

# National Museum of the Pacific War

Center for Pacific War Studies  
Fredericksburg, Texas

**Interview with  
Frank Jagielski  
USS Cebu and USS Mindanao  
Coxswain Third Class**

PROOF NOT RETURNED WITHIN 6  
MONTHS!  
TO ARCHIVES 02/01/09

## Interview with Frank Jagielski

This is Joe Litzelfelner. Today is October 16, 2003. I am interviewing Mr. Frank Jagielski. This interview is taking place at the Bush Gallery of the National Museum of the Pacific War. This interview is in support of the Center for Pacific War Studies, Archives for the National Museum of the Pacific War, Texas Parks and Wildlife for the preservation of the historical information related to this site.

Joe: When and where were you born?

Frank: April 5, 1926 in Redding, Pennsylvania.

Joe: What was the name of your parents?

Frank: Stanley Jagielski who came from Poland and my mother, Stella Jagielski. She came from Poland.

Joe: Where and when did you enlist in the Navy?

Frank: I enlisted in 1943 at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania at the age of approximately sixteen years and seven months.

Joe: You must have had to get permission.

Frank: I had taken my father along to Philadelphia and told him that I wanted to go to the Navy because my brother was in the Army. He agreed and so he went down along with me and signed.

Joe: Well now, you hadn't graduated from High School yet, had you?

Frank: No

Joe: Where were you on December 7, 1941?

Frank: I can remember when the papers came out and I saw that they had started the draft all the people. I took it as there was no place like me so I had better go. Everybody was being drafted and I did not want to be drafted.

Joe: You were in High School at that time.

Frank: I actually finished my High School by getting a GED.

Joe: Now, did you do that after the war was over?

Frank: Right.

Joe: Now, when you enlisted in the Navy, where did you get signed up?

Frank: I signed in Philadelphia.

Joe: Did you get on a train to go to.

Frank: Samson, New York, my boot camp.

Joe: How long was boot camp?

Frank: It was eight weeks at that time. After I graduated from boot camp I was Seaman Second Class and went to Gunnery School at .....Neck, Rhode Island.

Joe: How long was that school?

Frank: Approximately two weeks.

Joe: Where did you go after Gunnery School?

Frank: We went in for some interviews and I asked for sea duty. I didn't want to fool around. I wanted to go to action.

Joe: Did they ask you whether you wanted the Atlantic Fleet or the Pacific Fleet?

Frank: No, no. They just asked you what you wanted to be and I wanted to go. I want to go where the action is and they said, "Okay".

Joe: They didn't ask you what kind of ship you wanted to go on?

Frank: No, nothing of that nature. I'm happy they got me.

Joe: So, where did they send you?

Frank: We put a ship in commission which was the *USS Cebu* in Baltimore, Key Highway at the dock. I was assigned to that ship.

Joe: Was that ship built at the shipyard in Baltimore?

Frank: Right, right, it was a Liberty Ship.

Joe: What was your job then when you reported to the *USS Cebu*?

Frank: Seaman First Class. Anything they told you to do you had to do.

Joe: You got promoted then from Seaman Second to Seaman First Class. Did the ship get under way soon after you reported?

Frank: The ship had to go out for a trial run. We had to get commission.

Joe: Was this like sea trials.

Frank: It was a brand new ship. It had never been out. Captain Scott was out Captain. He was really a fine man.

Joe: Did anything interesting happen on those sea-trials when you were out?

Frank: No, every thing worked out pretty good. We did not have much trouble.

Joe: What was your job then?

Frank: I was on the deck force. You would either man the pole line or the anchor or whenever you docked ..... My job was with the deck force. There was a lot of chipping and painting and manning the gun crews. My position was on a 3-inch 50, first loader.

Joe: Did you ever have to swab the deck?

Frank: Not too often. That wasn't my assignment. Although, I did have KP duty in the mess hall. We had to peel a lot of potatoes. Thank God we had a potato peeling machine. You might of peeled, say, three bushels at one time for one meal.

Joe: Where did the ship go then when it got through with the sea-trials?

