

National Museum of the Pacific War

Center for Pacific War Studies

Fredericksburg, Texas

Interview with

**James C. Doig
United States Navy**

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This is Ed Metzler and today is May 13, 2004. I'm interviewing Mr. Jim Doig here in Fredericksburg, Texas. This interview is in support of Center for Pacific War Studies, Archives for the National Museum of the Pacific War, Texas Parks and Wildlife, for the preservation of historical information related to this site.

Mr. Metzler: Jim, let me start by thanking you for sharing the experiences with us. Let me ask to start telling us a little about yourself, your family, your high school.

Mr. Doig: I was born in Detroit, Michigan. My parents both came over from Scotland. I went to high school at Redford High School in Detroit. I didn't finish. I left high school when I was seventeen and went in the Navy.

Mr. Metzler: What was your birthdate?

Mr. Doig: My birthday was 10/26/25.

Mr. Metzler: What did your father do for a living?

Mr. Doig: My father was a blacksmith.

Mr. Metzler: Wow, that's an old skill. And, brothers and sisters?

Mr. Doig: I've got one brother, Earl, he was a Navy pilot in the 1950's.

Mr. Metzler: So, you didn't finish high school. Tell us what happened?

Mr. Doig: I was a very poor student and my folks, I think, were real happy to see me want to go in the Navy and they let me go when I wanted to. I went with a buddy of mine I was in the Boy Scouts with. I didn't see him again for three years. I went to be in the Navy with him and that's the way it happens when you're in the Navy. I went through boot camp with him and that was the last I saw of him.

Mr. Metzler: Why the Navy?

Mr. Doig: I just thought you had a clean bed every night and I didn't want to be living in a fox hole. It just appealed to me better. No particular reason.

Mr. Metzler: Where did you actually enlist?

- Mr. Doig: In Detroit.
- Mr. Metzler: And then it was off to boot camp, right?
- Mr. Doig: It was December 24, 1942. We went to Great Lakes. Day before Christmas.
- Mr. Metzler: You obviously must remember when Pearl Harbor was attacked?
- Mr. Doig: That's an odd thing. I didn't know where Pearl Harbor was or what it actually meant when it happened. It didn't really register with me how significant that was, at the time. I don't think I was too much different than a lot of people at the time, not paying that much attention.
- Mr. Metzler: So December 1942, you in boot camp, where was that?
- Mr. Doig: Great Lakes, Illinois.
- Mr. Metzler: What was boot camp like?
- Mr. Doig: It was a little tough. I was fortunate. I was right out of high school and I didn't have any trouble studying. A lot of guys had been out a while and they couldn't really sit down and concentrate. I was fortunate in that manner and I was in really good shape. They wound up doing some seven mile marches in the dead of winter and I remember the chief ended up with a frozen ear. He was an All American tackle from Ohio State. All the chiefs at Great Lakes were football players at that time.
- Mr. Metzler: So a little frost bite.
- Mr. Doig: It was tough. You run for seven miles when it's freezing outside and you don't mind running just to keep warm. But it was a very big change. I realized they put me in (audio problem on tape) and he shot. I don't know if it was someone going over the fence or what it was but at that time they said the Marines were all patrolling the place and they gave them a carton of cigarettes and a transfer if they shot somebody.
- Mr. Metzler: So was that good for them or bad?
- Mr. Doig: Well, it was good for them because they didn't want to get tied up with having shot somebody but it happened! That brought everything down real close when you heard something like that happen.
- Mr. Metzler: So you just did extended marches and physical fitness stuff?

- Mr. Doig: Right.
- Mr. Metzler: Were you trained to shoot a firearm or anything like that?
- Mr. Doig: Yes, at Great Lakes we did fire a rifle but they didn't really trust the sailors that much with fire arms.
- Mr. Metzler: How long did boot camp last?
- Mr. Doig: Three months, twelve weeks. I went home on leave and came back. I was assigned to Navy pier in Chicago. I went to the diesel school. I spent three months in diesel school.
- Mr. Metzler: Diesel school means learning how to repair diesel engines?
- Mr. Doig: Right, how they run right from the ground up on a diesel. I took an aptitude test and I wound up in that class. The whole Navy pier, at that time, I don't know if you're familiar with Navy pier, but the big long pier stuck out in Lake Michigan. They had kinds of different schools there. They had air craft gunnery school and air craft school, mechanic school. They had chef schools, teaching guys how to be chefs in the Navy and all sorts of varied occupations in the Navy at that time.
- Mr. Metzler: So it was a big training facility?
- Mr. Doig: I remember that one of the heroes at the time was Joe Fosse who was a pilot at Guadalcanal and later became governor of Utah, I think, and he came and gave us a speech about how the guys were repairing his planes after he came in all shot up at Guadalcanal. These were the guys he was speaking to.
- Mr. Metzler: How important a mechanic was...
- Mr. Doig: Yes, what your job meant something when you came in with a riddled up plane and they put it back together so you could use it.
- Mr. Metzler: Where were you housed when you were there, being trained at the pier? Did they have housing right there on the pier?
- Mr. Doig: Yes, it was a great big barracks. They had different schools in different areas. They had a couple of ships in the lake where they were landing airplanes on. They'd take off on land and land on the decks of these converted carriers and it was a training ground.
- Mr. Metzler: You say converted ships. You mean other ships that were converted to carriers?

Mr. Doig: They were tankers I think and they converted them to carriers. I heard they had at least two of those ships. I just read they're still picking up planes off the bottom of Lake Michigan.

Mr. Metzler: They're still picking them up...

Mr. Doig: Yes. That fresh water kept them pretty good.

Mr. Metzler: So how did it go at diesel school? Is that something you really seemed to ...

Mr. Doig: Yes, I enjoyed that. I like mechanics and everybody that came out of that school came out a second class petty officer. Three months later you were getting your second class petty officer. That was unheard of. I kind've wondered why they were giving us rank like that and somebody said well, if they gave you a rank like that, if you're a prisoner, they'll treat you better. And I thought, jeeze, there's a good idea. But I don't know if that's true or not. But they did make all the guys who went through that school second class petty officers which was quite unusual at the time.

Mr. Metzler: So you came out a second class petty officer. Then what happened?

Mr. Doig: We got sent down to San Diego. I got on a train in Chicago. Nobody knew where they were going. They had absolute restrictions on where we were supposed to be going and this guy said, well, we're going to New York. And we're watching the sun set down here in the direction we're going so we're not going to New York. We wound up going to San Diego.

Mr. Metzler: This was a troop train?

Mr. Doig: Yes.

Mr. Metzler: These were passenger cars that had been converted to carry troops?

Mr. Doig: These were old, old things. Anything that would roll on the railroad they used at that time. It had a boiler in the corner. It had wicker seats, pull-down bunks and you wouldn't dare open the window because nothing came in but soot, black soot. As I remember, they said "don't anybody get off the train we're leaving the country." They were going into Mexico. Well, there wasn't a soul on the train. Everybody jumped off because he said stay on. That's all they needed to hear was "don't get off" and they all got off. At some point we went down. The track must have gone down into Mexico and come back. I don't know.

Mr. Metzler: Some people jumped off?

Mr. Doig: Oh, but we got back on again. They just wanted to say they were in Mexico.

Mr. Metzler: Oh, I see they wanted to say they actually stood in Mexico.

Mr. Doig: Yes. Well, seventeen year old kids do that stuff.

