

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR

THE NIMITZ MUSEUM

PRESENTS

AN ORAL HISTORY BY

JAMES SAUNDERS

INTERVIEWER - ED METZLER

TAPE NUMBER 1263

THIS IS ED METZLER AND TODAY IS THE 19TH OF SEPTEMBER, 2004. I AM INTERVIEWING MR. JAMES SAUNDERS. THIS INTERVIEW IS TAKING PLACE IN FREDERICKSBURG, TEXAS.

THIS INTERVIEW IS IN SUPPORT OF THE CENTER FOR PACIFIC WAR STUDIES, ARCHIVES FOR THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR, TEXAS PARKS AND WILD LIFE FOR THE PRESERVATION OF HISTORICAL INFORMATION RELATED TO THIS SITE.

LET ME START OUT JAMES BY THANKING YOU FOR SPENDING THE TIME WITH US TODAY TO SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCES ON THE *USS MIAMI* DURING THE PACIFIC WAR.

LET'S START OUT BY HAVING YOU TELL US WHEN AND WHERE YOU WERE BORN, WHO YOUR PARENTS WERE AND A LITTLE BIT ABOUT YOUR EARLY YEARS.

JAMES SAUNDERS

I WAS BORN AT BLACKWELL, TEXAS IN 1924. I WAS BORN ON A FARM ABOUT THREE MILES WEST OF BLACKWELL, TEXAS.

ED

BLACKWELL IS WHERE?

JAMES

IT IS ON THE SOUTH SIDE OF NOLAN COUNTY. I WENT TO GRADE SCHOOL AT BLACKWELL, AND LATER I WENT TO GRADE SCHOOL AT BRONTE AND I FINISHED HIGH SCHOOL AT BRONTE. I DIDN'T FINISH [GRADUATE] BECAUSE I LEFT AND WENT TO THE NAVY. I DID HAVE ALL MY CREDITS TO GRADUATE BUT LEFT BEFORE THE END OF THE SCHOOL YEAR.

ED

YOU SAID BLUNT?

JAMES

B-R-O-N-T-E.

ED

OK. I WOULDN'T HAVE SPELLED IT THAT WAY.

JAMES

SUPPOSEDLY, IT WAS NAMED AFTER EMILY BRONTE. THE WRITER. ITS ON THE COLORADO RIVER UP IN COKE COUNTY.

ED

SO, YOUR DAD WAS A FARMER?

JAMES

HE WAS A SHARECROPPER WHEN I WAS BORN.

ED

HE WAS A SHARECROPPER AND YOU WERE GOING TO SCHOOL BUT YOU DIDN'T FINISH BECAUSE THIS OPPORTUNITY CAME ALONG.

JAMES

WELL, I GOT MAD. THEY BOMBED PEARL HARBOR AND I WAS SEVENTEEN YEARS OLD AND EVERYTHING WAS ROSY. BROTHER, JUST OLDER THAN ME, WENT IN THE NAVY 2 OR 3 DAYS AFTER PEARL HARBOR. HE WAS LOST IN JANUARY 1944. I JOINED THE NAVY JANUARY 15TH, 1943.

ED

HE WAS MISSING OR ----

JAMES

HE WAS ON THE *SCORPION*, THE FIRST SUBMARINE *SCORPION* WHEN THAT MINE GOT A HIT. THEY LOST IT WITH ALL HANDS. I WENT TO SAN DIEGO CALIFORNIA AND WENT THROUGH BOOT CAMP THERE, COMPANY 22-43 AT THE RECRUIT TRAINING CENTER.

ED

HOW OLD WERE YOU THEN WHEN YOU WENT IN?

JAMES

I WAS EIGHTEEN.

ED

SO YOU WERE EIGHTEEN?

JAMES

I FINISHED BOOT CAMP, BASIC TRAINING THERE AND THEN THEY SENT ME TO THE TRAINING CENTER IN SAN DIEGO. GAVE ME A CHOICE WHAT I WANTED TO DO. MY FIRST CHOICE WAS PILOT TRAINING AT PENSECOLA. THAT'S WHAT I WANTED TO DO WAS FLY AS A FIGHTER PILOT. I DIDN'T GET THAT. MY SECOND CHOICE WAS SUBMARINES. THE DRAFTS CAME IN FOR BOTH OF THEM AND I MISSED IT BY TWO OR THREE. I NEVER GOT TO GO TO SUBMARINES EITHER. I FINALLY TOLD THEM, "JUST GIVE ME A GUN AND HEAD ME WEST.

THAT'S WHAT THEY DONE.

THEY PUT ME IN A CLASS AT GUNNERY SCHOOL FIRST. I WENT THROUGH THAT FROM APRIL OF '43 TO SEPTEMBER OF '43. I WENT THROUGH SCHOOLS. I WENT THROUGH GUNNERY SCHOOL AND THEN ELECTRIC HYDRAULIC SCHOOL.

THEN I GOT ORDERS TO JOIN THE *MIAMI*, THE NEWEST CRUISER. I WENT TO PHILADELPHIA RIGHT AFTER IT WAS LAUNCHED. I WAS TRANSFERRED ON ORDERS TO PHILADELPHIA. WE HAD A TRAIN WRECK IN ARIZONA WHICH MADE ME OVER ORDERS, LATE. I GOT PUT ON REPORT BY A YEOMAN WAVE. THE PROVOST MARSHAL DROPPED THE CHARGE AND GAVE ME A THREE DAY PASS. THEN I WAS BILLETED WITH THE CHIEFS. THAT WINTER AND TOOK A WORKING PARTY OVER THERE AND WE CLEANED THE GUNS_UP. WE CLEANED UP THE FIVE INCH GUNS. SOMEBODY ELSE CLEANED THE SIX INCH. I DIDN'T KNOW WHO IT WAS BUT THEY WERE PACKED FULL OF GREASE AND THEY HAD TO BE CLEANED. IN THE MEANTIME, THE CRAMP SHIPYARD WAS BUILDING THE REST OF THE CRUISER FROM THE 0-1 DECK UP. WE SPENT A PRETTY ROUGH WINTER THERE WITHOUT ANY HEAT ON THAT. THAT CARBON TETRACHLORIDE WAS ALL WE HAD TO CLEAN THEM GUNS WITH AND THAT WAS BAD STUFF. I HAD TO WATCH REAL CAREFULLY TO NOT GET A GUY IN A TIGHT PLACE WHERE HE COULDN'T GET FRESH AIR I KNOW IT WAS COLD BUT OTHERWISE YOU HAD TO CARRY HIM OUT. THAT CARBON TETRACHLORIDE WOULD PUT THEM TO SLEEP.

