: Okay. What do you remember about Hawaii in those early days?

BA: Well, Hawaii was just -- you know, from a little coal mining town in Pennsylvania to beautiful Hawaii was really a switch. Yeah, it was nice, quiet, peaceful, all military. We kept looking for all these beautiful, exotic, native beauties that everybody talked about and didn't see too many of them. But, yeah. I was standing a four to eight watch on the gateway, and I had been ashore the night before at Pearl, and we -- the battleships each had a band, a good band. Dance band. And they'd play the old -- the good music, like Glenn Miller.

BP: The big band music?

BA: Big band sound and all that. That Saturday night, right before we got hit, they had a battle of the bands. I always like to relate this story because it is kind of sad. The *Arizona* band won the contest, and the next morning every man in that band was dead. But to get on with the attack, I was on the gateway just about ready to be relieved. In fact, I should have been relieved. I was standing at four to eight. We usually relieve the watch about a quarter to the hour. I always tell I saw the first Japanese plane, because I saw this plane coming down and dropped something. And then I always thought it was the first plane because it was the first explosion I heard.

BP: And where was the explosion?

BA: Down there -- it seemed like towards the end of Battleship Row, towards Ford Island, or the *California* was the last thing [there?].

BP: So, in the direction of *California*.

BA: And in just a matter of minutes, they were all over the place. I mean, in all I think there were about 360 aircraft in two different waves. They hit us at eight. Then the second wave hit us at nine. But I immediately got relieved. That first bump, my relief came running up and said, "I'm relieving you. We got to get in the boat." We swung all our launches out, and I think we had about four

boats in the water tied up to booms. I was a deck man in a motor launch. What we did, we just kept running back and forth to Battleship Row. You couldn't get near the *Arizona*. She was burning so bad. But the *West Virginia*, which was also burning badly, we managed to get right up to her. We weren't trying to go aboard her, but there were men just all over the water floating. Dead. Floating in the water. We were picking them up.

BP: The wounded, or the unwounded, or everyone?

BA: The wounded. Wounded.

BP: Okay.

BA: And then there were men that weren't wounded that were trying to get out of that oil. The water was just coated with oil. In fact, our boat was kind of smoldering. I remember -- I didn't, but one of the guys in the boat -- there were only three or four of us in the launch, the guy on the -- the coxswain and the (inaudible) and a couple deckhands. I remember one of the guys reached over and grabbed a fellow, and he just literally pulled all the skin off his arm, he was burnt so bad, trying to pull him out. And I was covered -- you know, I had a suit of whites on, just covered with oil and blood and everything else. But we continued -- we did get very close to the *West Virginia*. We continued to do that all day long. I remember wearing

that old World War I helmet, and I kept moving it this way to the back of my head and on the side, and then I just -- they were really --

BP: For what reason? Why?

BA: Just kind of scared. Being scared. I mean, it wouldn't have done any good wherever I put it, because they were just tissue thin. We kept going back and forth, but mainly to the *West Virginia*.

BP: Do you remember any specific individuals you helped pull out of the water?

BA: I remember a chief.

BP: A chief?

BA: I remember a chief that we pulled out, and he was laying on the boat. And we did have some canteens of water, and I'll never forget this chief. He had his hands covering his stomach, and he kept asking me, "Can I have some water? I need some water." And I got a canteen, and I had it like this, and he reached up, and his whole stomach was exposed, everything just fell out. He put the canteen to his mouth, and he died right there. Little things like that just stick with you (inaudible).

BP: Anybody else?

BA: Well, there were so many. There were so many, and they were all in about the same shape. Burns, most of them were

burned. Just burned to a crisp like a piece of wood.

Squares charred. Couldn't touch them. You know, we had to pick them up, but they were screaming, "Don't touch me.

Don't touch me."

BP: So, you left them in the water?

BA: No. We got them in. We didn't leave -- in fact, we kept going back to the *Solace*. The medical officer was on the gangway, and he yelled down, "Try to bring back as many living as you can." Because by the time you get back to the *Solace*, half of them would be dead. But that's a tough decision. You know, an 18-year-old kid, which one am I going to pick up?

BP: So, a lot of them, half of them would be dead by the time you got back?

BA: Yeah. So --

BP: What'd you do with the dead ones?

BA: No, we brought everybody aboard. We had a big incinerator on the ship, and I remember, the only times I saw the incinerator used were not to burn the bodies, but, like, we had at least six or eight operating rooms on the *Solace*, and if a limb was [saved?] or something, I remember that they would take it down to this incinerator. So, I would imagine that incinerator was pretty busy.

BP: So, the incinerators, their primary function was for cremation, or you don't know?

BA: No. I can't say that. As far as an entire body, I don't believe we put any bodies in the incinerator. We took them ashore, over to Aiea, and then they were disposed of somehow, buried over there or whatever. Buried maybe up in the Punchbowl later. But we did this for two solid days. When we finally got aboard the *Arizona* -- she burned for almost two days. But we finally got aboard her and the *West Virginia*. (inaudible).

BP: Did you find any survivors on the *Arizona*?

BA: No. No. We didn't find any. Most of the survivors from the *Arizona*, I think, swam over to Ford Island, which was just, you know, a short swim away. They went over the side and just --

BP: So, what did you do on the *Arizona*? Were you looking for survivors?

BA: No, we -- yeah.

BP: Did you do anything else besides look for survivors?

BA: We were looking for survivors, but I can't recall if we found any. We did find them on the *West Virginia*.

BP: Now, Admiral Kidd was killed on the *Arizona*.

BA: Kidd was on the -- I can't recall. Was he on the *Arizona*?

BP: I think on the *Arizona*, along with the captain. They were both up on the bridge.

BA: I think the skipper on the *West Virginia* was killed.

BP: Possibly. I don't remember.

BA: I don't remember that either.

BP: I'd have to check it out.

BA: But that was -- it was two --

BP: Two days without sleep?

BA: Two days --

BP: And nights.

BA: Uh-huh, just continuous. Just an awful experience for a kid. That's probably the biggest day of my life.

BP: Could you hear anybody trapped inside?

BA: We did open a hatch on the *West Virginia*. No, it was the *Arizona*. After we got aboard, we did open a hatch. And I remember as soon as we opened the hatch, there was a body face down in the hatch. I just had an (inaudible), of course. Yeah. I repeat, there were no survivors that we picked up on the *Arizona*. On the *West Virginia*, that first day we did get a lot of men off of her. We took them back to the *Solace*. Other boats would come over to the *Solace* and pick up a lot of the men that we had picked up that weren't in too bad of shape, men that we had fished out of the water, and probably took them over to the fleet

landing, and then probably from there to a hospital. A lot of the men got on other ships that same day from -- via wagons.