Laughter

Mr. Metzler: So you could say you were in a foreign country. So you made it to San Diego.

Mr. Doig: Yes, we were stationed at the San Diego Destroyer Base and we were using landing craft. We would get Marines aboard and we'd take them out of the bay, out to the beach, and we'd land them on the Pacific side of the bay in San Diego. We did that for about three months.

Mr. Metzler: What kind of landing ships were they using?

Mr. Doig: All these landing crafts, they had LCV Ps which were landing craft vehicle and personnel. You could put a jeep in it and you could put men in it. They almost never put a jeep on it, it was just too small, and it was plywood with a steel ramp on it.

Mr. Metzler: This was what they used to call a Higgins boat, wasn't it?

Mr. Doig: Yes. They were all made by a couple of companies, Higgins was one of them. And then what we, what our ship was built for, was a LCM, it was bigger, they were fifty foot long and they were steel. They had a big steel bottom and they would carry a tank, we carried Sherman tanks on them.

Mr. Metzler: So LCM...

Mr. Doig: Landing craft mechanical. There were a lot of other designations that came along. LCT, landing craft tank, it was a much larger ship that would carry a lot of tanks. They'd run up on the beach and drop the ramp and they'd run off with them. That's what we were doing. We went to fire training school in San Diego and Camp Pendleton was just up the beach from us there. They'd always pick up Marines and shuttle them down to us. We would train with them on the beach.

Mr. Metzler: What was your role in this? You were trained as a diesel mechanic..

Mr. Doig: These LCMs had two diesel engines in them and we watched the operation of the engines and we'd make sure they didn't get choked up with sand when we hit the beach. They had big filters on them and we had to take care of that and maintain the engines.

Mr. Metzler: Who made the parts for these ?

Mr. Doig: It was Gray Marine. Gray Marine was the manufacturer of most of these diesel engines we were using. They, well, I won't get ahead of myself but we just trained there and the first group of ours that we went into the Naval destroyer in San Diego base there, a group of them got sent to Atooi in the Aleutians, that was the first group that left our place, first group that we knew that got shipped out. That didn't last very long, I think they were back before we knew it. It was just a quick deal. We learned we were going to wind up getting in harm's way when we left there.

Mr. Metzler: So you're starting to figure out where you might be headed.

Mr. Doig: Yes, I asked for a transfer and a guy said, you're crazy, the only place you're going to go is west. So I said, I don't care. I've been kicked out of every bar in San Diego and I said, I'm ready to get out of here and it wasn't but a day or so and I wound up on the *USS Ashland*. It came in and no one knew what it was. We'd never seen it before and no one had ever seen anything like that before. They were all very curious about what it was. It had lots of guns hanging off of it. It had a hole in the middle of it and no one could figure out what it was.

Mr. Metzler: So LSD was ?

Mr. Doig: Landing ship dock. That's a big ship, 450 feet long, and what it did was it ballasted down, it had tanks all over it and it would ballast down and drop the tailgate on the end and the *welldeck* inside that was the whole width of the ship three hundred feet long and we had fourteen landing craft inside there with tanks in them. Just as soon as the water would come up and we'd float, we'd dry them up and make a landing.

Mr. Metzler: So if you were going to do a landing with the ship, you'd get in as close as she could and...

Mr. Doig: You'd say five miles if she could ...

Mr. Metzler: And they would go out the back...

Mr. Doig: We'd go out the back of the ship and head in to the beach and line up in whatever unit you were supposed to hit the beach at and they had different groups running in at different times and we were all supposed to be on a time schedule and the only landing I made there was at Tarala. The boat I was on got tangled up with a line. We left the ship around three o'clock in the morning to make a landing and ...

Mr. Metzler: Let's go from San Diego to Tarala... did you go directly?

Mr. Doig: No.

Mr. Metzler: You were assigned to the *Ashland* and then what?

Mr. Doig: We departed San Diego and went directly from San Diego to Pearl Harbor. Then from Pearl Harbor, our first venture out was to build an airfield on a little island called Baker Island six miles north of the equator.

Mr. Metzler: So what roughly was the date then when you were in Pearl Harbor?

Mr. Doig: The later part of August of 1943.

Mr. Metzler: So it's been going on two years since Pearl Harbor was attacked so what kind of shape were things in?

Mr. Doig: Pearl Harbor was awful. Pearl Harbor had an inch of oil over the top of it.

Mr. Metzler: Still? Two years later?

Mr. Doig: Oh yes absolutely thick with oil. You couldn't touch anything. Pearl Harbor at the time was a real mess. I think they'd cleaned up the majority of the ships on Ford Island, they'd picked all those up and got rid of them but no, there was still one there. In fact, they didn't know what to do with it. They wanted to put one of those wagons in dry dock or wait til they had a new one. I think the *Oklahoma* ended up being put in dry dock. But our first excursion out, we, I'm trying to think what they loaded us up with. I don't think we had much of anything. We had a bunch of boats we had to service all the merchant ships that had come to this island. We put the steel matting down and we carried the steel matting ashore. They put us ashore, they put us ashore and left us there.

Mr. Metzler: You went ashore on what?

Mr. Doig: Baker Island.

Mr. Metzler: What, you just walked ashore?

Mr. Doig: No, we took our boat landed and unloaded.

Mr. Metzler: The LCMs?

Mr. Doig: The LCMs. We took them ashore with all the gear they gave us a tent. I remember the first night we were there somebody sounded an air raid alarm and everybody started to run and I remember I thought, where the hell are you going to run, there's no place to run. So I ducked underneath the floor of this tent, I was the only one in the tent, big huge tent, and everybody else. Well, the guy I was supposed to sleep with jumped in a latrine spot, some Mexican kid that had just come up from Mexico into Texas to join the Navy, he couldn't even speak English.

Mr. Metzler: I didn't know they did that.

Mr. Doig: Yes. They put him in the Navy real quick.

Mr. Metzler: They took him in the Navy?

Mr. Doig: At that time they wanted everyone. If you wanted in the Navy, they took you. But we hauled all this stuff ashore and the Army had put this stuff down...

Mr. Metzler: How big was Baker Island? Big enough for an airfield I guess...

Mr. Doig: Well an airfield if you run it out into the ocean on both sides. They put P40s on there. They brought in P40s from China and the guy... they must have put them on carriers some place and they took off from carriers and they landed on the island.

Mr. Metzler: The old Flying Tigers?

Mr. Doig: Yes, and they did a loop before they landed because they couldn't slow it down fast enough to land it on that short runway. They came in and did that and landed. I couldn't believe it when I looked in that cockpit. I'd have been crushed in one of those cockpits and the guys that were coming out were six three, six four, their knees must have been up around their ears!

Mr. Metzler: So it was really tight to be able to even land?

Mr. Doig: Unbelievable. They were, I thought, a great plane. They really knew how to fly them. I don't know how they got involved until we left the island.

Mr. Metzler: How long were you there?

Mr. Doig: A month.

Mr. Metzler: So during that month you built that landing strip with steel mats?

Mr. Doig: Well, we didn't, the Army did. The Army had been brought ashore.

Mr. Metzler: So what were you doing in that time?

Mr. Doig: I was shuttling. I was on the night shift. I was on from six at night until six in the morning, unloading merchant ships and we'd go out beside a merchant ship and beg them for a sandwich and some coffee because when the *Ashland* dumped us off on the island, they gave us nothing. We didn't have a cook, nothing.

Mr. Metzler: So you lived on what, K-rations?