WE FINISHED THAT AND WE WERE COMMISSIONED JUST AFTER CHRISTMAS IN 1943, DECEMBER 28TH, 1943.

ED

WHAT KIND OF SHIP WAS THE *MIAMI*? WAS SHE A BEAUTY, OR AN UGLY DUCKLING?

JAMES

WELL, THEY CALLED US, WE WERE NICKNAMED, THE "THE SOUTH SEAS DEBUTANTE".

ED

SOUTH SEAS DEBUTANTE. SHE MUST HAVE BEEN A LOOKER.

JAMES

IT WAS PRETTY, I MEAN IT WAS A NICE SHIP. THE OFFICIAL RECORD ON IT, I DON'T THINK IS QUITE ACCURATE. THEY USED THAT AS A GENERAL RECORD FOR THAT SIZE CRUISER. IT WAS A LITTLE BIT DIFFERENT FROM OTHER CRUISERS BECAUSE IT WOULD HOLD MORE FUEL ALONE AND IT WOULD HOLD MORE AMMUNITION. THEY CALLED IT AN ANTI-AIRCRAFT----FAST CARRIER. FAST CARRIER TASK GROUP CRUISER. IT WAS SUPPOSED TO KEEP UP WITH THOSE BIG CARRIERS AND THE BATTLESHIPS AND IT WOULDN'T DO IT.

ED

IT COULDN'T DO IT.

JAMES

COULDN'T DO IT. THE NIGHT WE HEADED SOUTH FROM UP EAST OF SAM MAR, WE WERE IN BULL HALSEY'S TASK GROUP 34, THE ONE THAT THEY CLAIM WAS LOST, THEY COULDN'T FIND AND ALL THAT. WELL, WE KNEW WHERE WE WERE. WHEN WE TURNED BACK SOUTH, AFTER THAT RUN.

ED.

YOU ARE GETTING A LETTLE AHEAD. TELL ME HOW YOU GOT FROM PHILIDELPHIA OUT TO THE PACIFIC AND THEN WE WILL COME TO IT.

JAMES

WE SHOOK THAT CRUISER DOWN AT ST. THOMAS ISLAND IN THE CARRIBEAN, BETWEEN NORFOLK VIRGINIA AND ST. THOMAS ISLAND AND THEN IN MARCH OF 1944, THEY SENT US ON A COLD WEATHER TRIP TO GREENLAND, AND THAT WOUND-UP THE SHAKE DOWN. WE WENT INTO BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS TWO DAYS AFTER THE *QUINCY* CAME IN FROM NORTH AFRICA. *QUINCY* GOT HIT OVER THERE AND THEY WERE IN BOSTON FOR REPAIRS. I HAD A BUDDY THAT I WAS RAISED UP WITH ON THERE SO I WENT AND VISITED HIM THAT NIGHT.

ANYHOW, THEY SENT US ON UP TO WHERE THE TEMPERATURE WAS 54 DEGREES BELOW ZERO AND THAT WAS OUR COLD WEATHER CHECK. THAT WAS COLD WEATHER, I MEAN. WE CAME OUT OF THERE IT WITH ABOUT 100 TONS OF ICE ON US. THEN WE CAME BACK TO PHILIDILPHIA AND CHECKED IT OUT THE LAST TIME AND THEN LEFT AND WENT TO THE PANAMA CANAL WITH THE *HOUSTON* AND THE *VINCENNES*. THERE WERE THREE OF US.

ED

THE NEW *HOUSTON*?

JAMES

YEAH. THAT WAS THE NEW ONE, THE HEAVY CRUISER *HOUSTON* WAS SUNK AFTER THE BATTLE OF JAVA SEA IN EARLY 1942. THE CRUISER *HELENA* WAS SUNK IN KULA GULF IN JULY 1942, I VISITED OVER IN THAT NAVY HOSPITAL IN PHILIDELPHIA. I WENT OVER THERE AND VISTED SOME OF THE MEN THAT WERE ON THE *HELENA* WHEN IT GOT SUNK, AND ESPECIALLY THEIR CHIEF ENGINEER. I KNEW HIS SON AND HIS FEET WERE COOKED, THEY WERE SCALDED. HE WAS THE CHIEF ENGINEER, CHIEF PETTY OFFICER IN THAT

BOILER ROOM. I VISITED HIM A GOOD BIT DURING THAT WINTER. HE WAS IN THE NAVAL HOSPITAL IN PHILADELPHIA.

ANYHOW, WE GOT THAT COLD WEATHER BUSINESS OVER WITH AND WENT TO PANAMA. WE HAD TO LAY OVER IN COLON OR BALBOA, THE ONE ON THE WEST SIDE BECAUSE THE *HOUSTON* HUNG A GATE CHAIN, WALK CHAIN, WITH ONE OF HER SCREWS AND THEY THOUGHT IT HAD MESSED IT UP SO WE HAD TO LAY OVER THAT NIGHT WHILE THEY SENT DIVERS DOWN AND CHECKED THAT OUT. THEN, WE WENT ON TO SAN DIEGO, PICKED UP PASSENGERS AND WENT TO PEARL HARBOR, THEN WENT ON TO THE FLEET.

ED

SO THAT'S WHERE YOU JOINED THE FLEET THEN AT PEARL HARBOR?

JAMES

YEAH. WE WENT TO CRUISER DIVISION 14. THE *COLUMBIA* AND THE *MONTPELIER* WAS CRUISER DIVISION THIRTEEN.

ED

WHAT OTHER CRUISERS WERE IN CRUDIV 14?

JAMES

THE *SANTA FE* WAS IN IT LATER ON 'CAUSE THAT WAS A NEW ONE. IT DIDN'T COME OUT FOR A YEAR AFTER WE WENT TO SEA. THE *BIRMINGHAM* WAS IN IT SOME. I DON'T REMEMBER ANY OTHER CRUISER TO BE IN IT; IN CRUISER DIVISION 14.

