

**The National Museum of the Pacific War
(Admiral Nimitz Museum)**

**Center for Pacific War Studies
Fredericksburg, Texas**

**An Interview With
Roy Crawford**

Mr. Grahm

This is Eddie Grahm. I'm interviewing Mr. Roy Crawford in the Fredericksburg high school here in Fredericksburg, Texas. Today is September 19, 2004. We're conducting this interview for the National archives of the Admiral Nimitz Museum of the Pacific War. Mr. Crawford, tell me when and where were you born?

Mr. Crawford

I was born in Quinlan, Texas. That's in Hunt County October 16, 1922.

Mr. Grahm

Where did you go to school?

Mr. Crawford

Graduated from high school in Quinlan. I had taken my first eight grades in the little community where I was born in grew up, Dry Creek. And then went on to Quinlan. At that time, there was only eleven grades, so I did my ninth tenth and eleventh at Quinlan. Graduated there in 1939.

Mr. Grahm

What were the name of your parents?

Mr. Crawford

Roy and Willie Crawford.

Mr. Grahm

Where were you and what were you doing December 7th, 1941?

Mr. Crawford

I was already teaching, and I was taking a friend to school in southern Hunt County. And as I was crossing a railroad crossing, had the radio going, and that's when I first heard the word that Pearl Harbor had been bombed.

Mr. Grahm

Well, then tell us. How did you end up getting into the United States Navy?

Mr. Crawford

I went ahead and taught three years, and my number came up, and it lacked a few months being the end of the school year. So I had a short deferment, and then went into the service actually, at the last of 1943. My real entry date was January 8th, 1944.

Mr. Grahm

And where did you do your basic training?

Mr. Crawford

San Diego.

Mr. Grahm

And after you finished your basic training, what happened to you, then?

Mr. Crawford

As a lot of people were, I was shuffled around on several bases in the San Diego area, and then in May, I went aboard the USS Richard P. Leary?

Mr. Grahm

Did you, in all the shuffling around in all the different bases, did you take any kind of specialized training?

Mr. Crawford

Well, I went through 3 weeks of radar operators school, yes. A short period of time, there.

Mr. Graham

And what was your first assignment?

Mr. Crawford

USS Richard P. Leary, DD664.

Mr. Graham

You're a tin can Navyman, huh?

Mr. Crawford

Tin can Satler, right.

Mr. Graham

What was the first assignment of your ship, then?

Mr. Crawford

We went to Pearl Harbor and stayed around there a few days, and after that, went on into the south Pacific. As far as I remember now, Eniwetok was their first stop.

Mr. Graham

What did you do there at Eniwetok in Marshall Islands? Anything in particular?

Mr. Crawford

Not in particular. Well, we made some dry runs, you know, and some practice firing.

Planes pulled those... Planes pulled those practice sleeves for us to fire on.

Mr. Graham

Sleeves?

Mr. Crawford

Yeah, right. And we spent, spent quite a bit of time around there.

Mr. Graham

What was your battle station?

Mr. Crawford

I was shifted around quite a bit. I spent a little time at one of the five-inch ammo storage passing projectiles. Didn't stay very long. I didn't stay in radar. We just had way too many people. So they needed some help in the personnel office, and they learned I could type so I went in the personnel office and became a third-class yeoman. And then a few months later, the logroom yeoman, that's the engineers' yeoman, a one yeoman office. He was transferred, and they asked me to go in there. I spent the rest of my time aboard in the logroom.

Mr. Graham

After this training exercises that you did there, where did your ship go after that?

Mr. Crawford

I believe Saipan and Tinian was our next stop.

Mr. Graham

And what did you do there?

Mr. Crawford

We fired some as shore bombardment.

Mr. Graham

After you finished that, where did you go?

Mr. Crawford

You know, I'm not real sure the exact next stop – Palau. We did some duty in Leyte Gulf.

Mr. Grahm

What kind of duty was that?

Mr. Crawford

Well, about the same thing. It was shore bombardment, and of course, we did in escorting with some of the convoys doing screening and things of that kind.