Frank: We went from there through the Panama Canal, into Hawaii, and then on to every battle station that came up from then on.

Joe: What was the first place that the *Cebu* actually got into some action with the Japanese?

Frank: We all hit the typhoon in Okinawa. That was a big storm that lasted a couple of days. You had to go out to sea and ride it out.

Joe: Did any ships sink?

Frank: Not that I know of. Our biggest action was when we were loading ammo up alongside the *US Mindanao* which was an ammunition ship. She had two DE's (Destroyer Escort) close by and they were loading ammunition as we were. She caught a torpedo. There was plenty of action and fireworks.

Joe: How far away were you from that ship blew up?

Frank: I would say about twenty five or thirty yards. It killed some. Six got killed on our ship.

Joe: Where were you when that happened?

Frank: I was on deck. It was right after we had our morning call. Every morning we had our call. The Boatswain Mate got you in line and gave you your job for the day.

Joe: Well, did you get injured?

Frank: Well, I wouldn't say that I was injured. I got thrown down the shaft where the Boatswain's locker was, which was nothing compared to what happened. Everybody had a jolt. We were picking up shells off the deck. Some were lodged in the deck plates. We had to burn them off. Actually, we were a repair ship. We would tender all the craft. Anything they had to get done, we did it.

Joe: Now, where was this when the Mindanao got torpedoed? I got a map here that....

Frank: Let me see, were in the Marshall Islands, at Pelileu, the Admiralties, we were in the Philippines, Okinawa.

I think it was around the Ulithi Islands, to tell you the truth.

Joe: Which Island?

Frank: Ulithi Islands.

Joe: Is that on the map?

Frank: I'm looking and I don't see it.

Joe: You had to cross the Equator.

Frank: Yes, when you cross the Equator you become a Shell Back. That is one place where you can take the Captain or anybody and give them the full treatment. All who was your enemies who were Polliwogs, you could take care of them. That is a celebration which lasted roughly two days sometimes.

Joe: It was a little bit of an initiation, was it?

Frank: Yes, it was an initiation. You walked the plank into the ocean. There were all kinds of initiations. Then you got a card, like a Social Security Card, that said you had crossed the Equator and you were a Shell Back.

Joe: Did you carry that card with you then?

Frank: Oh yeah, Right so that anytime you went back to that area you didn't have to worry about getting initiated. You were a card carrying Shell Back. You would show them your card and you were all right.

Joe: Was the deck pretty hot when you were crossing the Equator? I was wondering if that deck of the ship gets hot from the sun.

Frank: Being out in the ocean, you have a lot of breezes. To my knowledge, I don't think it was ever that hot that you couldn't stand it, you know.

Joe: What other areas did the *Cebu* go where there was enemy action going on?

Frank: We had a submarine attack. We had Destroyers putting up smoke screens. But the submarines didn't torpedo the *Cebu*. The submarines were our submarines looking for the Japanese.

Joe: Did you ever see any collisions between US ships when you were underway?

Frank: No, I never did witness that.

Joe: Did you generally go from one place to another with a bunch of other ships?

Frank: Right. We always had a lot of escorts because we weren't really a large fighting ship. We mainly helped the other ships that had deteriorated or had holes in them, or whatever they needed to repair. We had divers on board, roughly three. They would go under water and weld plates on the sides and different things of that nature.

Joe: Did you ever get a Third Class rating? What was your rating?

Frank: Coxswain. At the present time it is called Boatswain Mate Third Class.

Joe: But at that time it was called Coxswain Third Class?

Frank: Right, right. During World Was II.

Joe: Would you actually drive a small boat?

Frank: Right, right

Joe: Did you participate in the diving?

Frank: No, I wasn't a diver.

Joe: How did you like being a Coxswain?

Frank: Good. I liked the whole thing. I never regretted my time spent in the Service like some people. I enjoyed myself. I saw a lot of the world and I seen it free. Thank God, I got home safe.

Joe: Did you get to drive the Captain's gig?

Frank: Once in a while, I did. We took turns. It depended on what time and what day and who was available. I did a lot of KP work, I told you.

Joe: Were there other boats besides the Captain's gig?