SOME TIMES, WE WOULD GET CAUGHT AND WE WOULD STAY IN ANOTHER SEGMENT OF A TASK FORCE; WE DIDN'T STAY IN THE SAME SEGMENT ALL THE TIME 'CAUSE WHAT THEY CALLED THE "FAST CARRIERS", IT DIDN'T MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE WHERE WE WERE BUT WE WERE GOING TO BE WHERE THOSE CARRIERS WERE.

ED

(GARBLED) TO PROTECT THEM.

JAMES

WE FOUGHT ON THERE AND DID LOTS OF BOMBARDING AND RUNNING, I'D SAY JUST RUN TO AN ISLAND UP AND DOWN AND THIS AND THAT.

ED

SO, WHEN YOU WENT TO PEARL AND JOINED UP WITH THE FLEET IN ESSENCE, THEN YOU HEADED OUT, HEADED WEST, SO TELL ME WHERE YOU HEADED TO.

JAMES

WELL, WE WENT DOWN, SOUTH, ACROSS THE EQUATOR, SOUTH OF NEW GUINEA AND WE DIPPED DOWN JUST ENOUGH SO WE COULD SAY WE CROSSED THE EQUATOR. WE WERE NOT ACROSS IT OVER 2 OR 3 HOURS.

WE WENT BACK UP TO ENIWETOK. THAT'S WHERE WE ANCHORED THE FIRST TIME. THEN, FROM ENIWETOK, THAT SECOND ANCHORAGE THEY USED WAS ULITHI, 'CAUSE THEY HADN'T FIXED ULITHI UP WHEN WE GOT TO ENIWETOK. THAT'S WHERE WE JOINED THE TASK FORCE, THIRD FLEET.

ED

SO, THE THIRD FLEET.

JAMES

WE STAYED IN THE THIRD FLEET AND THE FIFTH FLEET ALL THE TIME WE WERE IN THE PACIFIC.

ED

WHAT WAS IT LIKE WHEN YOU FIRST JOINED UP WITH THE FLEET?

JAMES

WELL, WE WOULD JUST GO OUT AND TRAIN ON THE WAY IN AND OUT. WE WOULD GO AND BOMBARD SOMEWHERE OR GO AROUND AN ISLAND OR MAKE A PATROL, YOU MIGHT SAY, AND COME BACK IN. BECAUSE BULL HALSEY WAS A HUNTER. HE ALWAYS HUNTED THE *YAMATO*. HE FINALLY CAUGHT IT.

ED

DID YOU EVER SEE BULL HALSEY?

JAMES

OH, I WATCHED HIM MANY HOURS.

ED

REALLY. TELL ME ABOUT IT.

JAMES

WE CRUISED ALONG SIDE THE *MISSOURI*, WE WOULD PROBABLY BE A HALF A MILE FROM HIM, RIGHT BY (HIS) SIDE. WE WERE ON THE STARBOARD SIDE OF THE TASK FORCE AND THE *VINCENNES* WAS ON THE PORT SIDE OF THE TASK FORCE AND THEN THE *HOUSTON* WAS BEHIND US. IF THERE WAS ANOTHER LIGHT CRUISER THERE, SOME OF THE

TIMES IT WOULD BE A HEAVY CRUISER WITH US BUT, ONLY SO WE WOULD HAVE AN EIGHT INCH GUN PLATFORM WITH US. I WATCHED HIM THROUGH BINOCULARS FOR MANY AN HOUR PACE THE DECK OF THAT *MISSOURI*. THAT'S THE WAY HE GOT HIS EXERCISE. HE WOULD GO OUT ON THE STARBOARD MAIN DECK AND PACE BACK AND FORWARDS, ABOUT 70 TO 80 FEET.

ED

LIKE A TIGER IN A CAGE.

JAMES

YEAH, JUST LIKE A CAT IN A CAGE. BUT, HE GOT HIS EXERCISE.

ED

AND HE WAS THINKING ALL THE TIME PROBABLY.

JAMES

WELL, YEAH HE HAD TO BE A-THINKING 'CAUSE THOSE ADMIRALS, THEY HAD A PRETTY AWESOME POSITION TO FILL.

ED

OK. SO, OUT OF ENIWETOK, THEN YOU HEADED OUT WITH THE FLEET?

JAMES

YEAH. FROM THEN ON, WE WERE AT ULITHI WHEN WE ANCHORED TO REPLENISH. DURING THE MARIANNA'S CAMPAIGN WE WERE ON "FIREFLY DUTY" SHOOTING STAR SHELLS SO THE FLEET COULD LOOK FOR SHIPS AND SUBMARINE PERISCOPES AT NIGHT. WE SET OUR STAR FUZES AT 36,000 FEET AND POINTED OUR FIVE INCH GUNS NEARLY STRAIGHT UP, 87°. WE WOULD FIRE A SERIES IN A PATTERN TO LIGHT UP A BIG AREA. BUT ONE NIGHT WE SHOT 24 OF OUR 150 STAR SHELLS AND NONE OF THEM ILLUMINATED. SO WE STOPPED AND THEY MOVED UP THE *SANTA FE* OR *BIRMINGHAM* TO FIRE STAR SHELLS. OURS WE NOT FUZING. WE OFF-LOADED THE REST OF THEM DURING THE NEXT AMMUNITION LOAD AND IT WAS DISCOVERED THAT THE SHELLS WE HAD BEEN SABOTAGED DURING ASSEMBLY. WE HAD JUST STOPPED AT ULITHI AND WERE TAKING ON AMMUNITION WHEN WE WERE IN THAT TYPHOON, WE WERE ANCHORED IN ULITHI WHEN THAT TYPHOON HIT.

ED

AND THIS WAS BEFORE LEYTE GULF?

JAMES

YEAH. THIS WAS BEFORE LEYTE GULF..

ED

TELL ME ABOUT THAT TYPHOON THEN.