Mr. Grahm

When you did this shore bombardment, was that in support of an invasion, or what?

Mr. Crawford

Yes, right.

Mr. Grahm

So do you remember which invasion this was again?

Mr. Crawford

Palau and Lingayen Gulf after Saipan and Tinian.

Mr. Grahm

And how long did you do the shelling on each of these did you mention, several days?

Mr. Crawford

Several days. I don't know the exact time.

Mr. Grahm

When you were there, how many hours a day were you at battle station?

Mr. Crawford

Most of the time it would be short times, and then we might move out and then come back in and spend more time on the battle stations.

Mr. Grahm

You said your last one, I think was Palau? Then after Palau, what were your assignments?

Mr. Crawford

Lingayen Gulf and Leyte Gulf.

Mr. Grahm

Gulf, so is this, this wasn't in the Battle of Leyte Gulf, was it?

Mr. Crawford

No, it was not. That was later.

Mr. Grahm

Well, tell us about it. From here on, what happened to you?

Mr. Crawford

Oh, we, we did screening and did some of the escorting and was in, in Lingayen. Not Lingayen but Leyte Gulf.

Mr. Grahm

And when you say you were doing screening, what laying smoke?

Mr. Crawford

Yes. We did some of that, right.

Mr. Grahm

Okay, and what happened after that?

Mr. Crawford

Probably the next thing I remember vividly is in October 44 in Lingayen. In Leyte Gulf. Prior to Surigao Strait, which we were in and, in that night's surface battle, the Honolulu, a cruiser, light cruiser, was torpedoed by a Japanese plane, and we went along, they were port side, and, and received 25 of their wounded. And of course, we didn't have any, a destroyer does not have any facilities. We had a doctor and a pharmacist mate. About all we could do was make them as comfortable as possible, clean them up, identify them, and then transfer them to a hospital ship, which we did, to the hospital ship USS Rixey.

Mr. Grahm

Now you mentioned about the battle. So yall, were yall involved in the battle, yourself there?

Mr. Crawford

In Surigao Strait, yes. Four days later, that was the 20th of October 44.

Mr. Grahm

Well, tell us something about the action there.

Mr. Crawford

About Surgiao Strait?

Mr. Grahm

Yes, sir.

Mr. Crawford

Yes, we, we were Desron 56, and of course, we had eleven ships, and we were split up into, into three groups to make torpedo runs. We made a torpedo run on that battle ship, and until a few years ago, I didn't realize that was the, the Fuso. I thought it was just the

Fuso class. But evidently, I was mistaken about that because what all I've read lately is the, it was actually the Fuso.

Mr. Grahm

Did yall get any hits on it?

Mr. Crawford

We were credited with two hits.

Mr. Grahm

And did the ship sink, or?

Mr. Crawford

We did sink it.

Mr. Grahm

Yes.

Mr. Crawford

As far as I know yes.

Mr. Grahm

So you had a successful run?

Mr. Crawford

Yes, we think we did, and one of our sister ships that was right with us was hit very bad.

The USS AW Grant. We took some survivors and some of their property off. They had first thought they needed to tow it out and sink it, and later, they decided they could salvage it, which they did. I don't even know how many people they lost, but a lot of people in the water. We didn't get a scratch in that.

Mr. Grahm

Okay, after that, what happened?

Mr. Crawford

We went on to Iwo Jima. I believe that would have been about the next step. We did spot firing and illumination firing and observed the raising of the flag, after which we proceeded to Okinawa.

Mr. Grahm

And what did you do at Okinawa?

Mr. Crawford

We did patrol, and of course, we had several destroyers damaged there by kamikazes.

Mr. Grahm

While you were at Okinawa?

Mr. Crawford

Okinawa.

Mr. Grahm

Okay, that's where they really hit the hardest.

Mr. Crawford

They really did.

Mr. Grahm

Did yall have any experience with one?