Frank: Nobody went on the Captain's gig but the Captain. Maybe a couple of Officers or whoever he wanted. We took the Captain fishing. Whatever you were assigned to do, you gladly done. It was nothing like it is today.

Joe: Was the *Cebu* attacked by Kamikazes?

Frank: No, no sir. At the end of the war, they were headed for the Bikini Atoll for the A-blast.

Joe: Where were you when the war ended?

Frank: I was aboard the *Cebu* around Okinawa. We were going to head into Japan. Our first liberty in Japan at the end of the war and the treaty was signed was four hours and only so many allowed at a time, you know. You couldn't let half the ship go Port side or Starboard side. You had to earn it.

Joe: What Japanese city was it where the *Cebu* had liberty?

Frank: Kobe Cove, Honshu, Japan.

Joe: Did you go on liberty there?

Frank: Yes, sir.

Joe: Were the Japanese hostile at all?

Frank: No, not at all. In the beginning I think that some of us were more hostile than they were. We won the war so, you know. You are looking for different souvenirs and this and that and you get a little outraged and do this and do that. The same thing happens today. You take, over in Iraq with all this carrying on, when they tore the statue of Saddam down. It is similar to what we did.

Joe: How long was it before the *Cebu* returned to the United States?

Frank: I was transferred off the ship and went on the *USS Mindanao* PA-54 troop ship. We had some 6,000 troops on board.

Joe: Was the *Cebu* a target for the.....atom bomb...

Frank: No, no observing. There were a lot of ships and a lot of people observing the blast. It was the first blast they ever done at the Bikini Atoll.

Joe: At one of those test they actually had some ships out there didn't they?

Frank: Yes, they had some that were out of commission and this and that to see what effect they would have. They were using them for target and tests. These ships weren't World War II. They were an older make or newer make that were damaged too bad. Everybody was set so far away that you weren't going to see what happened to each and every one of us. Just what happened to the ships that were there.

Joe: Were you up on deck when the bomb went off?

Frank: I wasn't over there. My ship was there but I was transferred.

Joe: How long were you on the *Mindanao*?

Frank: Approximately seven months.

Joe: Did it come back to the United States?

Frank: It came back to Lido Beach, New York.

Joe: It went through the Panama Canal.

Frank: Oh yeah, I went through the Panama Canal three times.

Joe: Did you stay in the Navy?

Frank: No, no I elected to go home. I figured the war was over and it was time to go home and see Mom and Pop.

Joe: Where did you get discharged?

Frank: Lido Beach, New York. I was discharged there.

Joe: Are there any other events that took place while you were in the Navy that sticks in your mind that you think are important that should be recorded?



Frank: Well, I look at it this way. I think we had it easy, I think there are a lot of other fellows that had it a lot rougher than we did and they should get the glory. I think we were just like peace keepers, as a repair ship, trying to keep everybody going. So they could go and really fight up front.

Joe: Did you ever get promoted to a higher rating than Third Class Coxswain?

Frank: No, I was discharged with that rating.

Joe: Well, Frank thanks a lot for telling us about your experience.

Frank: Yes, it was a time well spent. I can't say anything bad about it. If every young American would go it would make a man or woman out of them. That is the way I look at it. Maybe not as young as I did but it wouldn't hurt anybody to go in the service and at least take one year experience.

Joe: You were still only about twenty years old when you got out of the Navy.

Frank: Right, all of twenty one. When I got out of the Navy, I went to work for Bethlehem Steel. All the work I did aboard ship helped. I worked for Bethlehem Steel for thirty two years.

Joe: Where is that located?

Frank: I didn't work in Bethlehem. I worked at one of the plants that builds bridges in Pottstown, Pennsylvania. When I got out of Bethlehem Steel, they were working on the end of the Golden Gate Bridge in California. I was a welder at Bethlehem Steel and an assembler, First Class, then I was a General Foreman.

Joe: Thank you, Frank; it was good talking to you.

Frank: It was good talking to you, too, thank you.

Transcribed by:  
Bill and Mary Brown  
Wake Forest, NC  
February 25, 2008