JAMES

IT CAME IN ONE MORNING. IT WAS ABOUT 4 OR 5 DAYS, I THINK, AFTER THE *BENNINGTON* GOT HIT. WHEN SHE WAS HIT WE WERE AT ANCHOR, THE MAIMI CREW WAS UP ON THE FOCSELE WATCHING A MOVIE, AND A PLANE CAME OVER, A JAPANESE PLANE CAME OVER OUR FOCSELE ABOUT 150 FEET HIGH. THE *BENNINGTON* WAS ANCHORED OVER TO OUR PORT ABOUT A HALF MILE OR A LITTLE OVER, AND THAT PLANE WENT RIGHT IN UNDER THE FLIGHT DECK ON THE FANTAIL. THERE IS A PICTURE OF IT IN THERE [REFERING TO THE SHIPS CRUISE BOOK], NO, ITS NOT IN THAT BOOK I DON'T THINK, BUT IVE GOT IT IN THAT OTHER BOOK AT THE HOTEL.

ED

OK. WENT RIGHT INTO HER?

JAMES

OF COURSE, IT HIT AT A FIVE INCH READY ROOM, UPPER AMMUNITION HANDLING ROOM AND THEY WERE GLAD TO BE IN FIVE INCH WHEN THE AMMUNITION WENT OFF THERE. THEN THE MORNING OF THE TYPHOON, JUST GETTING DAYLIGHT, IT GOT CLOUDY. WE FIRED UP THE BOILERS. BY THE TIME WE GOT THE BOILERS UP WHERE THEY COULD MAKE TURNS WE WERE UNDER WAY GETTING OUT OF THERE. BY THE TIME WE GOT OUT OF THERE, OUR ANNANOMETER TWISTED IN TWO AT 155 MILES AN HOUR.

ED

THAT WAS A REAL TYPHOON.

JAMES

AN HOUR AND A HALF AFTER THE FRONT HIT, WE WERE IN A BLOW AND I DON'T MEAN MAYBE. IT WAS A STORM, A GOOD STORM AND THAT WAS THE ROUGHEST ONE I EVER SAW, AND WE WENT THROUGH THREE OF THEM.

THAT NIGHT, THERE WAS AN ESCORT CARRIER THAT WAS IN OUR GROUP. ALL OF THE LINE SHIPS SURVIVED THE SEA. THE DESTROYERS AND THE CRUISERS, THE BATTLESHIPS AND THE CARRIERS GOT OUT OF ULITHI BUT ALL OF THOSE CARGO SHIPS THAT WERE IN THERE, THEY COULDN'T MAKE TURNS ENOUGH TO PULL THAT WIND SO SOME OF THEM BLEW UP ON THE BEACH. THEY COULDN'T MAKE ENOUGH WAY TO GET OUT

OF THERE.

WE GOT ASSIGNED THAT NIGHT TO SHADOW THAT ESCORT CARRIER THAT HAD SPRUNG A LEAK IN A BOILER ROOM AND THEY WERE TAKING WATER AND IT KILLED THEIR BOILERS. WE WERE ASSIGNED RADAR GUARD AROUND THEM THAT NIGHT. THAT WAS THE ROUGHEST NIGHT OF ALL OF THEM.

ED

WHERE WERE YOU STATIONED THEN DURING THIS?

JAMES

I DON'T REALLY REMEMBER, AT THE FIVE INCH GUNS. MY LIVING COMPARTMENT WAS A 417L.

ED

YOU REMEMBER THAT.

JAMES

JUST BELOW THE SICK BAY AND JUST ABOVE THE FIVE INCH MAGAZINES. IT WAS ON THE ARMOR DECK, THE FORTH DECK, AND THE MARINES WERE RIGHT UP ABOVE US, IN 302L. EVERY LIVING COMPARTMENT ON A SHIP IS NUMBERED, OTHERWISE YOU DON'T KNOW WHERE YOU LIVE.

WE JUST WENT AROUND AND AROUND THAT CARRIER COUNTER-CLOCKWISE ALL NIGHT LONG, REAL SLOW, JUST ENOUGH TO MAKE WAY. THAT CRUISER WAS SUPPOSED TO CAPSIZE AT 47 DEGREES. WE DID A REPORTED 49 DEGREE ROLL 3 OR 4 TIMES THAT NIGHT. IT WAS ROUGH.

ED

FORTY NINE DEGREES. GETTING UP THERE.

JAMES

THAT MEANS LOTS OF BOTTOM SHOWING.

ED

HOW LONG DID THIS LAST? THIS KIND OF STORM?

JAMES

THE REAL HARD PART OF THAT LASTED, I GUESS, 24 HOURS. IT WAS A BIG STORM. I THINK THEY ESTIMATED 825 MILES ACROSS IT, OUR WEATHER PEOPLE IN THE FLEET IT WAS A PRETTY BIG STORM. IT WAS ROUGH, WE LOST THREE DESTROYERS THAT NIGHT.

THEY TURNED UPSIDE DOWN AND SANK. THEY DIDN'T HAVE ENOUGH WEIGHT. WE WERE ALL EMPTY WHEN WE WENT INTO ULITHI TO ANCHOR. THOSE DESTROYERS DIDN'T HAVE TIME TO FUEL IN ALL THEIR FUEL TANKS WERE LOW. THEY DIDN'T HAVE ANY BALLAST IN THEM SO SOME TURNED UPSIDE DOWN AND SANK.

I FELT SO SORRY FOR THEM "TIN CAN SAILORS".

ED

WHY IS THAT?

JAMES

THEY SHOULD HAVE PUMPED SOME WATER INTO THEIR FUEL TANKS FOR BALLAST. WE CARRIED 2,700 TONS OF FUEL SO WE WERE IN PRETTY GOOD SHAPE BUT WE NEVER DID GET BELOW 70 PERCENT OR BETTER ALL THE TIME BECAUSE WHEN THEY SAID "CRUDIV 14 GO SO AND SO", OF COURSE THEY USED CODE NUMBERS BUT WE KNEW WHO THEY WERE TALKING ABOUT, YOU GOT UP AND WENT AND YOU HAD TO HAVE ENOUGH TO GET THERE AND BACK, THERE WERE A LOT OF TIMES THEY WOULD BURN IT DOWN A LITTLE BELOW 70 PERCENT BUT THEY TRIED TO KEEP IT AT 70 PERCENT.