Mr. Doig: They gave us a bunch of K-rations and we were supposed to make do with that. They gave us a big garbage can and a boat paddle and said there, you can put it over a fire and heat your stuff and throw it in there and that's what you're eating. Well, the first time I came back hauling some Army gear, I landed, I was a sergeant. I was a sergeant in the Army in the chow line. That's the only way we could eat. As far as the Navy was concerned, they just got rid of us.

Mr. Metzler: So the Navy just ...

Mr. Doig: They dumped us on the island.

Mr. Metzler: ... and the Army guys, they had food.

Mr. Doig: They set up a regular campsite for themselves. They had cooks and everything. One of the officers, I'm standing in the chow line with my tray and he said where the hell did you get that? And I said, I swiped it off one of the sailors over there. I had a tray and they all had mess kits. The Army had mess kits and I'm standing there with a tray and that kind've gave me away a little bit but he didn't seem to think too much about it. I had an Army fatigue on ...

Mr. Metzler: Where did you get the Army fatigues?

Mr. Doig: One of these gears broke when they came ashore and I just picked out a few pieces and I just kept them for myself to put on and use.

Mr. Metzler: Were any of the others guys able to do the same?

Mr. Doig: I don't recall how they were eating. Everybody was really looking out for themselves. It turned out to be a real mess. That little deal just didn't go over too well in the end.

Mr. Metzler: So they really dumped the Navy guys...?

Mr. Doig: Unbelievable.

Mr. Metzler: So the *Ashland* just sailed off after they...

Mr. Doig: The *Ashland*, after the boats got out of it, tried to pick up their sterngate and they broke the cables on it and they couldn't get the sterngate up so they had to go all the way back to Christmas Island and pull along side a dock and have the gate pulled up for them before they could come back and pick us up again.

Mr. Metzler: How far was Christmas Island?

Mr. Doig: (It was a) couple hundred miles. It was between Pearl (Harbor) and where we were. I don't know exactly how far it was but all the ships spent a whole day out there running as fast as they could trying to get that gate pulled up and they never could. They just had to leave the gate down and take it some place it could be taken care of. It shows you how experimental the *Ashland* was.

Mr. Metzler: Was she the first?

Mr. Doig: Yes she was.

Mr. Metzler: She was LSD 1?

Mr. Doig: Yes, with the complete bridge design... it was all designed in Britain... I don't know if the engines were British engines or not. They were three cylinder steam engines, very crude ancient old engines and they were always falling apart.

Mr. Metzler: But you never had to work on those, right?

Mr. Doig: No, I didn't work on those at that time.

Mr. Metzler: So when she was sailing and you were on her, what did you do, because your ships, your landing crafts, had diesel engines?

Mr. Doig: Well, we'd stand watches, we'd stand look-out watches and after we had used the ships on a couple of landings the guys had to work on them, doing repair work and we found out real quick that when you land some of these landing crafts on a coral beach, the coral just opens those things up like a can opener. We wound up exchanging all of our boats down in New Mea in New Caledonia. They put wooden planks on them to keep the coral from tearing open the bottoms of them.

Mr. Metzler: So did you experience this after the Baker Island?

Mr. Doig: Yes.

Mr. Metzler: So you were at Baker Island for a couple of months and then the *Ashland* came back...

Mr. Doig: Well it came back right away. It got the tailgate up and came back but we hung around. Like I say, the *Ashland* just rode around out there until we were done with our job. They took us all back, well, they didn't take us all back, we left a crew there, forever. There was a crew there to handle any ship that came in, they would take a crew out to meet it and they would bring in all the gear...One of our boat crews, we left a whole boat crew there.

Mr. Metzler: They were eating K-rations?

Mr. Doig: Well, I don't know how they set them up, I hope they set them up better than that, but when we left that was the way it was. In the Navy, they picked up a couple of policemen from Honolulu who had been on this island before and they were going to blast out all of the landing areas where we could come in with the boats and they had dynamite. As soon as, while a couple of Hawaiian guys were on the ship, they were eating with the officers, they were really being taken care of. As soon as they hit the beach, they were through with them. They didn't know them anymore. They dumped them. They did what they wanted, they showed them how to get on the island, where to land and they basically were dumped off. The Navy just forgot them. I couldn't believe they did what they did. They just handled them terribly.

Mr. Metzler: So Baker Island is now behind you and you're on the *Ashland* and she's headed back to Pearl and then what?

Mr. Doig: From there we went to New Mea, New Caledonia to pick up the Second Marine Division, Tank Group who had tried to put Sherman tanks on Guadalcanal and they found out that didn't work, the jungle was just too thick for a Sherman tank. So they brought them off the island.

Mr. Metzler: The LCMs could handle the Shermans but the Shermans couldn't handle themselves once they got into that...

Mr. Doig: No, they couldn't handle a big thick jungle. In fact, I think they took some lighter tanks in there and tried to use them, I don't know what they would have been at this time...I know that the Second Marine Division had been in the Solomon's and were brought out and brought back to New Mea and they were very gungho to go when we told them we were going to go.. they'd been sitting there for quite a while. They were very eager to go.

Mr. Metzler: So you picked them up...

Mr. Doig: They came up and we headed for Pearl. We didn't know where we were going but we headed north. We rendezvoused with another group that was coming in there and we sat off of the Gilbert Islands there and landed at Tarala.

Mr. Metzler: When did you find out where you were headed, I mean, how did you find out?

Mr. Doig: The Marine commander held a meeting on board ship and we attended the meeting and he told us we were going to make our landing at Guadalcanal. It had been occupied by the Japanese for about eight years and was well fortified.

Mr. Metzler: You mentioned Pearl...

Mr. Doig: Guadalcanal was where they had landed with their tanks and we picked them up at New Mea and took them to Tarala. We made landing November 20th at Tarala.

Mr. Metzler: What was that like?

Mr. Doig: That was a real mess. I think we were supposed to be about the third wave to hit the beach with our tanks and I don't know what time it was but we left the ship at about 3:00 in the morning to get five miles away with th landing craft and go to the beach. The boat I was on got a line tangled up in one of the screws, we only had one engine, we couldn't get the engine to go, we were just locked up. So we were trying to make the landing with one engine.

Mr. Metzler: How did that work?

Mr. Doig: It didn't work too good. The officers that were going ashore saw us lagging behind and thought we were goofing off trying to get out of the landing. One of the guys told us one of the officers was going to take a shot at us with a .45. We were very late hitting the beach but we put our tank on the beach.

Mr. Metzler: So this tank that was on your ship, it was a Sherman?

Mr. Doig: Yes.

Mr. Metzler: And I guess you had that one engine full throttle...

Mr. Doig: Yes, all the way, just wide open all the way in. Unfortunately they hit some coral and the cockswain stopped the boat thinking we were flying up the shore and when the tank took off it just went straight up and when it went up it just went straight down and tore all the cables off the ramp and knocked the ramp straight down. I don't know how but it wound up getting on the beach. I don't know how, it disappeared...

Mr. Metzler: So the water was so deep, the tank literally....

Mr. Doig: The water had to be eight feet.

Mr. Metzler: ... submerged.

Mr. Doig: It went right down but it came up on the beach.

Mr. Metzler: That's amazing.

Mr. Doig: Oh, it was. There was no protection for the engine. Later on they put snorkels on them so they could get air and the exhaust out of them but they didn't have any of that on them...

Mr. Metzler: So they were learning on the job.