BP: They were on other ships.

BA: They got on other ships.

BP: You probably couldn't keep them. So, you had actually 48 hours without sleep?

BA: Yeah. And, you know, I was -- I'm not bragging or tooting my own horn or anything, but I was probably one of the guys that was in the harbor, right in the harbor, while the attack was going on. I mean, they were still bombing, and we were running back and forth in these motor launches, so it was --

BP: Anybody try to strafe you?

BA: There was strafing going on.

BP: Did they try to strafe your boat?

BA: They -- no. There was strafing going on all around us, but they weren't trying to strafe our boat, they were just --

BP: Did anybody in any of the other boats get hit?

BA: No. Not that I know.

BQ: They didn't attack the *Solace*?

BA: No, but they flew right -- I remember fighters going right alongside of her. You could see the guys in the cockpit. They were, like, looking right at you go by.

BP: Did you see the *Pennsylvania* get hit?

BA: No. She was quite a ways. She was in dry dock.

BP: Did you see the *Nevada* trying to get out?

BA: See, *Nevada* was right there. Yeah.

BP: I interviewed the senior officer on the *Nevada*. He was the one who was getting the ship out. He's 96 years old now. Back in Ohio with his son. He won the Navy Cross [for that?] and retired as an admiral.

BA: Yeah. She got underway. She was the closest battleship to us. We were just -- there's a long pipeline that extended out just the stern of the *Nevada*, and we were right behind there. Yeah. I thought I had some pictures, or maps, or something.

BP: I have some maps at home.

BA: You can probably, if you had a map, you can pinpoint the *Solace* right where we were.

BP: Yeah. And Ford Island is here. Here's the mouth to the harbor, and *Solace* was over here. And then there's some of the destroyers, *Ramsay* and some of the destroyers, *Monaghan*.

BA: Yeah.

BP: So after, I suppose you went and got some sleep then, after being up for (inaudible)?

BA: Yeah. And then after --

BP: How long did you get to sleep?

BA: Oh, it was just a few hours. In fact, you just kind of passed out for a few hours and slept. It was very -- it was kind of like a nap or something, and then you'd wake up. You were just exhausted. So, after things quieted down, and the attack was over --

(break in audio)

BP: Okay. After the attack, things slowed down?

BA: Yeah. So, we laid in Pearl Harbor until about *Marchand* finally got underway and went to Pago Pago. We stayed there for a while, and from Pago Pago we went to Tonga. Tongatabu. One of the prettiest places I've ever seen. And things were -- I guess the Navy was making preparations to hit Guadalcanal shortly. Well, we didn't hit it until August, but that was our first landing. From Tonga, I believe we went up to Noumea, New Caledonia, and we were in and out of Noumea so many times. And when we would get a load of wounded -- well, actually, we didn't start getting wounded until after the Guadalcanal operation.

BP: Landings in (inaudible).

BA: Mm-hmm. And then we'd take them to Auckland and Wellington, New Zealand. They had a big hospital down there. We made several trips to New Zealand, and that was about the prettiest place I ever ventured, New Zealand.

BP: You did that until May 1943?

BA: Mm-hmm. And then we -- gee whiz, I'm trying to think chronological here. We were in New Zealand. We were in Wellington. And I remember we were cleaning the ship, and word came that we were going back to the States. I believe that was in November.

BP: It would have been late October, '43.

BA: Yeah. I had mentioned that through the Tarawa operation, but we weren't at Tarawa, because I think Tarawa was in November. When we got into Hawaii we got -- like I said, I was a signalman. We tied up right there at the Aloha Tower. We tied up there, and I remember getting a message from Nimitz, and they gave us a [BZ?], care of victims, an order that means "Well done." We got a well done from Nimitz. I think I still have --

BP: So as a signalman, you got this message then.

BA: Mm-hmm. And then we went right into San Francisco. I was the first guy ashore. (laughter)

BP: Do you remember the captain of the ship? Was it the same one?

BA: Perlman. Captain Benjamin Perlman.

BP: Do you remember anything about him, or did you have any opportunity to --?

BA: A good skipper. Really conscientious about his men and real caring skipper. When we were in Tonga, he went aboard the *Portland*, a heavy cruiser, when the skipper from Portland got sick, I believe. He took the *Portland* into the Coral Sea battle.

BP: Perlman did?

BA: Yeah.

BP: Because the skipper was (inaudible)?

BA: Mm-hmm. I think that was in May. It could have been May.

BP: Yeah, May.

BA: And he took the -- he was skipper of the *Portland*.

BP: Temporarily. And that's during the Coral Sea?

BA: Yeah, and then he came back to the *Solace*. And when we were in Tonga, I remember the *Yorktown* came in. And she had been at sea for days, for an unbelievable period of time. I remember she had so much moss on her lower line. She was just the -- she had been at sea for -- I never heard of a ship being at sea so long as the *Yorktown*, which was also the Coral Sea. [It would be?] the *Lexington*.

BP: She was damaged, yeah. The *Lexington* was also.

BA: And then we operated -- then we were taking, like, casualties from the Solomons.

(break in audio)

BA: Turn it back on.

BP: Do you remember anybody else? The executive officer or your division officer?

BA: Waters.

BP: And how was he?

BA: He was wild. They called him Tawahi Joe. If somebody would foul up, he'd say, "Send him to Tawahi. Put him on the beach." Which was, you know, Tawahi was up there right next to Guadalcanal. Yeah, it can be under Waters. Muddy Waters. I remember coming out of Espiritu Santo one morning -- no, we were going in, and it was just dusk, when it's real hard to identify ships. We were coming in, and they transported the *USS Zeilin*.

BP: *Zeilin*?

BA: I forget how you spell it. Z-E-I-L-I-N.

BP: I can look it up.

BA: A transport. She was coming out, and she opened fire on us. (laughs)

BP: Was it an Australian ship?

BA: No. It was one of our ships. I was up on the signal bridge, and Waters was screaming, "Fire a flare! Fire a flare!" So, I remember putting a World War I flare (inaudible), and it was just sort of like a (makes a noise). (laughs) They were so old. We had them on the ship [by then?], and they didn't work. But anyway, they

kept firing away, and they damaged a bunch of lifeboats right along the side of us.

BP: What were they shooting at you with?

BA: I have no idea.