ED

AFTER THAT TYPHOON, THEN WHAT HAPPENED?

JAMES

WE WENT BACK TO ULITHI AND THEY CHECKED OUR DAMAGE, OUR BOW WAS CROOKED AND WE HAD SOME DAMAGE UP FRONT. THEY INSEPECTED ALL THE SHIPS THAT CAME IN FOR DAMAGE. THERE WERE 23 OR 24 DAMAGED. THERE WERE 3 OR 4 DESTROYERS THAT SANK. IT WAS A PRETTY ROUGH TIME A COUPLE OF WEEKS THERE. THEY GOT THAT ALL STRAIGHTENED OUT AND THEY GOT SHORED UP AND THEN THEY SENT US TO PEARL HARBOR SO THEY COULD GET STEEL TO BRACE UP INSTEAD OF USING WOODEN TIMBERS ON SOME OF THEIR DAMAGE CONTROL. AT FRAME 54, THAT BOW TURNED SIX DEGREES. WE HAD A WRINKLE TOPSIDE ABOUT TWO FEET HIGH.

ED

A TWO FOOT WRINKLE ON THE DECK?

JAMES

ON THE MAIN DECK, IT JUST ALMOST BROKE OFF BUT IT WAS THAT TYPHOON. ALL THE REST OF THE FLEET COULD TURN TAIL TO AND GO STRAIGHT AND WE HAD TO BE BROADSIDE OF ALL THOSE SEAS AT LEAST HALF THE TIME, HALF TIME GOING FORWARD AND HALF TIME GOING AFT OF THAT CARRIER BECAUSE WE HAD TO STAY AROUND HIM.

ED

OF COURSE, YOU WERE GOING IN A CIRCLE.

JAMES.

WE JUST TURNED A TIGHT CIRCLE RIGHT AROUND AND AROUND THAT LITTLE CARRIER FOR ALL THAT LONG, ALL THAT NIGHT LONG MAKING ABOUT 8 OR 10 KNOTS, SOMETHING LIKE THAT, THEY COULDN'T MOVE. THEY JUST DRIFTED IN THE WIND. I DON'T KNOW HOW FAR WE MOVED THAT NIGHT. IT BLOWED A LONG WAYS.

ED

SO, YOU GOT REPAIRS THEN FOR THE DAMAGE?

JAMES

YES, BUT THEY DIDN'T FIX THE BOW OF THAT SHIP UNTIL 1946 OR 1947 AFTER THE WAR. WE WENT AHEAD AND FINISHED THE WAR WITH THAT BOW.

ED

YOU WENT IN WITH A BENT NOSE ALL THROUGH LEYTE GULF AND EVERYTHING?

JAMES

YEP. THEY TOLD US WHEN WE LEFT THE STATES, THEY WERE BRAGGING ON THOSE CRUISERS, THIS 'N THAT AND SURE FAST. "THEY WILL OUTFRAN ANYTHING IN THE FLEET." I GOT SOME NEWS FOR ALL THEM PEOPLE THAT BELIEVED THAT BECAUSE THAT'S NOT SO.

ED

SHE WOULDN'T DO IT HUH?

JAMES

AUGUST, I BELIEVE IT WAS THE 19TH OR 20TH, ---- IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN IN OCTOBER, OCTOBER 19TH OR 20TH. WE CAME DOWN CHASING, TRYING TO FIND THAT NORTHERN FLEET. BULL HALSEY, WHEN WE TURNED BACK SOUTH AT NIGHT, AND WE WERE IN 26 MILES OF THEM. WE COULD HAVE CAUGHT THEM IN ANOTHER TEN HOURS, WE COULD HAVE HAD THEM ALL SUNK. THEY DISCOVERED IT WAS A RUSE. TURNED BACK TO GET BACK TO LEYTE GULF. NIMITZ SAID, "WHERE IN THE HELL IS TASK FORCE 34?".BY THAT TIME, THEY ALREADY HAD ONE OF THE BATTLES AND THE YAMAMOTO WAS GOING BACK THROUGH SAN BERNARDINO STRAITS.

ED

LET'S GO BACK FROM BETWEEN WHEN YOU WERE IN THE TYPHOON AND YOU HAD REPAIRS TO THE SHIP AND THEN WHEN YOU WENT TO LEYTE GULF. WHAT HAPPENED AFTER YOUR SHIP WAS REPAIRED?

JAMES

WE LOADED UP WITH AMMUNITION AND FUEL AND HEADED BACK OUT. WE BOMBARDED THE CHINA COAST FROM SINGAPORE TO FORMOSA ONE TIME. WE WERE GONE ABOUT 14 OR 15 DAYS ON THAT TRIP WHEN OUR AMMUNITION PLAYED OUT.

ED

THAT WAS SHORE BOMBARD MENT?

JAMES

SHORE BOMBARDMENTS. WE HIT EVERYTHING THAT LOOKED LIKE IT WAS A MILITARY TARGET OR A RADIO STATION OR A BARRACKS.

ED

ALL THE WAY FROM SINGAPORE UP TO FORMOSA? THAT'S A LONG WAY.

JAMES

WE WERE IN SIGHT OF THE CHINA COAST FOR ALL THE TIME.

ED

AFTER THAT HAPPENED, THE WHAT WAS THE NEXT?

JAMES

JUST RUN IN AND OUT. FIRST ONE PLACE AND THEN ANOTHER.

ED

JAMES WHERE YOU WITH OTHER SHIPS?

JAMES

YEAH. WE WERE ALWAYS WITH THE TASK FORCE. THE *MISSOURI*, BULL HALSEY ON THE *MISSOURI*, AND THE *NEW JERSEY* PART OF THE TIME. WE ALWAYS HAD THREE BIG BATTLESHIPS WITH US, THREE BIG CARRIERS AND MAYBE AN ESCORT CARRIER IN OUR FLEET. THAT IS ABOUT THE COMPLEMENT OF A FLEET.

ED

AND HOW MANY CRUISERS?

