

**Admiral Nimitz Historic Site
National Museum of the Pacific War
Fredericksburg, Texas**

Interview with Mr. Robert Haskett

My name is Richard Misenhimer and today is March 10, 2003. I am interviewing Mr. Robert Haskett by telephone. His address is 520 West I Street, Bencia, California 94510. His telephone number is (707) 745-2142. This interview is in support of the National Museum of the Pacific War for the preservation of historical information related to World War II.

Agreement read.

Mr. Misenhimer: Where were you born?

Mr. Haskett: Willits, California.

Mr. Misenhimer: What is your birth date?

Mr. Haskett: January 28, 1920.

Mr. Misenhimer: And did you finish school around 1938?

Mr. Haskett: Yes, that's when I graduated from high school. Then Uncle Sam grabbed me.

Mr. Misenhimer: When did you go into the service?

Mr. Haskett: In 1938 when I graduated from high school.

Mr. Misenhimer: Did you volunteer?

Mr. Haskett: Well, yes, I guess they were after me and I figured just as well do it and get it over with.

Mr. Misenhimer: Which branch did you go into?

Mr. Haskett: I was in the Navy.

Mr. Misenhimer: How did you choose the Navy?

Mr. Haskett: Oh, hell, I don't know. I like to be aboard a boat and what have you. It was just one of those things. I was used to the water and hunting and fishing all the time.

Mr. Misenhimer: When you went into the Navy, where did you take your training?

Mr. Haskett: Back on the east coast. I can picture it in my mind. I just can't remember the name.

Mr. Misenhimer: What was that training like?

Mr. Haskett: Oh, it was on the go. There was no fooling around. It was right when the war started and they ran us through and we learned it. I didn't have any problems with any of it.

Mr. Misenhimer: Did they have a lot of marching and things like that?

Mr. Haskett: You mean a lot of hard things, too. Well, that was no problem to me. I was hunting and fishing all the time. So as far as being in shape, I weighed 220 back then. I came down to 200, but I was on the go all the time back then.

Mr. Misenhimer: What kind of weapons training did you have?

Mr. Haskett: Well, I had a little bit of everything I guess--rifles, shotguns, pistols, and then on an anti-tank gun. I'm trying to think of the name of the damn thing. It's single shot, had a 3 or 4 inch shell.

Mr. Misenhimer: When you finished that boot camp, where did you go then?

Mr. Haskett: Oh boy, let's see. I can't remember—seems to me they put me aboard a tin can, I think, aboard a ship.

Mr. Misenhimer: Do you know where you went aboard that ship?

Mr. Haskett: Back on the east coast somewhere.

Mr. Misenhimer: What was your job on that ship?

Mr. Haskett: I fired the gun and took care of it and the ammunition, anything to do with guns, because I knew guns real good. They put me as one of the top dogs on that thing aboard the ship. I didn't have any rest time at all. I was on the go all the time.

Mr. Misenhimer: You don't recall the name of that ship, do you?

Mr. Haskett: Oh no. Tin can, I know that.

Mr. Misenhimer: That's a destroyer. About how long were you on that destroyer?

Mr. Haskett: Oh boy, quite a long time. I think it was 3 years and 4 months before they discharged us.

Mr. Misenhimer: Were you on the destroyer the whole time? I thought you were on a PT boat?

Mr. Haskett: Well, yes, that came in after.

Mr. Misenhimer: You were overseas, right?

Mr. Haskett: Yes, well, I guess I was on a PT boat the whole time and what little I did on the destroyer, I'm trying to think, I guess that's when I got out of boot camp or somewhere. I can't remember. You would have to write in and get my records.

Mr. Misenhimer: You were down at Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands?

Mr. Haskett: Yes, I was down and through all that.

Mr. Misenhimer: Do you recall anything that happened to you down there in the Solomon Islands?

Mr. Haskett: Oh, let me see. I didn't get wounded or anything, but the thing with them was I knew guns so well, they would yank me and put me here and there, and I ended up doing most of all the damn repair work on all the guns.

Mr. Misenhimer: Do you recall what base you were at in the Solomon Islands?

Mr. Haskett: No, I can't remember names any more. I forget what island we were on.

Mr. Misenhimer: You went on patrols on the boat, didn't you?

Mr. Haskett: Oh, yeah. They kept me on the boat and all that. Then later on, they put me on the beach in the base force to take care of all the boats that would come and to take care of all the guns when they would break down. That's one thing I did learn. They found that out real quick and they put me to repairing guns and stuff.

Mr. Misenhimer: When you were on the PT boat, what were some of your experiences you had there?

Mr. Haskett: You name it—a little bit of everything. I mean firing and loading ammunition, and I was a first aid man along with it so I was doing a lot of first aid.