BP: They were shooting guns or 5"?

BA: Twenty-millimeter.

BP: Twenty-millimeter?

BA: Put big holes in them. Waters, after he was yelling, "Fire a flare," which didn't take, he says, "Identify us. Identify us." So, I just flick a light, like, you do it twice.

BP: Where, on a signal?

BA: Yeah, a big search light, you know.

BP: A search light? What do they call those, but for sending messages? Do they have a special name for them? Signal lamp or something?

BA: Yeah, signal lamps. But this was a 24-inch light, a big one, with an [arc?]. And I was just doing it like this, intermittently, and they stopped. And then I said, "What ship?" And they came back and said, "*USS Zeilin*." And the skipper, Waters, was screaming his head off. He says, "What are they saying? What are they saying?" And I said, "Captain, it's the *USS Zeilin*, one of ours."

BP: You called him captain?

BA: He was the captain.

BP: Waters was?

BA: Yeah.

BP: I thought you said --

BA: Perlman had been relieved.

BP: Perlman?

BA: Yeah.

BP: So, Waters has it.

BA: Yeah. He was a lieutenant commander.

BP: Oh.

BA: Perlman was a four striper. He was the skipper. He said, "Tell them that they shot up all our lifeboats." And I was doing that. We were still moving, you know. But you could reach somebody 20 miles with one of those lights. So, we shot the breeze back and forth for a while. Then that ended probably just as soon as it started, but I'm sure he made a big report out of all that.

BP: Nobody was hurt?

BA: Nobody was hurt.

BP: Do you remember Waters' first name?

BA: No, I don't.

BP: You said when he said somebody would screw up and he would say, "Send them to Tawahi," he actually put people ashore?

BA: No. That was his favorite line.

BP: Send him to Tawahi, because Tawahi was worse than being on the ship? So how long did Waters stay in your (inaudible)?

BA: He brought it back to the States.

BP: Do you know where Perlman went?

BA: No. I don't.

BP: Okay, but he was just temporarily attached to the Portland, came back, and then he was relieved by Waters?

BA: Yeah.

BP: Sometime when you were --

BA: Yeah.

BP: -- in Espiritu Santo.

BA: Yeah.

BP: How about your division officer or any of the people in your division? Does anybody have any special influence on you in terms of getting you trained or just you're your best friend there?

BA: I had a good chief signalman. In fact, I believe his name was Schultz. Big tough barrel-chested guy. He was the chief. He probably had about eight signalmen. He was a great guy, let me tell you.

BP: He was responsible for training you to be a signalman?

BA: Well, our first class was really responsible for training.

BP: What was his name?

BA: His name was Sanford. Or no, Sanderson.

BP: Sanderson. Okay.

BA: We had a whole bunch of guys from New England, a bunch of reserves. New England. Connecticut, Massachusetts. We had a bunch of fellows from New Jersey. Almost all Polish descent, these fellows from New Jersey.

BP: You all got along pretty well?

BA: Yeah. Everybody got along well. Then we had the nurses aboard.

BP: Did that cause any problems, having all of these girls on board?

BA: No. But I kept communicating with a nurse. Her name was Shaw, Kitty Shaw, and I communicated with her and her husband. He had been a lieutenant commander on I believe it was the *Lansdowne* destroyer. He was the ship's doctor, and they lived in Hawaii.

BP: So, she was a nurse. They were married then?

BA: She got married after she got out.

BP: Oh. They were going together during the war?

BA: Yeah. Every time his ship would come in, he'd call. As soon as that ship would clear the channel, I'd see a light. I'd answer, and it would be a message for Kitty Shaw that said, "I'll see you on the beach." (laughter)

BP: How come you were so close to her, just friends?

BA: Just a good friend. Good friend. That's all there was to it. Good friend.

BP: Did they have special quarters for the nurses and the guards?

BA: No.

BP: No? Everybody was very appropriate then?

BA: Yeah. Mm-hmm.

BP: Nobody got pregnant during the war?

BA: No. We had a couple of wild nurses on there, though.

BP: In what respect?

BA: Pardon?

BP: In what respect?

BA: Well, I mean, it was just kind of common knowledge that they were kind of wild on the beach. [I'm not sure?]. But this Kitty Shaw, the last time I went to Hawaii, I used to call them regularly. She had been very ill, in and out of Tripler Hospital, and she was looking forward to me coming back and visiting them. And about two months before I went back, she passed away.

BP: How long ago was that?

BA: That was about five years ago.

BP: So, they lived in Hawaii?

BA: They lived in Hawaii, up near the university. But I did, I still communicate with her husband. Nice guy. And then I -- where were we?

BP: Well, I'd like to hear more about the personnel, because you had not only your regular Navy personnel, but you had a large medical staff there, and doctors, and stuff.

BA: Large medical staff.

BP: Right. I wonder if anybody else stands out in your memory? What do you remember about the medical staff?

BA: I think the senior medical officer's name was Kevin Jensen. I remember them -- you could walk on deck, and you could actually look in the windows, not the portholes, the windows, of the operating rooms. You could be out on deck watching them.

BP: Watch surgery?

BA: Then, like I said, there must have been at least a half a dozen operating rooms. And they were so busy, especially after a landing like in the Solomons [after?], bringing the wounded on the way back to New Zealand. And boy, that medical staff really worked hours in there doing surgeries. We had a lot of the crew that got married in New Zealand.

BP: The medical staff or ship's company?

BA: Just ship's company.

BP: Oh, you mean they got married to the medical staff?

BA: They got married to the New Zealanders, because all the men in New Zealand were gone. They were going back [at that?].

BP: I know a guy down there, Jack Clark. He was the beach master on Guadalcanal, and he got married to a girl from New Zealand. He lives down there still.

BA: Beautiful. Have you ever been to New Zealand?

BP: No.

BA: Boy, it's pretty. So pretty.

BP: He's 87, 88 years old now.

BA: Two islands. North and south. Completely different. South Island is ice, snow, glaciers.

BP: Have you been back there?

BA: No, but I'd love to go. But I better hurry up if I'm going to go.

BP: Okay. So now did the Japanese ever fight on the *Solace*? Or did you have any close calls?

BA: No, but we were about 600 miles from an Australian hospital ship when we were down in the Tasman Sea there. We were on our way in to New Zealand, and we got an SOS from an Australian hospital ship which had been torpedoed. We didn't go there because they were a lot closer to Australia. We were leaving.

BP: Do you remember the name of the Australian --?

BA: No, I don't.

BP: And how many people were killed or --?