JAMES

THERE ARE ALWAYS THREE AND SOMETIMES, FOUR. WHEN WE TURNED BACK SOUTH, I WAS LISTENING TO HIM ON A JKS CIRCUIT BECAUSE I HAD A HEADSET CONNECTION TO CIC ON THE *MISSOURI* AND *MIAMI* AND ALL OF THEM. WE COULD HEAR THE CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN HALSEY AND HIS COMMANDERS, HIS CAPTAINS. HIS EXACT WORDS WERE, "IF YOU GOT ANY BOILERS THAT BUST, BUST THEM OR KEEP UP, BECAUSE WE ARE GOING TO SAN BERNARDINO STRAITS." WE WERE AFTER THE *YAMATO*.

OUR ENGINEERING OFFICER; ALL OF OUR OFFICERS WERE REAL, REAL NAVY MEN. MOST OF THEM HAD SHIPS SUNK ON 'EM IN KULA GULF OR CORAL SEA OR SOMEWHERE. MY IMMEDIATE OFFICER OVER ME WAS A REAL PROMINENT NAVY MAN AND HIS FAMILY WAS FOR YEARS AND YEARS BACK BEFORE. HIS NAME WAS CMDR. MUSTIN. HE IS THERE ON THOSE NAVY RECORDS, VERY PROMINENT NAVY PEOPLE. HE SPENT 16 YEARS IN THE SAME TURRET ON THE *CALIFORNIA* THE BATTLESHIP *CALIFORNIA*.

OUR EXECUTIVE OFFICER WAS SQUAD DOG OF DESTROYER SQUADRON 58 IN THAT BATTLE OF THE CORAL SEA AND THEY SANK EVERYONE OF THEM. HE LOST A COMPLETE SQUADRON, EVERY ONE OF THEM. HE WAS OUR EXECUTIVE OFFICER. HE WAS A GOOD MAN.

WE HAD SOME VETERAN OFFICERS, SOME CRACKER JACKS. OUR ENGINEERING OFFICER WAS NAMED WULFF. HE TIED 75 POUND TURBINE GEARS ON HIS SAFETY VALVES THAT NIGHT AND FOLLOWING HALSEY'S ORDERS. WE HEADED FOR SAN BERNARDINO STRAITS AND WE WENT THROUGH THERE.

WHEN THE SUN WENT DOWN THAT EVENING, WE WERE WITHIN 3 MILES OF THE BATTLESHIP *MISSOURI*. THE NEXT MORNING WE WENT THROUGH SAN BERNARDINO STRAITS. THE NEXT MORNING WHEN WE HAD ENOUGH LIGHT YOU COULD SEE, WE COULD SEE ABOUT TWO FEET OF *MISSOURI'S* S K RADAR MAST. THAT'S HOW MUCH HE HAD GAINED ON US ALL NIGHT.

ED

THEN YOU HAD EVERYTHING OUT, GOING FULL BORE.

JAMES

OUR NUMBER ONE BOILER EXPANDED THIRTEEN INCHES. IT ALMOST BLEW BUT IT DIDN'T. THAT CRUISER WAS ROCKING ON, 38 TO 40 KNOTS.

ED

BUT NOT AS FAST AS THE *MISSOURI*.

JAMES

IT WOULD NOT RUN WITH THE *MISSOURL* THOSE BIG CARRIERS COULD OUTFRAN US TOO. MAYBE JUST 3 OR 4 KNOTS BUT THEY COULD GET IT DONE.

ED

GO ON AND TELL US WHAT HAPPENED THEN.

JAMES

OF COURSE, WE LOST THEM, THEY ALL GOT AWAY. GOING THROUGH THE STRAITS, WE SANK A JAPANESE SHIP IN THERE.

ED

WHAT WAS IT?

JAMES

WE THOUGHT IT WAS A CRUISER. IF IT WASN'T, IT WAS A BIG DESTROYER. SOME OF THE RECORDS SAY IT WAS A DESTROYER AND SOME SAY IT WAS A CRUISER. I PUT 608 ROUNDS IN HER.

ED

YOUR SELF?

JAMES

MY THREE GUN MOUNTS DID. I HAD SIX FIVE INCH 38 GUNS. FOUR OF THEM, 1, 2, 4, & 6. EIGHT FIVE INCH GUNS TOTAL COULD BEAR ON THEM. WE PUT 608 ROUNDS OF FIVE INCH THROUGH THE HULL. I WAS MOUNT CAPTAIN AND I COULD SEE EVERY ONE OF THOSE ORANGE BLOSSOMS WHEN THOSE SHELLS HIT. I KNEW WE WERE HITTING IT. I DON'T KNOW HOW MANY TIMES THEY USED THE SIX INCH BUT IT WAS A BUNCH. IT TOOK SIX MINUTES TO SINK.

ED

DID THAT SHIP HAVE ANY CHANCE TO TRAIN FIRE ON YOU.

JAMES

THEY WOULD BUT THEY DIDN'T FIRE A SHOT. THEY KNEW WE WERE COMING SEE. THEY WERE CRIPPLED. THAT'S HOW COME THEY WERE IN THERE BY THEMSELVES. OF COURSE, THEY DIDN'T WANT TO FIRE A SHOT BECAUSE THAT WOULD HAVE GIVEN AWAY THEIR POSITION BUT WE CAUGHT THEM ON RADAR ANY HOW. WE CAUGHT THEM WITH RADAR. OUR RADAR CREW FOLLOWED THEM.

ED

NOW THIS WAS AT NIGHT OR DAY?

JAMES

DAY OR NIGHT. IT WAS DARK. WE ALL KNEW WE WERE HITTING IT. IT TOOK SIX MINUTES. THEY DIDN'T FIRE A SHOT. THE NEXT DAY, WE CAME BACK THROUGH THERE AND WE STOPPED AND PICKED UP A SURVIVOR OUT OF THAT.

ED

ONE SURVIVOR?

JAMES.

THAT WAS ALL WE FOUND.

ED

SO, THEY BROUGHT HIM ABOARD.

JAMES

YES AND THEY PUT HIM ON A DESTROYER AND TOOK HIM TO THE *MISSOURI*. THEY PUT HIM ON THE *MISSOURI* TO QUESTION HIM WHERE BULL HALSEY WAS.