Mr. Doig: All on the job from the word go and I remember sitting there a couple of days later, we had enough boat tied up there, we must have looked like another island. We had a big huge pile of landing craft and we were sitting there doing whatever we were supposed to do and it just looked like a newsreel. You know with these planes coming in there bombing, it just looked like, it was unbelievable, they bombed the living daylights out of that place and didn't seem to hurt anybody.

Mr. Metzler: I guess when you're dug in...

Mr. Doig: It didn't make a bit of difference. You were sitting there watching a wagon launching these fifteen inch shells and they were just bouncing off this big bunk house they had...

Mr. Metzler: Bunker?

Mr. Doig: Well, I understand it was supposed to be like an ammunition depot for them but also a command post but it was all made out of logs and coral. Those big shells didn't even penetrate them. A fifteen inch shell would get stuck in them, in the coral...

Mr. Metzler: So you were observing this when you were onshore?

Mr. Doig: No, we were on the boats, we were just... we didn't get ashore. The tanks did but we didn't.

Mr. Metzler: So what happened to the LCM?

Mr. Doig: Well, we backed it up and now we only got one screw and we can't get the ramp up and we couldn't go forward because we'd be taking on water, so we backed up all the way to the ship on one screw. I can't remember what time it was when we got back, it must have been much later in the day when we finally made the landing and then it was that much later when we got to the ship. Of course, they brought it on board and I took the line out of the screw and put new cables on and we were ready to go again.

But very fortunately for our gangs, only one guy was killed on the landing. One of the cockswanes was killed. He had his head blown off. That's the only casualty I can remember.

Mr. Metzler: That was on your ship?

Mr. Doig: No, on one of the other ones, the ones that went in before us.

Mr. Metzler: All the LCMs successfully delivered their tanks?

Mr. Doig: Yes. They all got on the beach. They were all broken down within the next day. The Japanese had magnetic mines that they were throwing on the backs of the tanks and blowing up the engines on them and all the tanks were knocked out within the first day. So they, I remember talking to a couple of guys after the invasion, and he said they woke up, he couldn't stay in the tank, and he woke up in a foxhole or bombed out bomb crater and he woke up and he was sitting next to a, he was sleeping next to a Japanese guy and didn't even realize it and he woke up and he shot him. Luckily he woke up before the other guy did.

Mr. Metzler: So they were sharing a

Mr. Doig: They hadn't slept in thirty-six hours and ... it took them four days to secure that island. The Marines lost a thousand men and they, the Japanese, lost four thousand men. For such a little piece of land it was ridiculous.

Mr. Metzler: Did you have any interactions or did you have any chance to talk to the tank crew onboard your LCM.

Mr. Doig: Just a very little bit after we brought them back onboard the *Ashland* and we went back to Pearl Harbor.

Mr. Metzler: After they had lost their tank or...

Mr. Doig: I think they left all the tanks on the island, they didn't bring them back.

Mr. Metzler: So the tank crews...

Mr. Doig: The tank crews came back onboard..

Mr. Metzler: Did you talk to them before the landing?

Mr. Doig: No, not very much. There wasn't too much communication with our tank crews.

Mr. Metzler: How big a crew on the LCM?

Mr. Doig: Four guys.

Mr. Metzler: There was you and the cockswane and..

Mr. Doig: ...two deck hands. And there was no place to go, the cockswane had a little turret he was sitting in and we were sitting on the deck.

Mr. Metzler: No armament?

Mr. Doig: No. No one had a rifle, no one had a pistol, like I say, they didn't trust sailors with guns and I realized why later when one of the guys they did give a gun to shot himself with it. He was horsing around and the gun went off, it hit a set of bits and the gun went off, it was an accident, and it hit him ... and they said "there's why we don't give sailors guns"! (laughs)

Mr. Metzler: Ok, so you're back on board after Tarala and what next?

Mr. Doig: Well, one of the other kids on the boat crew was told he was going to be sent down to the fire room and he was transferred off the boat into the fire room on the *Ashland* and he didn't want that, he wanted to go back onboard the boat so I told them fine, I'll trade with you. So I went down to the fire room and I never went back on the boats again. I stayed in the fire room until I got off and we had made another landing at Inawetok and Qadjulane after that before I left the ship.

Mr. Metzler: What did you do in the fire room?

Mr. Doig: I had a regular shift tending the boilers and

Mr. Metzler: These are oil fire boilers, bunker type....?

Mr. Doig: Well, they have big long injectors in them and you hook up a fuel line to them and you open up and get the fuel flowing and the fuel is pre-heated, it's like tar, if you don't pre-heat it it won't flow at all and they put little injectors on it and get the spray out and it will ignite. It was a learning experience for me, I'd never seen a boiler in my life. It was something new to me and I kind've enjoyed it. I'd get a sunburn and I'd go down below and I'd spend four hours below and I didn't have any sunburn left, it would just sweat right off. It was a 120 degrees down there all the time.

Mr. Metzler: It must've been hot down there...

Mr. Doig: Oh, it was just terrible and it didn't have like the newer boilers had covers and all the air was pushed in around this jacket but it didn't have that, this was just an open room and all the air pressure from the boilers was coming down right on top of us, that was what was keeping the fire in the fire pot so it was just like a sauna from the minute you got down there.

Mr. Metzler: So you needed a lot of water?

Mr. Doig: We drank a lot of coffee.

Mr. Metzler: Coffee? So you had what, twelve hours ?

Mr. Doig: No, four on, eight off.

Mr. Metzler: So you had two four hour shifts a day?

Mr. Doig: Yes.

Mr. Metzler: So that was after those two landings or before those two landings that you were in the fire room?

Mr. Doig: After Tarala I went down into the fire room and then we went up to the Marshall Islands and we landed at Inowetok and Quadulane and I was in the fire room at the time.

Mr. Metzler: You didn't really get to see what was going on there.

Mr. Doig: No, and it didn't bother me a bit, I'd seen enough of that. When I found out what landing a tank was all about I'd had all I wanted to see.

Mr. Metzler: So after that, where did the *Ashland* go?

Mr. Doig: We went back into Pearl again.

Mr. Metzler: Now did she sail alone or was she part of a fleet?

Mr. Doig: When we went to New Mea we sailed with one destroyer with us. I remember sitting in the galley and Tokyo Rose telling us "all you brave boys on the *Ashland* will wish you hadn't joined the Navy because we're

Mr. Metzler: So she knew the ship by name... how do you think that could possibly be?

Mr. Doig: Pearl Harbor had to have been so loaded with spies, they were spies before December 7th and I'm sure they were there long after that. They just knew everything that was going on.

Mr. Metzler: How did everybody feel when they heard Tokyo Rose talking?

Mr. Doig: Oh, we kind've laughed it off but we kind've wondered how she knew, too, how she knew who we were. But they sent us down there with one destroyer and I remember a couple of occasions where they said they spotted a submarine and the destroyer was going nuts chasing it around trying to figure out where it was and we couldn't make any speed, nineteen knots was the best we could get out of this thing we were on. It was , when I first got on the *Ashland*, I found out the majority of guys who had been assigned to that were all survivors off of different ships, the *Oklahoma*, the *West Virginia*, the *Chicago*, whatever was sunk, they wound up on that thing.

Mr. Metzler: How interesting!

Mr. Doig: They just took guys from everywhere and put them on there.

Mr. Metzler: This was when she first came in from the Pacific....