Mr. Crawford

Yes, we did with one. It was coming in from the port side, he just skimmed across and tore the lifeline off and the number one gun down on the main deck. The gun Captain was standing on his little pedestal, standing up out of that hatch. That hatch come

straight up. And it would have been about at his waistline. That plane went across and just swept that off. The ironic thing is that number one gun had a powder can that jammed, and he stooped down to help him, and zoom, went right across.

Mr. Grahm

Would have cut him in half.

Mr. Crawford

Well, a piece of plane flew down in there and cut his neck a little. Not serious but it bled.

And he's the only man that we had aboard that received a Purple Heart.

Mr. Grahm

And by the fate of God, he's still alive.

Mr. Crawford

I mean to tell you.

Mr. Grahm

What else happened while you were there in Okinawa? How long did you stay there?

Mr. Crawford

Oh, we stayed there several days. Matter of fact, we relieved four or five of those tin cans that took a kamikaze right down the stack, you know. Put them completely out of commission.

Mr. Grahm

Did you ever witness any, see any kamikazes hit a ship?

Mr. Crawford

Yes, we did.

Mr. Grahm

Can you explain to us what happened, what it looked like, ect.?

Mr. Crawford

It just really kind of looked like a bomb hit it to tell you the truth because there was an explosion when they hit it. And of course, they tried to hit it about mid ship because they knew that's where the brains of the ship was.

Mr. Grahm

How many, approximately, did you witness?

Mr. Crawford

A couple, probably, is about all.

Mr. Grahm

After you relieved these other ships at Okinawa, how long were you there? Were you there when the bombs were dropped?

Mr. Crawford

No, we had gone to the Aleutian Islands. You mean at the end of the war.

Mr. Grahm

No, just said, after Okinawa, what else did you do until you went to the Aleutian Islands?

Did you continue to patrol?

Mr. Crawford

Yes, we did, right.

Mr. Grahm

Then you were assigned to go to the Aleutian Islands.

Mr. Crawford

Yes, and we were there. We understood that we were to pick up foul weather gear, and we were on our way to begin bombarding the shoreline of the mainland of Japan. But when we arrived at, well I think we were between ATU and ADAK, and as we dropped anchor, we got word that Japan had surrendered. And that would have been August 15, 1945.

Mr. Grahm

What did you do? Did yall still pick up a gear and take it back?

Mr. Crawford

You know, I don't have any recollection about that. I doubt if we did, but I don't remember. But we did go to Japan, and anchored in Tokyo Bay, and was only there two or three days. Anyway, had a bad typhoon while we were there. I don't remember whether we anchored, and another cantied alongside or vice versa. But anyway, that was coming across the mainland of Japan. And we dragged anchor a long ways before we were able to get underway and have our own pawls.

Mr. Grahm

That wasn't this big typhoon that hit in there and capsized two of our ships, was it?

Mr. Crawford

I don't recall that.

Mr. Grahm

Okay, well that was another one, then. So you survived that typhoon, though?

Mr. Crawford

Oh, you bet, yeah. We survived several others, too. We had some bad ones.

Mr. Grahm

Anybody seriously injured or hurt with these typhoons?

Mr. Crawford

No.

Mr. Grahm

Okay, after Japan, what happened?

Mr. Crawford

I believe we, maybe started working our way back toward Pearl Harbor. I recall that in Guam, we received mail and three of us received our transfer there in that mail.

Mr. Grahm

Transfer to what?

Mr. Crawford

Off the ship. Back to the States.

Mr. Grahm

So you were, what, catching another ship there?

Mr. Crawford

No, matter of fact, my orders called for me to be transferred from Commander of a Western sea frontier to the Eastern, and I went to Jacksonville, Florida. But the three of us, and this was gonna be quite a while before we get back to the States. Two of us were yeomen and one storekeeper. The Executive Officer called us in and said that we were gonna stop in Pearl Harbor and stay a few days. And if we choose to do so, they'd fly us back to the States from there or if we wanted to, just find somebody to take our place, do our job. And when we thought they were trained well enough to do it, we'd just be a

passenger and we could stay on. And he said "All three of you have to do the same thing. I'm not gonna split you up."