Mr. Misenhimer: What kind of guns did you fire on the PT boat?

Mr. Haskett: Well, we had—what the hell was it?— 3 inch, no, 5 inch in the turret. We had 50 caliber. I fired them right in the beginning. They found I

knew a little about the 5 inch gun that had the wheels under it. I was on that son-of-a-gun when they found out I knew them.

Mr. Misenhimer: Was that on the PT boat?

Mr. Haskett: No, that was when we had our base. Like I say, it's so hard to try to remember. When you lose your memory, that's the worst damn thing that can happen. I would rather lose a leg or arm than to lose my memory.

Mr. Misenhimer: Now when we were down in Guadalcanal together four years ago, you were telling me about some escapades when you shot on the beach at the Japanese. Do you recall any of those things?

Mr. Haskett: Yes, but it's been so long, I can't remember any of this stuff. It's hell. You know a lot about the stuff I told you before, but that was 3 or 4 years ago. Four years for me is a long time.

Mr. Misenhimer: Do you remember what boat you were on?

Mr. Haskett: Yes, PT 155.

Mr. Misenhimer: Were you ever around John Kennedy?

Mr. Haskett: Oh yes. That was the first part of the war and you got to know all those people, but I can't tell you a heck of a lot about it. You know there was such a small bunch of us—two or three bunches of us—like a couple of squadrons in one area. We were all working there together all the time.

Mr. Misenhimer: As I recall on Lumbaria Island, you were looking for a sign that had been there. Do you remember what that sign said?

Mr. Haskett: I can't remember what it was.

Mr. Misenhimer: The sign was about someone that had been killed down there. There was a name on the sign. Do you remember what it was?

Mr. Haskett: I can't recall.

Mr. Misenhimer: Do you recall ever shooting at a ship or airplane?

Mr. Haskett: Yes, the enemy or any plane that flew over that wasn't ours, I would shoot at it.

Mr. Misenhimer: Did you ever shoot a plane down?

Mr. Haskett: I don't recall, but I imagine I did, because a lot of times, the fighter pilots would come after us and they would be right there. You couldn't miss them. At least, I didn't miss them! Is there any way you could check on Squadron 9? They could answer those questions.

Mr. Misenhimer: Do you recall your PT boat firing a torpedo at an enemy ship?

Mr. Haskett: Oh yes, I swung the mallet a lot of times.

Mr. Misenhimer: What do you mean by "swung the mallet"?

Mr. Haskett: On the first boat we had, there was a cartridge on the torpedo tube and a quick firing pin. When the skipper yelled "fire one," you would whack it with a leather mallet. It was a 3 inch shell with a blank shell in there and it fired off the top of the torpedo. Later on, there were cartridges that would fire out of the torpedo tube. You need to get hold of a gunner's mate that's still alive and kicking that can remember that stuff.

Mr. Misenhimer: What rank did you have when you were there?

Mr. Haskett: When I started out I was seaman first and worked up. I know for awhile I was top dog.

Mr. Misenhimer: Back on the PT boat, when you fired those torpedoes, did you ever hit any Japanese ships?

Mr. Haskett: Oh yeah, there was a lot of nighttime stuff—most of it was, but I don't know how many were hit or sunk, just a little bit of everything.

Mr. Misenhimer: On our trip to Guadalcanal, you told me on one of the times you were out that you were firing at the Japanese, I guess strafing a beach or something, and you didn't use up all your ammunition and the Captain got on to you for not using it up and you said you had to save some in case you were attacked. Do you recall that?

Mr. Haskett: Oh yes, I remember that. He chewed my butt out cause I didn't fire all the ammunition I had, and I told him, once we got there, that I was saving it for the trip back home.

Mr. Misenhimer: Did you have to use it to get back home?

Mr. Haskett: No, it ended up luckily we didn't have to. He later apologized to me, but I was thinking ahead.

Mr. Misenhimer: When you were strafing the beaches, what were you shooting at then?

Mr. Haskett: I don't remember now what the hell it was—Japanese, I guess.

Mr. Misenhimer: How was the food on the boat?

Mr. Haskett: Hit and miss. It was fair. We didn't have any packaged stuff. We had our little freezer and canned stuff.

Mr. Misenhimer: How many people were on the PT boat?

Mr. Haskett: Well, let's see—3 in the engine room, I would say probably 8 or 9 of us, and for a short time, we went up to 12. We were carrying extra ammunition and stuff. Yes, probably 12 people.

Mr. Misenhimer: What would have been your most frightening time?