WE HAD SOME PRETTY TIGHT SPOTS 'CAUSE I THINK THE TOP SPEED THROUGH SAN BERNARDINO STRAITS THAT TIME WAS TEN OR ELEVEN KNOTS. WE WENT THROUGH THERE PRETTY CLOSE TO 36 OR 38 KNOTS.

ED

THAT'S MOVING.

JAMES

IT TAKES A WHILE TO GO THROUGH SAN BERNARDINO STRAITS. YOU DON'T DO IT IN 30 MINUTES OR AN HOUR WE WENT RIGHT ON THROUGH THERE. HALSEY, BOY, WHEN HE SAID HE WAS GOING TO DO SOMETHING, HE DONE IT. HE SAID HIS CREWS WERE GOING TO DO SOMETHING, WELL, BOY THEY DONE IT.

ED

SO YOU WENT THROUGH THE STRAITS AND THEN WHAT?

JAMES

WE TURNED AROUND AND COME BACK THROUGH, OUT THROUGH 'EM AND WENT STRAIGHT ON TO, I GUESS ULITHI, AS FAR AS I KNOW. I DON'T KNOW WHETHER THEY SIDE

TRACKED US OR NOT.

SOME TIMES GOING THAT MUCH AND DOING THAT MUCH SHOOTING, YOU LOSE TRACK OF WHERE YOUR'E AT IN THE TIME LINE.

AT ONE TIME I WAS THE ONLY GUNNERS MATE IN THE FIVE INCH BATTERY THAT HAD EVER HAD SCHOOLING ON THE FIVE INCH MK38 GUNS. THE REST OF THEM WERE TAKEN OUT OF THE CORAL SEA BATTLE OR THE BATTLE OF MIDWAY OR THE BATTLE OF KULA GULF, OF THE OLD SAILORS. A LOT OF THEM HAD NEVER SEEN A FIVE INCH 38 GUN. I SPENT TEN MONTHS LEARNING ABOUT FIVE INCH 38 GUNS WHICH HAD NEW ELECTRO-HYDRAULIC OPERATORS AND COMPUTER CONTROLLED POINTING.

ED

WAS THIS A GOOD CREW THOUGH?

JAMES

OH, YOU BETCHA.

ED

TELL ME ABOUT THEM.

JAMES

I HAD SIX GUN LOADERS THAT I TRAINED. I PROBABLY MADE EVERY ONE OF THEM ABSOLUTELY DESPISE ME BUT, WHEN I GOT THROUGH WITH THEM BEFORE WE LEFT SAN DIEGO, BEFORE WE GOT TO SAN DIEGO GOING TO THE FLEET, THEY COULD STAND AND LOAD 600, ONE EVERY THREE SECONDS, WITHOUT STOPPING. ONE OF THEM LIVES RIGHT HERE IN FREDERICKSBURG, ONE OF THEM GUN LOADERS.

ED

IS THAT RIGHT? WHAT'S HIS NAME?

JAMES

JOSEPH GORDON. I TRIED TO GET A HOLD OF HIM BY TELEPHONE YESTERDAY BUT I COULDN'T GET HOLD OF HIM. I DON'T KNOW WHERE HE IS AT. I USUALLY GO SEE HIM EVERY TIME I COME DOWN HERE.

ED

MAYBE WE CAN LOOK HIM UP AND TALK TO HIM.

JAMES

HE IS A GREAT BIG GUY AND HE AFTER WORLD WAR II, HE WENT INTO THE MARINES

AND HE RETIRED OUT OF THE MARINES. HE IS A BIG GUY AND THE MOST HE EVER LOADED AT ONE FIRING WAS 600. HE COULD DO IT EVERY THREE SECONDS. EVERY LOADER I HAD COULD LOAD THAT GUN IN THREE SECONDS. THEY WOULD PUT OUT ONE EVERY THREE SECONDS. I ALWAYS SAID I HAD THE BEST GUN CREWS IN THE WHOLE NAVY.

ED

SOUNDS LIKE THEY TRULY HAD THE EXPERIENCE AND THEN YOU GAVE THEM THE TRAINING ON THE GUN.

JAMES

YEP. I KNEW THAT THE GUN IS THE LIFE OF A SHIP. IT'S A MATTER OF WHO PUTS OUT THE MOST SHELL IN THE SHORTEST LENGTH OF TIME, USUALLY.

ED

OK, SO WHAT HAPPENED THEN AFTER YOU CAME BACK FROM THAT LAST ROUND?

JAMES

WE WENT TO BOMBARDING IWO JIMA AND GUAM AND ROTA, TINIAN AND BONIN ISLAND UP IN THE BONINS, 'CAUSE WE WAS ABOUT, WE WAS RIGHT THERE WITH THE SAN JACINTO IN TASK FORCE 58. FACT IS HE WAS OUT OF OUR CARRIER GROUP WHEN GEORGE H.W. BUSH GOT SHOT DOWN. WE WAS PRETTY CLOSE. WE WAS CLOSE ENOUGH WE WAS LISTENING TO THE BATTLE OVER THE HEADSETS. LISTENING WHEN THEY WAS BOMBARDING NAHA. THAT WAS A BIG TOWN ON THE JIMA ISLANDS. I KNEW EXACTLY WHEN HE WENT DOWN 'CAUSE I HEARD HIM TELL THEM HE WAS GOING DOWN.

ED

IS THAT RIGHT? OUR 41ST PRESIDENT, YOU HEARD HIM GOING DOWN.

JAMES

HE SURE DOESN'T LOOK LIKE HE DID WHEN HE GOT PICKED UP.

ED

NONE OF US LOOK LIKE WE DID THAT LONG AGO.

JAMES

HE WAS JUST SIXTY SOME ODD DAYS OLDER THAN I AM. WE WERE JUST KIDS THEN. HE WAS A GOOD PILOT. HE DROPPED A LOT OF ARMS.

ED

AND YOU WERE IN TASK FORCE 34.

JAMES

THAT WAS THE FIRST ONE, FORCE 34, BUT FOR JUST A LITTLE WHILE AND THEN WE STAYED IN (TASK FORCE) 38, THEN 58. BULL HALSEY, WE WAS IN HIS TASK FORCE FIRST AND THEN WE WENT TO TASK GROUP 58 AND THAT WAS SPRUANCE'S. THAT SPRUANCE, HE WAS A REAL GOOD COMMANDER.