Mr. Doig: Well, she was put in from Alameda, she was built up in Alameda, up in Frisco, and she came down to San Diego and when I met these guys and found out the majority of them were all older guys in the Navy and I think the average age of us guys on the boat was twenty and these guys were all like thirty, which was old to us but they were all survivors and there were a couple of guys a couple of bowsan mates that ran the starboard crane on the *Ashland*, these big huge cranes they would have they would swing fifty tons on one of these cranes, they could pick up a tank, and they were really fun to watch, they'd use a bowsan whistle and they were really fun to watch, they never talked, everything was with a bowsan's whistle and they knew how to run this crane, it was beautiful to watch.

Mr. Metzler: You must have heard some real stories from these survivors...

Mr. Doig: No, no I didn't. Funny, they just didn't talk about it. I don't know why, I just never got much out of them. Nobody seemed to pump them about it but like I said, they didn't do too much talking about it but this one Sully, the bowsan's mate, said I want you to put in for a transfer for me every day that I'm on this thing. He said I was on the *USS Oklahoma* and I was in the US Navy and I wound up on this bucket and I don't even know what the hell it is and I have to get off this thing.

Mr. Metzler: So he didn't like it ...

Mr. Doig: He hated being on it.

Mr. Metzler: Why do you guess that is?

Mr. Doig: Well he thought he wasn't in the Navy anymore, he was on a man of war and he wound up on this thing and he didn't even know what to call it. I think he was right. It seemed like they had abandoned him and he was just shoved off on this thing and

Mr. Metzler: So it didn't seem like you were in the mainstream...

Mr. Doig: Oh, well, we weren't Navy, we were a bunch of guys who'd just joined and he'd been in the Navy for ten or eleven years and he knew what he was doing, he was a great bowsan mate but they had this feeling, they'd been lost, here they were on a battle ship and they wound up on this thing. There were guys who had that feeling.

End of tape

Transcribe r: Susan F Wilson
Date: May 26, 2009
Location: Fredericksburg, Texas
Tape Number: 1129

Interview in progress.

PART 2 (completion by K. Matras)

Mr. Doig: But...and there were guys in all...all areas of the ship that were, like I say, they were survivors off of everything. And I...I didn't realize that...until I'd been on the ship for a little while and got to talking to people that...

Mr. Metzler: So, did they all want off?

Mr. Doig: No, no, no...no...

Mr. Metzler: Just some of them?

Mr. Doig: ...the major...some of them; majority of them, I think, were just happy to be there. And...but he was very indignant about it. And...when I...I met him awhile back...a while later and I met him in...in Long Beach and I asked him, I said, "Hey, Sully, how...how'd you make out?" And he said, "Oh god," he says, "that was a mistake." He says, "I wound up on the [USS] Pennsylvania," and he said, "They were all looney." The Pennsylvania hadn't been ashore in two years. And he says, "When I got on there, they're all running around shooting each other with wooden guns." He says, "They were just as looney as a bunch of...bats." He says, "They're just crazy!" And a...he...he says, "I'd of been better off," said, "if I'd of stayed on the Ashland." He says, "At least the guys there were...sane." But, like I say, they...that ship hadn't been ashore in two years and...they were a little stir crazy.

Mr. Metzler: Man! So, you stayed on the Ashland; some of those guys...went elsewhere and...(unintelligible words).

Mr. Doig: Yeah, well, I got...no, we got...I got transferred off the Ash...Ashland rather quickly. They took eight of us and were going to send us to...Big Diesel Engine School in Cleveland, Ohio, a GM school, and...

Mr. Metzler: Roughly, what time was this now? What was the date roughly?

Mr. Doig: That had to been like...January or February...about March of '44...when I left.

Mr. Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Doig: And eight of us got transferred off and...uh, what really made me mad was...they...they sent us off and we got on a merchant ship to go...to the States...with...to go to Frisco, and the next day the Ashland was in the States, so why they...they sent us off...that...but that's the way the...the Navy was working it. They didn't know what was going on from one day to the next. But...it...and we had a terrible time on that...had about fourteen thousand guys on this...on this troop tran...it wasn't even a troop tran...transport, it was just a...a merchant ship.

Mr. Metzler: It was a liberty ship?

Mr. Doig: No, hell, it was older; it was...a liberty ship was new!

Mr. Metzler: (Laughter)

Mr. Doig: This thing was an old bucket, and...it was a mess. And...

Mr. Metzler: So, what was Big Engine...Big Diesel Engine School like?

Mr. Doig: You can't ask me that; I never got there.

Mr. Metzler: Oh! Well tell me what happened.

Mr. Doig: They...well, I got...they...when we got to San Francisco, everybody got to...a place where they called Treasure Island and...in...in...right in the bay...

Mr. Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Doig: ...and everybody was interviewed, and individually, and you just told them what you were doing and your experiences. And I don't know what I said to this guy, but he got the impression that...I could be...I think because I was down in the engine room...in the...in the fire room, that he got the impression I could do...other things other than diesel. And he transferred me to Terminal Island in Long Beach, San Pedro...to pick up a new...have a new ship, and...troop transport. So, I...I get transferred; everybody else went to...Cleveland. Seven guys went to Cleveland and I went to...to Long Beach.

Mr. Metzler: To a...to a troop transport ship?

Mr. Doig: To...to a...yeah.

Mr. Metzler: And what ship was that?

Mr. Doig: That was the USS Kenton.

Mr. Metzler: How do you spell that?

Mr. Doig: K-e-n-t-o-n.

Mr. Metzler: Okay. And so, what were your duties on the USS Kenton?

Mr. Doig: Uh, I was a...an Auxiliary Maintenance man, more or less. I was supposed to handle...where they had a couple of diesel engines; diesel pumps for...water pumps, and I was maintaining them, and I was...looking after the...after-steering motors, and...they...they wanted me to look into the...the...refrigeration units and just...whatever would come up. And I was supposed to maintain the...the gear in the...in the galley; take care of any problems that they had in the galley, and they used diesel oil to...to cook with.

And I had to make sure that I had...kept all lines full and...keep everything running. But, I didn't have any...any...all the time I was on there, I never had any...watches to stand. I was on my own all the time, and...

Mr. Metzler: Well, that must have been nice?!

Mr. Doig: Oh, it was beautiful. If...after it gets...a little monotonous after awhile when you're...you don't have any specific things to do, but I remember one time up in the Aleutians on that ship, uh, we...we spotted a mine floating...a mine was floating around up there, and...they asked me to come up on deck, and I had just gotten all cleaned up and out of the shower and standing in the chow line, and I had to go up on deck and they says, "The fog horn won't work; we got to get the fog horn work (unintelligible)." So, I climbed up on the mast and sat on the fog horn and tried to figure out what was the matter with it. They ran on steam, and somebody drained the line down below and they finally got the thing going, and here I am straddling this thing, and man, when that steam came through that fog horn, it about burnt me in half! And...but that was...that's...that's the kinds of things that they had me doing. I didn't have any specific thing to do while I was onboard. When we were (throat clearing), we made a landing in...Okinawa and well no, that was after...we...I was...bringing troops back from...from Japan to Okinawa and we pulled into Okinawa, Buckner Bay there, and the ship wouldn't steer; it would only go in one direction. So, here we are going around in circles, and they called me up and..., "Hey, what's the matter with our steering?"...you know? And I said, "What are you talking about?" I said, "I never even saw the steering." I said,

“How do I...how do I know what’s wrong with it?!” So, it was a guessing game from there on, and we found out...within about a half an hour what it was and fixed that, but...