BA: No, I don't. But from that night on, we ran without lights.

BP: Before that, you ran with lights on?

BA: Yeah. We had a big cross right in the center of the ship with the floodlights point right down.

BP: On the hulls, the sides (inaudible)?

BA: Yeah. And from that night on, we ran without lights, because really, we didn't trust --

BP: The Japanese?

BA: -- those Japanese too much.

BP: Yeah. Okay. So, what else can you tell me about the ship, or the staff, or the crew? Did you ever get together with the guys who were on your ship? Do you ever have reunions?

BA: We had a reunion the year before last at the Marine Memorial in San Francisco. There were about, oh, probably about 15 fellows. Most of them were from back east. That was kind of an East Coast crew.

BP: Anybody from your division?

BA: No. Nobody at all in the communications division. But it was a good time, and nobody remembered anybody.

BP: None of you guys remembered --

BA: [I know?]. But it was good to get together. We're having another one this year. I think it's in Minnesota. I'm not

going to make that, because we're all going to Pearl this year, this December, for our sixtieth reunion.

BP: Yeah. I inter --

(break in audio)

BP: Okay. So, where were we? You were talking about the personnel and stuff like that. Do you remember anything about the Marine casualties that were brought on board? Did you ever meet any of them?

BA: No. I really never came in contact. That was strictly medical staff. I was up on top all the time.

BP: On the bridge.

BA: Signal bridge.

BP: (inaudible). Okay. So now, you came back to the States in you said '43, right?

BA: Yeah.

BP: And what happened then? Were you [came?] out the ship, or you stayed on?

BA: No. Got off the ship as soon as we got back and went to Treasure Island. Then I went home on leave, 21 days. You know, today you get 30 days and probably get traveling time with it. I got 21 days leave, no traveling time, to go to Pennsylvania. Spent three days on that cattle car train going from San Francisco to Pittsburgh, and was home just a few days, and right back out for the West Coast. Then I

got orders to go to Hunters Point, and we stayed there.

That's where these dry dock sections were made in Stockton and some up in Eureka.

BP: Was this something new, or they had been around for a while?

BA: No. These were brand new.

BP: No, but had they used this concept before, the idea of these large floating dry docks?

BA: No.

BP: This was something new.

BA: No, this was something new. Mm-hmm. Ten-section docks. Huge docks. You could dock a carrier, a battleship. We've had two LSTs in this at one time. They're pretty big, LSTs.

BP: But, in other words, your orders were to go there where they were being constructed?

BA: Yeah. That was in Stockton.

BP: They were building them in Stockton?

BA: They were building these sections. They would build a section. We lived off -- we lived ashore.

BP: In Stockton or Hunters Point?

BA: In Stockton. Then we brought it down to Hunters Point.

BP: Fully constructed or just in sections?

BA: In sections. And that's where we gathered there. I think we got underway in August, '44.

BP: Okay. So, I take it this was the fourth one built, who had number four on it?

BA: Yeah.

BP: Okay. So, it's like a regular ship? I mean, you had a captain, an executive over it?

BA: Oh, yeah. We had a pretty big crew.

BP: And living quarters on board there?

BA: Yeah. Living quarters, which were awful. Hot. Just not the greatest conditions in the world.

BP: And you were taken there by what? How did they get you there?

BA: Tow.

BP: By tugboat?

BA: Tow. Forty-eight days from Hunters Point to Manus, 48 days at sea. I think we made about five knots.

BP: Who was the captain of your floating dry docks?

BA: The skipper's name was Karns. Captain Karns.

BP: Was he a four-striper?

BA: Yeah, four-striper. An ex-submarine skipper, and that was really a switch.

BP: Why did they take him from submarines? Did he screw up on submarines?

BA: I think he might have screwed up or something maybe.
That's the way they penalized him, gave him the dry dock.
(laughs)

BP: Give him the dry dock, huh.

BA: And then we -- yeah, 48 days to get to Manus.

BP: Okay. Any bad weather?

BA: No. We were lucky. We had good weather. I don't know what would have happened if we'd have hit some dirty weather being towed like that. And then when we got to Manus, oh, we spent weeks assembling this dock.

BP: In other words, you were towed in sections?

BA: In sections.

BP: So, the sections were on a barge or something?

BA: No. Each section was a -- it was huge pontoons. Each section had its own towboat. Just like a convoy.

BP: A convoy. Sections, and then they were welded together at Manus, is that it?

BA: At Manus. Put them all together, assemble it, which was a huge operation. It took weeks to put it together. And then we began docking ships, which was -- the whole concept was good, because it would save you going all the way back to Pearl from the States, if they had some battle damage.

BP: So how was Karns as the skipper?

BA: Karns would go ashore every day and get smashed. It was funny. We had an elevator, a cage elevator, where you came aboard, way down on deck. So, the top of the [wing bulls?]. Anyway, the cage, the elevator went haywire one day, and he was locked in there for hours, screaming, cussing his head off, all that. It was kind of a -- the crew wasn't the greatest, and the conditions were awful in that dock.

BP: The crew was not the greatest? Were these guys screw-ups from other commands or something?

BA: I think so. I don't know how I got on there, because I was a good sailor. (laughter) So we docked a lot of ships. We had a fighter strip. It was called the [Lukerang?].

BP: [Lukerang?]

BA: Lukerang, one of those South Pacific names. We had this strip, it was an Australian fighter strip, and they flew those F4Us, Corsairs.

BP: (inaudible). F4U? You mean, with the gull wings?

BA: Yeah.

BP: No. That was --

BA: Corsair.

BP: F4U, that's right. The Corsairs.

BA: Mm-hmm. Yeah. And they were really hot-shot pilots. They'd go out in the morning and make a sweep, I guess, and

come in at night. And when they'd come in, here were all these (inaudible) and everything. They were pretty hot pilots. But they used to bomb -- they would bomb the airstrip at Manus. What was the name of that field?

Momote. Momote Airstrip.

BP: Okay. So, the Japanese would come in from other areas and bomb?

BA: Mm-hmm.

BP: They didn't bomb your dry dock?

BA: No. No, they didn't. But then on April 30th --

BP: Nineteen forty-four?

BA: Nineteen forty-five, the ABSD2, another dry dock, was just over from us, just a few thousand (inaudible), and they hit us both. They actually thought we were carriers. It looked like a huge carrier I would think from an airplane, because it was an upright [thing?] and a lot of lights.

BP: At night you had lights on?

BA: Mm-hmm.

BP: Why? Because you're working day and night?