Mr. Haskett: Lots of times. When you are firing a gun—I'm talking machine gun twin fifties—and you've got shore batteries banging away at you, it ain't all just on your side. You have more coming at you than you're putting out. At times there would be 3 boats together and that would work out pretty good. A lot of times you would get separated and you're alone or you're running a special mission of some sort—it could be pretty doggone bad. Those were plywood boats. You know those little old 30 calibers go through plywood boats pretty easy.

Mr. Misenhimer: How fast would the PT boat go?

Mr. Haskett: Oh, you know that's a funny thing. You could probably hit, depending on the ocean, about 40 or 45 miles an hour. Most of the time at night, you're easing right along, you're not running wide open. With three engines and all with the exhaust pipes open, they could pick you up for 3 or 4 miles with all the noise. You had to slip around a lot, sneak around.

Mr. Misenhimer: Was your PT boat ever hit by enemy fire?

Mr. Haskett: Oh yes. It didn't take much to damage it. I don't remember any big stuff—well, maybe a destroyer but I can't recall. I remember we got a pretty good shell through the bow of the boat one time, I think from

one of the islands. We would sneak around more. We didn't get around any of the big stuff that much. Once in a while we would, but we would sneak in and fire torpedoes and get the hell out of there.

Mr. Misenhimer: Now when that shell hit the bow of the boat, you could get home all right?

Mr. Haskett: Oh yes, we would make up some wooden plugs and we would drive them in the holes and if it was on the water line, we would have to try and patch it. Up above the water line, it wasn't so bad.

Mr. Misenhimer: Was anyone on your boat ever wounded or killed?

Mr. Haskett: I can't recall. I know several small arms fire would hit some, but I can't remember any of our guys getting killed outright. Some of the stuff, I can backtrack. If I see some of the guys, I could ask them.

Mr. Misenhimer: So you see some of the people once in a while, do you?

Mr. Haskett: Oh yes, not all the time. Once in a while maybe one will phone me or something.

Mr. Misenhimer: Do you have reunions?

Mr. Haskett: Yeah. They have a get together every once in a while, but it's been a while since we had anything. We are all up there. We're not in our forties, you know.

Mr. Misenhimer: You turned 83 in January?

Mr. Haskett: Yes, I think it was last January. Well, if someone asks me my age, I say DOB 1/28/20. I tell them they can figure it out from there. It's too hard for me to remember what day of the week or what month it is.

Mr. Misenhimer: Did you get any ribbons or medals?

Mr. Haskett: I probably have. I don't know. My wife has them put away somewhere. Medals—pictures—she has all that stuff put away. I don't want to touch it.

Mr. Misenhimer: Anything else you recall from your time down there?

Mr. Haskett: Gosh! I got to see a lot of country and met a lot of people—our people through the war—and I still hear from different friends. My wife has all that put away.

Mr. Misenhimer: Did you go anywhere else besides the Solomon Islands?

Mr. Haskett: Solomon Islands—Squadron 9—whatever was happening, we were in it.

Mr. Misenhimer: Anything else you can think of, Bob?

Mr. Haskett: Not offhand. Some of that stuff, I know there's records on. If you could get hold of one of the record books on that and call me, you could ask me questions on that stuff. I'm talking about early squadron and stuff. A lot of that I don't remember. Now if you ask me stuff like the boat I was on or the skipper's name or something like that, I could think about it. I could get it. My wife has all that stuff laid out in a book there. I'm trying to think of a couple of guys. Glenn Houck—he was the radioman on our boat. He was a hunter and fisherman like me.

Mr. Misenhimer: Now when you were hunting, what were you hunting with?

Mr. Haskett: We would take the 30-06 with us or whatever would be kicking around there—a 45 you know.

Mr. Misenhimer: What were some of the things you hunted?

Mr. Haskett: Wild pig, or we would shoot big salmon. I'm thinking a wild cow, but it really wasn't a cow—damn it, it had horns like a cow, maybe a water buffalo. If I could get hold of Glenn Houck—he was the radioman—maybe we could get together, but not a big powwow. We are getting too old for that.

Mr. Misenhimer: Do you know where your next reunion is going to be or when it's going to be?

Mr. Haskett: Oh no, my wife knows. They send out something on it.

Mr. Misenhimer: When were you finally discharged?

Mr. Haskett: I don't recall that either. I guess it was after VJ Day.

Mr. Misenhimer: Now when they dropped the atomic bomb on Japan, do you recall hearing about that?

Mr. Haskett: Yes, I'm trying to think where I was. I know I wasn't too far from where a lot of that stuff was going on. They kept us on the go all the

time. There was no resting for Squadron 9. No kidding, they kept us on the move. Commander Kelly was number one, but they changed later on after he had been there for a long time. Like I say, when you lose your memory, that's one of the worst things that could happen. I tell you, going through the rest of that war with my wife, that's what kept me going.

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