Mr. Metzler: Well, you must have been a pretty good problem solver on a lot of different thing things then?

Mr. Doig: Well, it got to be that point, yeah. And...it...

Mr. Metzler: So, this troop ship went up to the Aleutians, is that right?

Mr. Doig: Yeah. Well, we...we were carrying troops from Seattle to...well, that was on a...on a routine...that was after the war, and that was...

Mr. Metzler: Ah ha! You were up there after the war?

Mr. Doig: Yeah.

Mr. Metzler: Okay. So, you’re on the troop ship here and it’s ’44...

Mr. Doig: Yeah.

Mr. Metzler: And...and so...

Mr. Doig: Well they...

Mr. Metzler: ...complete the story on where you went with the USS Kenton.

Mr. Doig: Well, the Kenton was being built. When I...when I got down there, there was one guy in charge of the USS Kenton, and he happened to be a kid from...uh, where in the world he was from...he was from down river in Detroit, and he...and I kind of...clicked it off a little bit, and I had just gotten back from...thirty days leave (throat clearing). And he said to me, “Hey, do you want some leave?” He says, “I’ll give you another thirty days.” I says, “I can’t,” I said, “I’m broke.” I says, “I...I couldn’t even go on leave if I wanted to.

I...I...like the idea, but I can't go." So, uh, we were...I was assigned to...a...a barracks and...people would keep coming in there; they were being assigned to the ship as it...as it was being built, and I don't know how long I was...I was there; I was probably there...three or four months. Anyway, they asked me to go to work in the Navy yard, in the ship yard; they were looking for people; the government wanted more people wanted working in the Navy yard so...or the...ship yard, so they hired...

Mr. Metzler: But...but not as a civilian...

Mr. Doig: No.

Mr. Metzler: ...but still in the Navy.

Mr. Doig: Still in the Navy, but...working as a...as a civilian...in the Navy yard...in the...in the ship yard. And I went there and that didn't last very long. Uh, all I can remember is...uh, people, Hollywood people, coming in and making speeches to the...to the workers at lunch hour, and uh, amazed at the number of women that were working...in the ship yard – welders, really good welders, too, and...

Mr. Metzler: The Rosie the Riveters, huh?

Mr. Doig: Yep! And...you never who they were because they were...all dressed up in all this leather gear and they'd throw the mask up and, "Oh my god! It's a woman!"

Mr. Metzler: (Chuckles)

Mr. Doig: Here you are talking about something that you should have in front of her.

Mr. Metzler: Shouldn't have been talking to, yeah, about it, yeah.

Mr. Doig: But...but it was...amazing that they got...that they built ships; oh, unbelievable that they built ships! The different things that...people would...would come in; they'd come in drunk and they'd drink all day and I don't know how they did their job...

Mr. Metzler: While they were building the ship.

Mr. Doig: ...while they were building the ships, and pipefitters, and...uh, just absolute ridiculous stuff that went on and...and they still got ships built! Yeah, I...I am not saying everybody was that way, but there were enough of them around to really screw things up, and why things didn't get screwed up more than they did, I'll never know. But...that was a...that was a real eye opener to...to get thrown into that and see how people were...were working during the war.

Mr. Metzler: So then, you were actually working on the Kenton then, is that right?

Mr. Doig: No, whatever ships that were being built. There...

Mr. Metzler: Okay, but the Kenton was under construction then?

Mr. Doig: It was...yes, it was under construction.

Mr. Metzler: So, when she was launched, you were on (unintelligible).

Mr. Doig: I was...I went aboard when she was...

Mr. Metzler: You were her...on her first crew?

Mr. Doig: Yes, and...

Mr. Metzler: So, who was your...Commanding Officer?

Mr. Doig: Uh, you know I can't...I can't think of his name. Uh...

Mr. Metzler: Well, let me ask you a more general question? What was your general opinion of the officers and the leaders that...basically, you know, you guys...worked for? So...

Mr. Doig: Well (throat clearing), well I...I thought that the off...uh, the Captain of the Ashland was...I thought he was very outstanding; I thought he was really a good man. Uh, I didn't think too very much of the Executive Officer who later became the Skipper of that ship. Uh, but...fact, I was just talking to a guy today that...was on it when...the Executive Officer became the...the Skipper, and...and I heard some really bad stories about...different things that happened when he...became Captain. But I remember, uh, I don't know what time that one time we were in Pearl...but...one of the times we came back to Pearl Harbor...I can't...like I say...can't recall which aft...after what...incident it was, but Nimitz came onboard, and he...naturally had never seen anything like that before, and our Captain was kind of showing him around.

Mr. Metzler: This was on the Ashland?

Mr. Doig: On the Ashland, and...

Mr. Metzler: So, did you see him?

Mr. Doig: Yes, I did; I...I saw Nimitz; I didn't get very close to him. He was speaking with the Captain and they were...right after that...then we wound up with a (throat clearing)...what they call a splinter deck; it was a...a mezzanine deck that they had built over the top of our well deck, and I think Nimitz must have had something to do with that...re...recommending that...they...they put a deck

over it; it would give them more area to...to store things and utilize areas that weren't being taken...

Mr. Metzler: But...you think somebody mentioned that to Nimitz, and he...?

Mr. Doig: Or he mentioned it to that...to us; I don't...to the...to the Skipper.

Mr. Metzler: Don't know which way it went?

Mr. Doig: No, I don't know which way it went, but shortly after that, why, we wound up with a splinter deck and the...this guy was telling me today that...shortly after that it came off; they...it didn't...it did...it didn't work out and they...they tore it out. But, I mean, it was things that were...that...the Ashland was used for so many different things. Well, they were...they were bringing larger ships onboard to...to repair them and with this splinter deck on the way...in there, it was...it was getting in the way, and so they just ripped it out. But they did so many different things – they brought PT boats on...onboard and tried to fix them.

Mr. Metzler: Hum!

Mr. Doig: They brought...

Mr. Metzler: Could...could they fix the PT boats?

Mr. Doig: Well, they were working on them. Yeah, they...they'd bring them in and...and work on them. In fact, the...they had a big typhoon during the Okinawa...fiasco and they go...and they had...three PT boats down in the well deck then...during that typhoon, and they were...they were just match sticks after that typhoon; they were just beat all to pieces. And they...they...they were all plywood, and there was nothing left but a bunch of sticks.

Mr. Metzler: And some engines.

Mr. Doig: And engines, yeah, right.

Mr. Metzler: (Unintelligible)...(laughter).

Mr. Doig: And...but they...they had...

Mr. Metzler: Tell me about that typhoon; what was that like?

Mr. Doig: Oh, that...we...I rode that typhoon out in the...on the Kenton, and...I don't think we hit the main part of it, but...we did a forty-five degree list on that thing. And there were...there were tin cans that rolled right over...and sank; that's how bad it was. And...the...but the...the Ashland, at one point, they were bringing PBVs onboard trying to fix them. They've got...they've got photographs of bringing the PBVs into the well deck.

Mr. Metzler: So, they could get something with wings like that in there?

Mr. Doig: Well, yeah, if you had that water inside the well deck high enough, you could bring them in and they...and they would go right over the deck.

Mr. Metzler: Float them in!

Mr. Doig: Yeah. And they...tried everything with that ship. That...and they really gave it a good wringing out, you know? They built fifty-two of those things.

Mr. Metzler: Fifty-two?