BA: Because they're working in the water, and a lot of lights were on. We thought we were so far removed from all these other operations going on. Everything was moving up towards Okinawa, and down to Philippines. But the planes

that hit us, two planes, I think they were from Rabaul.

The island of Rabaul.

BP: That wasn't too far away.

BA: Yeah, that's [right?]. We were laying kind of like right on -- we were one degree off the equator, 60 miles. We were laying between New Guinea and Rabaul. So, they could have thrown torpedoes in there all day, and they wouldn't have sunk something. They were just -- each section was just a huge pontoon. But they hit one section, and they literally broke us in half, and that was the end of the docking ships. In fact, then they started to tear it apart.

BP: So, it damaged yours, your --

BA: My [part?] dock.

BP: So bad that they --

BA: Mm-hmm.

BP: So that was it? They didn't take any more ships?

BA: No. They didn't, no. They started to tear it down, section by section.

BP: They did what?

BA: Towed the sections back to the States again.

BP: For what reason?

BA: I don't know. I mean, you could have -- I mean, for what reason? You could ask that question a million times during

the war, (inaudible). But a lot of them ended up back in Hunters Point.

BP: Okay. Let's back up a little bit though, because you have said some things that -- you said the captain went ashore and got drunk every day. During the working hours or at night?

BA: Oh, he'd go ashore every night and get over to -- they'd head him off, and just drunk on the beach. He'd get all --

BP: But he was there during the day during this?

BA: Oh, yeah.

BP: So he was responsible in that way or no?

BA: Yeah. He was okay. But he was -- I mean, there was this four-striper on the dry dock (laughs), probably the lowest thing in his life that he ever experienced. Something like a *Mister Roberts* story.

BP: Oh, sort of like a *Mister Roberts* story, yeah. Well, the other crew, you said a lot of them were screw-ups, they weren't a very good crew. How did you feel about being --?

BA: Well, I mean, they were good guys, but I think they all felt the same. What am I doing on this thing? You know, it was a -- yeah. I would kind of draw a parallel to *Mister Roberts*, if you remember that.

BP: Did you get along with them?

BA: Oh, yeah. Got along with everybody.

BP: There were no fights or anything, or were there fights there?

BA: No. No.

BP: Okay. But you said you were torpedoed. That's how you lost your leg?

BA: No. I didn't. About three days later we got hit with a terrific typhoon, and we had several barges tied up to buoys all around us, these pontoon barges loaded with all kinds of gear. On one of them it had a big what they called a stiff legged crane, a huge crane.

BP: This is April of '45 we're talking about?

BA: Mm-hmm.

BP: Okay.

BA: And this one lieutenant, he was worried that the barge, that the line, the wire from the buoy to the barge might part.

BP: The mooring line?

BA: And he asked for a crew to go out at night. So, he asked me to be in charge of the boat, because I was a ranking fellow.

BP: What was your rank?

BA: I was second class signalman. And so, we go out in this boat. The typhoon had sort of died down, but there were still whitecaps in this harbor. We were trying to get a

wire -- we got aboard. I told the coxswain in the boat to kind of lay this launch alongside, and don't try to tie up, because it was so right, just lay alongside, and we'll go jump, we'll get aboard the barge. All we had were a couple lanterns. And I told the coxswain, I said, "Just lay off, and I'll blink you when to come on." I said, "When you pick us up, just come alongside. Don't try to tie up, because it will just tear the gunwale, or you'll smash the boat." I said, "Bring it as close as you can and just try to keep it there, and we'll get in the boat." It was impossible to get the wire on. There was no way we were going to.

BP: He wanted you to put on a second mooring line?

BA: Yeah. It was an impossibility. There was no way we could put a wire on in this rough weather. So, I told the coxswain to come on in and pick us up. I made sure everybody was in the boat, and I was the last guy on the barge.

BP: This was at night?

BA: At night. Everything was on an even keel, the boat was right there, but just as I jumped a wave hit us, and the bow of the launch just went up in the air, and just as I jumped that happened. I got my hands on the gunwale and came down between the barge and the boat, and just my whole

leg was turned around. Just (inaudible) crushed me. I ended up in the drink, and the hull of the boat, as it goes up, my head was between the barge and where the hull --

BP: Of the boat was, huh?

BA: Pretty much. And the gunwale was right above me banging against the side of this barge. I could have been smashed like an egg. But it drifted away a little, and then a kid sitting in (inaudible), Lando from Minnesota --

BP: Londow? L-O-N-D-O-W?

BA: L-O-N-D-O. A kid from Minnesota. He reached over and got me, and pulled me in, and went back to the dock. And they had better medical facilities on the other dry dock. So, they got back to my dock, and then they took me back over to the other dock. I remember they picked me up in some kind of a --

BP: Water stretcher?

BA: Yeah. Arms like a water stretcher with a crane, picked me up on top of the other dock, and they had a better medical facility there.

BP: Were they giving you morphine by then or not?

BA: No. They hadn't. They did this right away. But then they decided they couldn't do much for me there, and I guess they did load me up on morphine, and then they took me ashore. That was a wild ride in that motor launch. Took

me ashore, and they had an Army dispensary on the beach. And that's where they -- well, they had my leg in a heat (inaudible) or a heat cradle, which is a million light bulbs. And then they -- I can't recall why they did. Well, I guess they tried heat for some reason, and then they packed me in ice. I was kind of an experiment.

BP: [That's pretty bad?].

BA: Then they wanted to fly me to Guam. They had a big Navy hospital in Guam. But they had to wait because the typhoon had shifted course. You know how they do, they just shift course. And it was headed for Guam, so they had to wait. In fact, the crew of this plane came over to see me while we were waiting, and then they got cleared to fly to Guam and some hospital there. I could hear doctors. They wheeled me into this one room, and I guess they undressed the wound and everything. I could hear them mumbling, and every once in a while, I hear the word gangrenous, gangrene. What is this gangrene stuff? They kept me in Guam for a short time and then flew me to Tripler. Then that's where they amputated my leg.

BP: Yeah. So [you asked?] where Claude Eaton was. He was in Guam and then in Hawaii.

BA: Gee whiz. I'll have to --

BP: Remind me to give you --

BA: Okay.

BP: -- his [home number?].

BA: He might try going.

BP: Well, did you know a Polly [Robbins?]? She was a pharmacist third class. She worked with the amputees at the hospital. Her -- I think it's [Hawkins?] was her single name. She married one of her patients, [Robbins?], and they still live in (inaudible). Polly was her name. I'll have to look up her number, too.