Mr. Grahm

Now, you're talking about staying aboard the ship?

Mr. Crawford

Or fly back from Honolulu.

Mr. Grahm

What did you choose?

Mr. Crawford

We chose to stay aboard. We reasoned that if it stayed afloat during all we'd been through, surely it would two or three more weeks. So we stayed aboard.

Mr. Grahm

And you went back to where?

Mr. Crawford

San Diego.

Mr. Grahm

San Diego.

Mr. Crawford

The minute we docked, I was off. We were, all three of us were.

Mr. Grahm

Then you went to Florida?

Mr. Crawford

Yes, Florida, working in the separation center at the Naval Air Station there.

Mr. Graham

How long did you stay there?

Mr. Crawford

After I was settled in at my new duty station at the Naval Air Station in Florida, I was granted 36 days leave – the first leave I had. I drove back to Jacksonville with my wife and baby, after spending some enjoyable time with family and friends – we stayed in a cheap small motel until arrangements could be made to move into Navy housing for enlisted men. The duty was light and somewhat relaxed. On duty five days and off two. We were able to enjoy being the small family we were and did some sight-seeing in the historic area. Stayed there until March 15, 1946, and got my discharge.

Mr. Graham

Very interesting story. But let me ask you this, of all of the experiences you had during this time, are there any of them that you still think about now more than others?

Mr. Crawford

Probably, other than some of these skirmishes we were in that we thought we'd never survive, probably in the highlight would be when Honolulu was torpedoed October 20, 1944. We went alongside and took 25 of their wounded aboard and transferred them as I mentioned earlier, to the USS Rixey, a hospital ship. All these years, I wondered what may have happened to some of those fellows. Never had any kind of word or report at all until about two years ago, I found one of them, and contacted him. And he came to our reunion, and I was just here the 10th, they were having their, the Honolulu was having their reunion in San Antonio. They came up here to put their plaque on the Memorial Wall, and I met him here. Had lunch with him. Went to that ceremony. And then even

met one of the other wounded that we took aboard. That was probably, I'd say, sticks out as the highlight of my whole career there.

Mr. Grahm

Now, you mentioned something about several skirmishes you were in. About how many total battles were yall in?

Mr. Crawford

Seven, as far as my count goes.

Mr. Grahm

You mentioned one where yall torpedoed a Japanese ship and probably sunk it. What other action did yall have there that you can recall in some of those battles?

Mr. Crawford

Oh, we did some air control, and I'm not sure how many planes we were credited with shooting down, but four or five planes.

Mr. Grahm

Alright. Let me ask you one more question. It's obvious you served with a lot of different people, met a lot of different people. Are there any particular people that you still think about that comes up in your mind quite often?

Mr. Crawford

Well, the last Skipper we had, Captain Duncan P. Dixon, was a real people person, and he came to our reunions until he passed away a few years ago. Super kind of a man. The Executive Officer is still living. He comes to our reunions part of the time. I stay in close contact with him.

Mr. Grahm

And this is your ship, the Leary. (looking at picture)

Mr. Crawford

Not just the Leary, now there's another Leary. But this is the Richard P. Leary.

Mr. Grahm

Well, Mr. Crawford, I can't think of anything else to ask you. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Mr. Crawford

I don't know. I might just mention that our sister ship, the Hayden L. Edwards, was the 663. We wer3 664. We operated together almost continuously out there. They had reunions probably started in the mid 80's, and one of our crew members had met with them some. So they invited us to meet with them and organized we hadn't had a reunion. So we met two years, 92 and 93, with them. They guided us into organizing. Matter of fact, I was charter President, and served the first two years. But they helped us a tremendous amount to get our Charter and Constitution Bylaws and things of that kind. And one of those fellows is here now, and was a panelist.

Mr. Grahm

Which one was that?

Mr. Crawford

That's Robert Chandler.

Mr. Grahm

Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Mr. Crawford

I don't think of anything that's especially a highlight.