Mr. Doig: It was...the fifty-two was the last one they built.

Mr. Metzler: So, what...what's your opinion then of the...success of that design?

Mr. Doig: Oh...

Mr. Metzler: Do you think that was...

Mr. Doig: I...I think it was fantastic; it was very unique and we...they finally ut...learned how to utilize it, and I think they did a good job with it. I...they...they had many, many more landings after we left. Uh, I'm trying to think of where...we...we were...we were in Guam one time and...on the Kenton, and we couldn't get the anchor up; we had it loaded up with troops to go to...I think we were...going to be either go to Iwo Jima or Saipan...and...with these troops, and they couldn't get the anchor up. And they worked...half a day trying to get that sucker up and they just finally had to cut it off, and I understand that is a real big no-no in the Navy...when you lose your anchor of your ship. So, the...that was the kind of a Skipper we had on that ship. (Unintelligible)...he was...he was bad.

Mr. Metzler: He was bad?

Mr. Doig: Oh, he was bad; he had...he had served on a tanker someplace...two years on a tanker that never got underway. He was just servicing...ships that came into the harbor, and he would...he would fuel them; never got the ship underway. So, he didn't know what...he absolutely didn't know what he was doing with a ship. And he had been...he had been sent back once before the war; they brought him back in and he had already lost...he had gone...like...I think from a Commander down to a Lieutenant Commander, uh, previous to the...to the war.

Mr. Metzler: So, there was some good ones and there was some bad ones.

Mr. Doig: Oh, there was...some bad ones, yeah.

Mr. Metzler: Were there any ninety-day wonder type...Commanders or...I mean, officers that...?

Mr. Doig: Well, there were officers, yeah. I mean, a lot of ninety-day wonders, but...they didn't have any huge positions.

Mr. Metzler: How did they do; did they do okay?

Mr. Doig: Well, they...well, they...if the smart ones...they pretty well kept their mouth shut and they just followed what was going on, and they got along great. But if they tried to...muscle it a little bit, then they'd get in trouble. And...

Mr. Metzler: 'Cause they just didn't have the experience?

Mr. Doig: They just didn't know what was going on.

Mr. Metzler: So, where you then when...the war ended?

Mr. Doig: Uh, uh...well, we were...off of...we were...off of Okinawa...someplace...when they dropped the bomb, and I can't recall just exactly where we were.

Mr. Metzler: But, you were in the Okinawa area?

Mr. Doig: Yeah, we made the landing.

Mr. Metzler: So, were you involved in...Iwo and Okinawa as far as being there on the troop ship or...?

Mr. Doig: No, uh, we didn't hit Iwo, uh, we went to...on the Kenton we went to Leyte and Cebu and Samar; we made three...three different landings in the...in the general...Philippines area...

Mr. Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Doig: ...in that area...the landing.

Mr. Metzler: So, when the troop ship would go there, they would just...launch the...the...bring boats (unintelligible)...

Mr. Doig: Bring boats...

Mr. Metzler: ...on both sides of the troop ship and...

Mr. Doig: ...load them up and...

Mr. Metzler: ...transfer them?

Mr. Doig: ...go...on...on to the beach.

Mr. Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Doig: And there was...there was no...no fire coming at us off the beaches.

Mr. Metzler: No...

Mr. Doig: No.

Mr. Metzler: ...every run into kamikaze problems on...Tinian?

Mr. Doig: Oh, at Okinawa, yeah. Yeah, we had...there was quite a few ships that were hit with kamikazes and we were bringing...I remember bringing a couple of guys onboard that...their ship had been hit by a kamikaze and...they were just black like a cinder; they just got burnt terrible, and they were...unfortunately, still breathing.

Mr. Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Doig: And...but they just...they couldn't do anything for them; they just...tried to...

Mr. Metzler: So, they had been in the water then after their ship had been sunk or (unintelligible)...?

Mr. Doig: No, they...they, I think what happened...they were down in the engine room and they...a plane went down through the...the engine room and the...the bomb

exploded in the engine room, and these guys were caught down there and they just...they...

Mr. Metzler: So, this was on a destroyer or...?

Mr. Doig: No, on a...I think it was a troop transport.

Mr. Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Doig: But, I mean, there's like...four thousand ships out here in this bay, and...the first thing they said was, "Don't anybody fly out over the...area where those ships are." Well, we pulled a...one of the Navy pilots out of the water and said, "Who the hell shot me down?!" "Well, what are you doing flying out over here?" He was chasing a Jap, and he just got exciting and...we shot him down and the Jap got away. But...and that's what...what happened, you know, and he just...got excited and...lost...the sense of where they were going. But...the...oh, the kamikazes were really raising hell. Yeah, they...they really...they did a job on a *lot* of different ships!

Mr. Metzler: So, the war is over now, and what happened with you then?

Mr. Doig: Uh, well we...I...I started hauling troops from...uh, Frisco and Seattle to...Japan, and we'd make...and...and we'd haul guys back that had been...we...we'd go down to Okinawa and pick up guys and...and bring them back to the States that were getting mustered out. And we were just making a...a regular round robin; it would take us fourteen days to get from...Seattle to Tokyo, and then back again and back again. And...there was just...we did that for...oh, about six months...after the war. I got out in...

Mr. Metzler: And this is late '45 then?

Mr. Doig: Yeah, I got out in February of... '40...out of...out of Great Lakes I got out in February of...of '46.

Mr. Metzler: So, if you...as you look back on that...that whole experience, what...what do you think was the most...humorous incident that you had happen to you, if any, (chuckle), something that kind of sticks in your mind?

Mr. Doig: (Pause), nah, I can't really recall something like that offhand, uh...

Mr. Metzler: Didn't seem to be a whole lot of laughing going on?

Mr. Doig: No, well, uh...one of the ridiculous things that I recall was...down in...destroyer base in San Diego, we used to...when we took the...the troops out and made landings with them out on the beach, they'd bring us lunch out there, and it was ham sandwiches and coffee. Well, one day, I don't know why, but...I decided that I wasn't going to go out there that day; I...just going to goof off and I...went to sick bay. Well, five hundred guys got ptomaine poisoning that day...out...these ham sandwiches, and they came back and they were in such a mess! God, they...they didn't know which way it was going first, and they were just running all over the place and they were really...

Mr. Metzler: Sick.

Mr. Doig: ...unbelievably sick. And some of them...didn't get sick till they got ashore and they were on leave...and they were running around San Diego and they...getting sick and throwing up all over the place, and we were hauling guys all over. And it...it...later on, I laughed about it because it...it got so ridiculous that...you...you didn't know which way to go; you had...people were just getting sick all around you.

Mr. Metzler: So, they ever find out what the source was?

Mr. Doig: Yeah, those ham sandwiches!

Mr. Metzler: (Laughter)

Mr. Doig: And...and luckily...I goofed off that day, and I didn't get caught in it, or I'd of been one of them! It was the only time I ever really remember...saying, "I'm not going out there today; I'm going to go to sick bay."

Mr. Metzler: Well, your timing was good!

Mr. Doig: It was...just perfect!

Mr. Metzler: (Laughter), and then as you think back, what...what do you feel like is the most...distressing or disturbing...incident or period during that whole experience?