BA: I can't recall.

BP: I'll call you when I get home and give you the number.

BA: Then they flew me to Mare Island, flew me to Oak Knoll, and then they transferred me right away to Mare Island. That was the amputee center for the Marines and the Navy. And I spent the -- oh, I spent months there.

BP: There was a volunteer there that taught you how to dance?

BA: I got to say, that's about the happiest year of my life. Mare Island Hospital. We had such a great time. We'd go ashore every night to San Francisco. We'd eat in the finest restaurants in San Francisco. We wouldn't have 10 cents in our pocket, and nobody worried about how we were going to pay the bill, because we knew somebody in this hotel or restaurant or wherever we were would pick up the

tab. And they always did. There'd always be four, five, six of us.

BP: Do you remember the doctor that took care of you?

BA: Dr. Canty, C-A-N-T-Y. Charles Canty. He had the misfortune to amputate his own son's leg. He was a carrier pilot. Yeah. He was a great doctor.

BP: You ever see him after that?

BA: Yeah. I saw him at -- he passed away about 10 years ago. He was a great guy.

BP: His son still around?

BA: I don't know. I don't know. But Mare Island Hospital was super, super time. We had so many women chase us. Well, there we were with about three decks of ribbons and on crutches. I don't know what they were [the way got?]. (laughs) It was kind of crazy. Wherever we'd go, we'd go in a nightclub, and the table would be covered with rounds of drinks. We didn't even know where they were coming from and really didn't even care. That's the way it was. But I guess it was so much different from after Vietnam.

BP: Oh, yeah. Yeah. Vietnam was (inaudible).

BA: I mean, we were, you know, the talk of the town.

BP: Who were the women? These were women at the base, the WAVES? Because I guess there was (inaudible).

BA: Oh, it was ashore in San Francisco. Oh, yeah. They'd just fall in love with us guys.

BP: Did you end up marrying one, or no?

BA: No. I didn't. (laughs) Just kind of crazy. There's a woman here who worked for Bell Telephone. In fact, they called her Miss Bell. Gorgeous gal.

BP: Here in Sacramento?

BA: She's still here. She's about 88 years old. She's just all -- just ready to kick the bucket, I guess. But she was the gal that would go from bed to bed when guys got there and set up a phone call to their folks at home, you know. She was, boy, just a sweetheart.

BP: What was her name?

BA: Jackie Bailey. B-A-I-L-E-Y.

BP: And they called her Mrs. Bell?

BA: Mm-hmm. Yeah. And just a super gal.

BP: She's too old -- too sick to be interviewed though, probably.

BA: Probably. She's not real coherent. She just kind of rambles and forgets things. No. She'd be a horror to interview.

BP: Who else do you remember on the medical staff out there?

BA: Gee whiz. It's hard to remember names.

BP: I'll put you in contact with Polly and her husband. Maybe they'll remember you.

BA: Polly?

BP: I think Polly was her nickname. She married Robinson. She was from Shreveport, Louisiana. And I think her name was Hawkins (inaudible). Red hair. And then there's a -- did you go take dance classes at Mere Island? There was a woman there. She was an amputee, or she was a civilian, but she had lost a leg in an accident.

BA: Oh, she was an amputee, too?

BP: She would take you guys out on the dance floor.

BA: I [don't?] remember her.

BP: Do you remember any of the other doctors there?

BA: I remember a nurse, and she's from -- I think she was living in Fairfield. Dargatz was her name.

BP: Dargatz?

BA: Dargatz. D-A-R-G-A-T-Z, I believe. First name was Yvonne. Now I dated her for quite a while there. She was a Navy nurse at the time. In fact, I used to say permission to come aboard. (laughs) Yeah. But I had a great time there. It was great. We all had cars. You know, the government gave us \$1,600 towards a car, and that's about what you could buy a car for in those days. We all had cars. We

were racing around, racing around the [land?] like the Indianapolis 500.

BP: Never got arrested or stopped?

BA: Oh, no. Nobody ever bothered us. And the girls on Georgia Street, (inaudible), they were all -- well, they had a bar downstairs and then a house upstairs.

BP: Oh, these are brothels?

BA: No. And the girls used to come, they'd come up to the hospital. We knew them all. They'd come to the hospital and make us afghans and bring us cakes.

BP: The prostitutes would do this for you?

BA: Yeah. Terrific gals.

BP: They'd make, knit stuff for you, and make cakes?

BA: Yeah. Oh, yeah. Super gals. Then I got discharged in January, end of January, '46, and went back to Pennsylvania. And on the way back I took three buddies with me, three amputees, because we all got discharged together from the hospital. One of them lived in Dallas, and he had both legs off. He was a Marine. He got hit on Iwo. Actually, he stepped on a mine on Iwo, and his legs were so high that he really couldn't -- I mean, his wounds were so high he couldn't wear legs, because he didn't have enough stump left. Then I took two home with me to Pennsylvania. One lived in Philadelphia. One lived in

Jacksonville, Florida, who I still see every once in a while. He was a Marine. He got hit on Iwo, (inaudible). But on the way back, I had told this fellow from Texas -- his name was Downey, Cecil Downey. Little tough little [Greek?], covered with tattoos. He had told his brother in Dallas to come up and pick him up in Oklahoma City, because we were on 40 going home. The old Highway 40. When we got to Oklahoma City, we wanted to get a room for Downey, and then we were going to continue on. And we went in this little hotel. It wasn't much of a place. And the fellow behind the desk, I talked to him, because the other three guys had legs on them, too, you know. We walked in. Downey stayed in the car. We asked him for a -- in fact, I did the talking. I said, "I want to get a room for a buddy of mine. He's out in the car." And he says, "Okay. No problem." So, I said, "I'll go out and get him," and we brought him in in a wheelchair. We had a wheelchair. All these legs, and a wheelchair, and everything in the trunk there. So, we wheeled Downey in, and the fellow behind the desk says -- he was reading the paper, I remember, sitting behind this desk. He looked up and he said, "Oh, we can't take him. We don't have an elevator in the hotel." And he said, "The only room I got is on the second floor, and we can't take him. What if we had a fire?" And I remember I

grabbed that newspaper out of his hand, and I swatted him across the face with it, and I asked him, "When's the last time you had a fire in this flea trap?" But then, like, Downey said, "Oh, come on." He said, "Let's go." He said, "Take me to the bus station." So, we took him to the Greyhound bus station, and he said, "I'll call my brother and tell him to meet me at the bus station in Dallas." And then he said, "I'll call him." Well, the phone was on the wall and Downey's in a wheelchair. I said, "Come on. Let me help you, Downey. Let me. Give me the money. Let me." He said, "I'll do this all by myself." And he propped himself up, and put the money in, and told his brother he was going to get a bus, and meet him in Dallas. So, we wheeled him over to the bus then. It was time for the bus to take off. I said, "Come on, Downey. Let us guys help you get on there." He said, "I'll get on all by myself." And he hopped up out of the chair on the front step of the bus, and picked himself up the -- (phone ringing). And then anyway, Downey got aboard the bus. Just propped himself up. He just looked like a seal with those empty pants legs flopping, I remember. And then I went down to see him a couple years later. His wife had filed for a divorce when he was in the hospital. And he had married again. He had a nice little house all adapted for a

wheelchair, you know, a little ramp and a lower sink, and things like that. He was doing real great. And he's a preacher today. He's a real hard shell Baptist preacher.