Mr. Graham

Well then let me say this, on behalf of the Nimitz Museum, we want to thank you very much for sharing your adventures with us and it'll add some history to our library.

Transcribed by
Christa Granger
January 7, 2005
Alice, Texas

ORAL HISTORY INFORMATION

The date of my birth is October 16, 1922 – Quinlan, Texas in Hunt County. I grew up on the family farm, located five and one-half miles northwest of the town of Quinlan that had considerable wooded pasture and enough open land to grow feed crops and a small acreage of cotton as a cash crop. None of the feed crops were sold as there were several head of work stock – horses and mules, used to plow and harvest with horse drawn implements, as well as saddle horses to be ridden for pleasure or used as transportation.

Much of the feed grown, harvested and stored in barns would be fed to cattle. Most of the time there would be 30 to 40 head of mature cows and calves, of which there would be from 14 to 18 cows which would be milked, twice daily. The milk would be taken to the house and run through a 'cream separator' and collected in five gallon cans to be shipped to creameries about twice each week.

From the time I was old enough to assist with field work, feeding and milking, my father and I would do the milking of the cows, carry the milk to the house in open buckets and run the warm milk through the separator while my mother did household chores and prepared meals for us.

It is to be noted that this was during the great depression. We had no electricity, running water or all weather roads. This meant that the cows were milked by hand and the cream separator was cranked by hand.

My first eight grades of school ^{was} laws in a two room school in the community we lived in, known as Dry Creek. There were only eleven grades. I attended Quinlan High School from 9th to 11th grade and graduated in May 1939. The school did have school buses, but when the roads were muddy they only drove on the pavement, hence when we had rain those of us who lived on unpaved roads had to get to school as best we could. When the temperature was above freezing I would ride a horse, but when the ground was frozen the uneven surface of the dirt roads would cut the horse's feet, hence I had to walk.

On one of those days I rode the horse – this time it was a very nice spirited buckskin mare, an excellent saddle mare. I failed to use a lead rope to tie around her neck and to a tie-rail behind the hardware store, just tied the bridle reins to the tie-rail. During the day she managed to rub the bridle off. The saddle was still on her and she showed up at the barn without the bridle and no rider. My father was at school by the time school dismissed and glad to know I was alright and not off the end of one of the bridges on the way home. We stopped by the hardware store to retrieve the bridle

and went home. That caused much anxiety and concern, but the end result was good.

We really did not consider that we were poor, since all our neighbors and other folks we knew were in about our same situation. We just did not have any surplus money, however, we never were hungry, since we raised our own beef, pork, chickens, eggs and garden vegetables.

Upon graduation from high school my folks determined that I should go to college. They were able to get a room for me in a private home and pay the tuition for me to go to East Texas State Teachers College in Commerce, in our home County – about 30 miles from home. When I had completed 32 hours of study, I could apply for a temporary teaching certificate, which I did just after my 18th birthday, and taught fifth thru eight grade and served as principal of that same two teacher school I attended during my first eight grades. During my three year stint there I assumed the operation of the family farm, married and had one child, when Duty called me into the U.S. Navy. It was hard to say good-by to my wife and baby, Mother and Father and the only home I had ever known.

January 8, 1944 I landed in the Navy Training Station in San Diego, CA, for an eight-week boot-camp training. By about the end of Boot Camp, my wife and baby came to be there until I shipped out. This was

such a big help to me for them to be there for that short period of time. I attended a three week course at Radar Operators school.

The building of a new Fletcher Class Destroyer, the USS Richard P. Leary DD 664, had been completed in Boston Navy Yard, made its shakedown cruise, and came through the Panama Canal to the Pacific and anchored in the Bay at San Diego. Along with several others I boarded it and became a member of the crew and not return to the home land for about a year and a half.

We had more people than the compliment of the design called for, and so was the crew who operated the Radar. Too many radar operators and they were short on help in the Personnel Office, hence since I was able to type I was encouraged to move from radar to the office and become a yeoman striker. In a short time I was able to pass the test to become a Yeoman Third Class, which is the rate I held for the remainder of my service time.