Mr. Doig: Well, the landing at...at Tarawa just...it...I...it changed me completely, I think. Uh, it...I finally grew up a little bit. On the way up to Tarawa, we crossed the International Date Line, and we missed a day and it happened to be my eighteenth birthday, and I was...eighteen on October the 26th; we made the landing on November the 20th, and...I grew up in a hurry right there. I...it...you wake up in the morning on the boat and here the thump alongside the boat and look over and it's a guy floating in the water, and just...bodies laying all over the place. There was nothing you could do; it...it was a...something that you didn't...really want to be involved in again.

Mr. Metzler: So, how did it change you then?

Mr. Doig: Oh, I think it just...made me a little more serious.

Mr. Metzler: Uh hum, at the age of eighteen?

Mr. Doig: Yeah, and...maybe it was about time; I don't know.

Mr. Metzler: Well, no, it just seems awfully young to be...

Mr. Doig: Well...

Mr. Metzler: ...but that's the way it was.

Mr. Doig: Yeah.

Mr. Metzler: So, when you were over there, how...useful or how...how was your communication back stateside? I (unintelligible) I guess you got mail; you sent letters; how did that work?

Mr. Doig: Well I was...well, yeah, I did get letters and I was very poor about writing letters. I think my mother had...every letter that I wrote and it must have been a half a dozen of them, and I was really very poor at that. In fact, I...I ran across a couple of those airmails...I use to draw pictures on them and...just try to make things kind of light-hearted, but I...I could...I could see after I got home that...they had to be wondering what the hell I was...going...what was happening to me, you know, because they didn't hear to...from me for such long periods of time. And...well, I was afraid that, for one thing, that...they were censoring; we couldn't tell them where we were; they just...hey...if you're telling them where we were, they were going to just tear it right out of the...just a razor blade and get it all out of your letter.

Mr. Metzler: They must have had a lot of people cutting up...

Mr. Doig: Oh, they...they had to be.

Mr. Metzler: ...letters somewhere.

Mr. Doig: And well, and...and the funny...one of the funny things in...when we were in boot camp...half of the guys...there's a...there's an area in Detroit called Hamtramck, and they're all Polish. And...we had a lot of guys on...in the company that were...Polish, and they spoke Polish, and they wrote Polish. So, they're writing home to their grandmother in Polish and the...Company Commander says, "What the hell is this?!" He says, "I can't censor this. I don't even know what it is!" He says, "I'm...I'm not...let...I'm not even sending the letter...period! I don't know what it is!"

Mr. Metzler: We need a Polish censor!

Mr. Doig: Yeah! And the...the only guy...well, the guy that could really read and...and write Polish...good, was the...a guy named Riley, of all things, and he was from Hamtramck, and...

Mr. Metzler: Must have been Polish on his mother's side (laughter).

Mr. Doig: Oh, he had to have some Polish in him!

Mr. Metzler: (Laughter)

Mr. Doig: Oh, he was a riot! (laughter) But, they were...they were trying to get him to...help censor the...the mail, and I...I don't know how that worked out because I know the...the Company Commander was really upset (laughter) trying to read these letters, but...

Mr. Metzler: Well, did you have any...buddies that you were particularly close to...during the period or did you move around enough that...?

Mr. Doig: Yeah, one of the guys that I'm with here right now, Dana Andrew, is...he was...

Mr. Metzler: Is he the one we met at your table?

Mr. Doig: Yeah, right.

Mr. Metzler: (Unintelligible), yeah.

Mr. Doig: Yeah, he was on the boats with me; he was a Motor Machinist Mate and on the boats.

Mr. Metzler: Uh hum, uh hum.

Mr. Doig: And we got transferred off the ship together.

Mr. Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Doig: And he went to school in Cleveland and I didn't.

Mr. Metzler: Oh, he was one of the seven that made it Cleveland?

Mr. Doig: He was...yes. And...we've been friends...well, ever since...I got...hooked up with the...the reunion group here and the Ashland group. I...the first I heard of it was...in '96. I don't know what took so long for me to get...to hear about it, but that's what happened. And...so I bumped into him then, and we've been seeing each other...well, we haven't seen one another now for four years, but...I'm trying to think where...I think it was...Kentucky was the last one he was at, and he...he doesn't like all these east coast things. We have a lot of reunions on the east coast and that's a long way from him from Chico, California.

Mr. Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Doig: Yeah, but he...he's already been on the road a month now to...to come here. He...he hauls a travel trailer and he's got it over here in an RV park...

Mr. Metzler: Uh huh.

Mr. Doig: ...and that's the way he travels. But they go all over the country every summer; he puts on six thousand miles a summer...

Mr. Metzler: My goodness.

Mr. Doig: ...just...waltzing around.

Mr. Metzler: My goodness.

Mr. Doig: But we've been buddies...uh, over the years.

Mr. Metzler: Uh hum. So, when you...when you mustered out then, briefly what was the rest of your life then? You...went back to Detroit?

Mr. Doig: Yeah, I went back to Detroit and finished high school and got my diploma. I went through a Veterans school, and...within, I don't know, a few months...uh, I had got my diploma, and then...a friend of mine, unfortunately, got me a job, and he got me a job at Kelvinator Refrigerator Company, and I went to work there 'cause jobs were really scarce in 1946. My father was working at General Motors and they'd been on strike for six months. When I got mustered out, I think I got three hundred dollars and I had to give it to him right away 'cause he was broke. And...things were...very...quite tough at that time, and...I don't know, it's...unfortunately, I didn't...I didn't get settled down right away, and I...when I got out I was twenty years old. And...I just kind of horsed around; I...I spent four years...working at Kelvinator's and...we made all the...all the refrigerators that everybody needed in four years; we...they filled the line and...so they just cut...cut back on...refrigerators and I wound up without a job. Well, they...they almost closed the whole plant down. And if you didn't have twenty years' service, you couldn't work there. So...I got a job...I was

out of work for...getting unemployment for...a while and...I kept telling them at the unemployment office that I wanted to be a draftsman, and they says, "Well, you know, how can you be a draftsman?" And I said, "Well, I was...I did some drafting in high school and I enjoyed it." And I...and he says, "Well, we don't have any openings, you know?" And they kept telling me that and...this woman evidently heard me complain about that and she says, "I've got a...a nephew that's a draftsman and maybe he could help you." Well, she gave me the number and I went over and they hired me. And I'd been getting a couple of dollars an hour, well, I think...I think I was getting two and a half dollars an hour at the time, well he cut me down to a dollar an hour. And I said, "Boy, I don't know if I can work for a dollar an hour." He says, "I'll tell you what," he says, "if you do alright," he says, "I'll give you a raise. Every week I'll give you a dime a week until you...we get you up...where you belong." So it worked. I...I was on the board...designing work for...ten years after that and...and I wound up...in a welding company and went to work for a friend of mine, and I worked for him for thirty-nine years. And he finally threw me out when I was seventy-four.

Mr. Metzler: (Laughter), and the rest is history as they say.

Mr. Doig: Yes.

Mr. Metzler: Okay. Well, is there...anything else you'd like to take the opportunity to...add to this...discussion so that we...?

Mr. Doig: Ah, I don't think so; I think that...pretty well covers it...unless you can think of anything. I...to me, I think...we pretty well rounded it out.

Mr. Metzler: Okay. Well, I appreciate your taking the time to share your experiences. You certainly saw a lot of the Pacific from a lot of different viewpoints over there (unintelligible).

Mr. Doig: Oh, I sure did, yeah.

Mr. Metzler: And...and I appreciate...your taking the time to share it with us.

Mr. Doig: Well, thank you very much.

Mr. Metzler: Okay, well, thank you!

(end of interview)

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