BP: With tattoos all over him?

BA: Yeah. Good guy. Terrific guy. But then I was home for about a year, and I said, "I'm going back to the West Coast."

BP: Why? You just didn't like the weather, or there was nothing to do?

BA: The weather. Nothing like a Pennsylvania winter. Brutal. I came back out here, and I went to work for the Navy in San Francisco, in the office at Military Sea Transport Service, MSTS. Are you familiar with that? We were the old Army Transport Service long ago. Transports. That's right. And Korea broke out, and I got on a ship, and I went to sea for almost seven years.

BP: As a civilian?

BA: Mm-hmm. It was civilian crews under Department of the Navy. And I had to get a --

BP: What was your official title?

BA: I was a chief yeoman.

BP: Chief yeoman, but a civilian?

BA: I went aboard that ship with a typewriter course in one hand and my spare leg in the other. Yeah. Well, I could

type some, and I had my own office. I did all the correspondence for the skipper.

BP: Who was a Navy captain?

BA: Who was a civilian.

BP: There were Navy ships manned by civilians employed in the Navy?

BA: Yeah. I did payroll, and I did dispersing. I did supply. I did a lot of work on there. I was on three or four different transports. We [went?] back and forth to Japan. I made 48 trips to Japan.

BP: You weren't married then?

BA: I got married after my last trip. She said, "Get off that ship." And then all during Korea. We'd go to Japan and then we'd go into Pusan. We used the ship for a headquarters ship at Wonsan during the war there. Then made that Inchon landing. I just loved going to sea. Really loved it.

BP: Your wife didn't like it?

BA: No. She said, "You've got to get off that ship. That's all there is to it." Which I did. And that was the end of my steam boating days.

BP: So, you retired from that job?

BA: I went to work at the post office.

BP: After that.

BA: Did 25 years in the post office. A very challenging job, sticking letters in a hole for 25 years.

BP: Didn't like that?

BA: Could have trained a monkey to do it.

BP: You retired from that when?

BA: In '81. Yeah.

BP: Now, I remember interviewing somebody from the (inaudible) hospital. They said there was some guy, he owned a racetrack, Santa Anita or something, I can't remember. He did something. He's the one who -- he'd pay for the (inaudible) or something. I didn't understand. You don't remember that?

BA: No.

BP: Anything else?

BA: That's about all. I was married 31 years to the best gal in the world. Still see her all the time.

BP: Oh, you're not married anymore?

BA: No.

BP: She's the best gal in the world, but you're not married anymore.

BA: Right. Just didn't communicate. The kids went to college and got married, you know, flew the nest, and then it was just me and her, eyeball to eyeball. I don't know. There just wasn't any communication. But we're the best of

friends. We see each other all the time. We have shindigs with the kids and grandkids.

BP: Just prefer to live apart?

BA: Not really. I don't prefer that. No. But it's good.

What there is, it's good. And I don't feel real good about what happened. That was the only reason we split.

Everything just stopped.

BP: After the kids left?

BA: Mm-hmm. I had [left?].

(break in audio)

BP: You arrived in San Francisco in October of '43, right? Was that it?

BA: October.

BP: Forty-three?

BA: Forty-three, right.

BP: And then you went ashore, but you stayed on the ship? You got leave or something?

BA: Yeah. I went ashore.

BP: So how long were you in San Francisco, and what happened after that?

BA: We weren't in San Francisco very long, if I remember. We were only in San Francisco maybe three or four days. I think it was about four days.

BP: To drop off patients or what?

BA: Yeah. And fuel and all that stuff, provisions. And I thought I was going to get relieved get off there. But for some reason they kept me, and it seems like another signalman. We stayed aboard, and we sailed from San Francisco, I think it was about four days later, and went to Tarawa.

BP: Did you stop in Pearl on the way or no?

BA: I don't recall if we stopped in -- we may have stopped in Pearl. I can't recall that. But we went to the Gilbert islands and the Tarawa operation. We hardly spent any time there. We just filled the ship up with wounded.

BP: How far off from shore were you during that? Did you see any of it?

BA: We were quite a distance. Tarawa was a tragedy as far as the Marines going ashore there. They dropped them off and --

BO: Outside the reef?

BA: If the tide was out, and, God, they had to walk forever to the beach. Yeah. We'd filled the ship up to capacity. I can't recall if we stopped at Pearl or not. I think we stopped at Pearl.

BP: Do you remember anything about the operation itself though? Is anything memorable about it?

BA: We were probably the same distance away as the battleships, which were bombarding these bunkers.

BP: Do you know anything about them bringing the casualties aboard?

BA: Oh, yeah. They were bringing them out in boats.

BP: You don't remember any of them? Or you didn't get close enough to see them?

BA: Just hundreds of them. They were bringing them aboard in boats. It was all kinds of awkward. They [kept?] bringing them up the gangway, you know, on stretchers.

BP: Did they change that procedure after that to make it easier on the patients or no?

BA: They never did change the procedure. I mean, any time we picked up wounded, sometimes they'd bring them out on a barge. Just the barge would be covered with stretchers, and they always used the same technique. Carry them up the gangway.

BP: What if you had rough seas?

BA: Pardon?

BP: What if you had rough seas? They didn't use cranes or anything to hoist them up?

BA: No. They didn't have cranes in those [days?].

BP: Oh, they didn't at the time?

BA: Uh-uh. But getting back to the operation, I believe we did go to Pearl, and we didn't stay there long. We went into -
- I thought we were going to go back into San Francisco, but we ended up in San Diego. That's where we dropped all the casualties off, and that's where I got off.

BP: Okay. That's when you started your leave?

BA: Yeah. That's where I started leave. That's when I was on that boat and a train right back.

BP: How about the medical staff? Did they ever say anything to you about Tarawa? Did they mention anything about the casualties in Tarawa? You knew Kitty Shaw. Did any of them ever say anything that you remember about like -- were they working two or three days in a row in surgery or anything?

BA: Oh, no. But it was evident. You could just go up on deck and how they were working. The nurses on that ship were terrific. Terrific. I remember you could watch them operating in there, and they'd be in their bare feet.

BP: The doctors and nurses?

BA: Yeah. It was for some reason. Maybe just to be comfortable or something. They were in their bare feet. But it was real graphic. You could just see them, you know.

BP: Kitty Shaw never said anything to you about that?

BA: No. Kitty never talked about that. She never talked much about that. But she was the best-looking nurse on that ship. Wish I had some pictures of her.

BP: What was the other thing we wanted to -- oh, yeah. You had talked about, too, when the floating dry dock was torpedoed. Tell me where you were, and what time of day it was, and what you remember about that.

BA: Well, I showed you that picture of the dry dock, and there's like a -- it almost looks like a little wooden barracks on top in the one that we built. I was in there sleeping. We got hit at 12:30 that night.

BP: Early morning?

BA: Yeah. I jumped out of my bunk, and my first thought was to go over to the signal bridge. But I started to cross this catwalk, which crosses the whole dry dock, and I couldn't get across because a lot of the wood construction, it was blown out.

BP: You're lucky you didn't fall off.

BA: So, I had to come back and go down the whole length of the block and go across the catwalk at that end, to get over to the bridge.

BP: You say the torpedo hit on a corner of the --

BA: Yes. And I remember the skipper, Captain Karns, I remember he was standing out there on top of the wing wall, and his

quarters were near the signal bridge. But he was standing out there in his skivvies, waving a .45 around. Probably still had a buzz on. But they came and went. From what I understand, they thought we were a carrier. We were huge, a huge thing.

BP: What happened to Captain Karns after that?

BA: I don't know. Oh, Captain Karns got relieved out there. We went, and then he went back to the States. He lived in Coronado, California.

BP: He didn't have another command after that?

BA: I don't think so. He was an old-timer.

BP: How old was he?

BA: I don't know. He had probably -- oh, I'm sure he had been in the Navy over 20 years at that time, ex-submarine skipper.

BP: Okay. Anything else you can tell about the torpedo and all of that?

BA: No. But I mean, there were several guys fishing. We had kind of an extended deck that came out in that corner, and some of the guys had been fishing, sitting there fishing. They hit the sack, you know, later. And the torpedo hit just about where they were sitting.

BP: Okay. Now, when you're back at Vallejo, you showed me that photograph, and there were you and two other guys, and you said there's this guy from Oklahoma, a farm in Oklahoma.

BA: Yeah.

BP: And he was kind of the leader of your [group?]. What was his name?

BA: Joe Lawrence, L-A-W-R-E-N-C-E. He was a Marine, yeah. He had been hit on [Iwo?]. Most of these patients that were there were from Okinawa and Hiroshima.

BP: Because this was towards the end of the war?

BA: Yeah.

BP: Okay. He had lost both legs at Iwo, too?

BA: Both legs.

BP: So, what were you telling me? You said you and him and one other guy run around together, is that right?

BA: Well, we all knew we were in a bunch of us that did all, went ashore together, and raised all kinds of hell. Like I was telling you, we ate in the finest restaurants, and nobody had a dime. But this one fellow, Todd, that you interviewed --

BP: I didn't interview him, but I was thinking of him.

BA: Well, you didn't interview him?

BP: I talked to him on the phone about doing it somewhere down the line.

BA: Yeah. I think Todd was on a heavy cruiser, the *Nashville*, which was in the same task force as the task force that flew those B-25s off the ship.

BP: Oh, off the *Hornet*?

BA: The *Hornet* or the *Enterprise*. He was on the *Louisville*.

BP: Oh, the *Louisville*, okay.

BA: The cruiser. No, I take it back. He was on the *Nashville*, a heavy cruiser. But he was in that task force, I think.

BP: Okay. But what about this guy from Oklahoma? You were going to tell me about his suicide.

BA: Well, that was strictly hearsay. That's what we heard later.

BP: He was discharged before you were? Or you heard it after you got out of the Navy or some years later?

BA: I don't recall whether he got discharged before me or not. But, God, there were hundreds of those amputees at Mare Island. Like I said, we all had cars. The government had given us \$1,600 towards getting a car, and we all had cars and raced around all over the Mare Island area, the layout.

BP: Is that it, or anything else? I think I can use this to clarify --

(break in audio)

BA: [They attacked?] with torpedoes. I think the planes -- we thought the planes might have come from Rabaul. I think one of the planes crashed in the harbor after the attack.

BP: You shot it down, or you don't know?

BA: I'm not sure what happened, but I think the story was that one of the planes had crashed after the attack. They hit the other dry dock, too.

BP: They torpedoed?

BA: They hit us both. The [Navy?] has two. She was hit, too.

BP: Now was she destroyed [and scrapped?]?

BA: No. I can't recall whether she was damaged enough to stop docking the ships or not, but we were. We started tearing the dock apart.

BP: Do you think the fact that the war was winding down had something to do with it? Now that was what month? That was in '45 that this happened, too?

BA: I think it was kind of a last desperation move. They had very few planes left.

BP: I'm just trying to -- I know, because Rabaul was cut off. There's a big military base that was cut off.

BA: Truk.

BP: Well, Rabaul was a big military base. Truk was, too.

BA: Truk was, too. Truck was a big Navy --

BP: Truk was a big naval base, yeah.

BA: Half the Japanese fleet was on the bottom of Truk Harbor.

BP: Oh, yeah. But they had about 30,000 troops on Rabaul, though. They were just caught, cutting off and [ice?].

BA: Yeah, they were cut off.

BP: They had a big air base, though. So maybe they just salvaged a few planes. So, do you remember what month? It was '45. What month was it?

BA: It was in April.

BP: Okay. So that was after Iwo Jima.

BA: April 30th, '45.

BP: Okay. And, let's see, and April was when Okinawa was invaded.

BA: April 1st was Okinawa.

BP: It's always towards the end of the war, so maybe they thought they didn't need that any more.

BA: Yeah. And then Iwo was about the 1st of February.

BP: That's right, February. Okay.

BA: Forty-five.

BP: OK.

END OF AUDIO FILE