ED

BUT, WHEN YOU WERE IN 34 WITH HALSEY, TELL ME ABOUT THE FAMOUS OR THE INFAMOUS TRIP NORTH WHERE YOU.....

JAMES

THAT'S WHAT I WAS TELLING YOU A MINUTE AGO. WE WENT UP THERE RUNNING ON A GHOST YOU MIGHT SAY. THEY HAD AN ADMIRAL THAT BROUGHT A BUNCH OF EMPTY AND CRIPPLES AND WHATEVER DOWN THERE FOR A FALSE ALARM. AND ACTUALLY, WHEN HALSEY HEARD, WHEN WE WENT UP THERE, HE ACTUALLY BELIEVED, I'M SURE, HE BELIEVED HE WAS GOING AFTER KURITA'S FORCE. KURITA WAS COMING IN FROM THE SOUTH, SOUTHWEST, INSTEAD OF COMING DOWN FROM THE NORTH. AS SOON AS THEY FIGURED IT ALL OUT, AND THE RECCON PLANES FIGURED OUT WHAT THE SCOOP WAS THEN WE TURNED BACK SOUTH. WE DIDN'T MAKE CONTACT WITH THE NORTHERN FORCE, BUT WE COULD HAVE BECAUSE HIS 16 INCH GUNS WOULD HAVE ALMOST SHOT TO THEM. WE WERE THAT CLOSE BUT WE TURNED BACK. BUT, HE WAS AFTER THAT *YAMATO* AND THE *MUSASHI*.

ED

THE BIG ONES.

JAMES

YEAH, THE BIG ONES. HE KNEW THAT WAS THE MAINSTAY OF THE JAPANESE FLEET.

ED

THAT'S WHAT THEY HAD LEFT.

JAMES

THAT'S WHAT THE *YAMATO* WAS. THEY STRICTLY BELIEVED THAT IT WAS GOING TO TAKE THE WORLD. THEY SAID IT COULDN'T BE SUNK, BUT IT WAS. HIS TASK FORCE CARRIERS; HE HAD TWO SEGMENTS, ESCORT CARRIERS AND FIVE OR SIX BIG CARRIERS THAT FOUGHT THAT *YAMATO*. SOME OF THE PEOPLE TALK ABOUT THE *YAMATO* BEING 2 OR

3 HOURS IS NOT SO. THEY FOUGHT THAT WITH EVERY PLANE AND BOMB THAT THEY COULD GET OVER IT FOR 8 OR 9 HOURS, A LONG TIME.

ED

IT TOOK A LONG TIME TO PUT HER DOWN.

JAMES

THEY TOLD US, HER PILOTS TOLD US WHEN THEY GOT BACK, THEY SAID THEY WAS STILL A-SHOOTIN' THEIR ANTI-AIRCRAFT GUNS WHEN THEY WENT UNDER WATER. THEY WAS READY ENOUGH SO THEY HUNG IN THERE. THEY FOUGHT BACK. THAT WAS THE BIGGY. WHEN WE GOT RID OF THAT, WHY, THAT TURNED EVERYTHING LOOSE. THAT CHANGED EVERYTHING IN THE PACIFIC A GOOD BIT. THAT WAS THE DYING BREATH OF THE BIG BATTLESHIPS. FROM THEN ON, THE BIG BATTLESHIPS WASN'T WORTH A WHOLE LOT; SHORE BOMBARDMENT AND THAT WAS ABOUT ALL.

ED

THE AIRCRAFT CARRIER HAD TAKEN OVER AT THAT TIME AS THE PRIMARY SHIP.

JAMES

THE AIRCRAFT CARRIER HAD THEM OUTGUNNED AND MORE SPEED, AND HAD MORE STRIKING POWER. THAT STRIKING POWER IS WHAT YOU GOT TO HAVE IF YOU GO INTO BATTLE.

ED

TELL ME WHAT YOUR OPINION IS OF ALL OF THIS CONTROVERSY ABOUT BULL HALSEY AND WHETHER THAT WAS HIS MISTAKE THAT LED TO FLEET DIVERSION.

JAMES

THAT WAS A MISTAKE ON SEVERAL PARTS. HE ACTUALLY THOUGHT THAT HE WAS GOING UP THERE TO MEET KURITO AND THE *YAMATO* AND THE *MUSASHI* AND ALL OF THEM BIG CARRIERS THEY HAD. THAT'S WHO HE THOUGHT HE WAS GOING TO FIGHT----- SEE, WE DIDN'T HAVE NO INFORMATION ON THEM FOR TWO WEEKS BEFORE THAT. THEY HAD HAD PLENTY OF TIME TO GONE UP THERE BUT CAME TO FIND OUT IT WAS A FAKE FORCE. IT WAS A DECOY AND THAT'S ALL IT WAS FOR WAS TO GET HALSEY'S TASK FORCE OUT OF THE WAY IN LEYTE GULF, THEN THEY COULD BEAT THEM LITTLE DESTROYERS AND JEEP CARRIERS UP THEN, YOU SEE; THOSE SEASONED JAPANESE NAVY MEN. THEY WAS GOOD. LET ME TELL YOU, THEY WAS GOOD.

ED

WHAT WAS THE OPINION THEN AFTER TASK FORCE 34 CAME BACK AND ATTEMPTED TO INTERCEPT THE JAPANESE FLEET?

JAMES

I DON'T REALLY KNOW. OF COURSE AFTER THAT ONE NIGHT GOING THROUGH SAN BARNADINO STRAIT, WE JUST MORE OR LESS FORGOT ABOUT IT.

ED

THERE WAS A LOT OF TALK ABOUT IT WAS A BIG MISTAKE AND ALL THIS BUSINESS ABOUT -----

JAMES

I NEVER HEARD NOTHING LIKE THAT 'TIL 40 YEARS LATER.

ED

OH, IS THAT RIGHT? ALL THIS FAMOUS "WHERE IS THIS TASK FORCE?" NIMITZ AND EVERYTHING?

JAMES

I WAS THINKING BACK AND I THINK IT WAS WAY UP IN THE 80's BEFORE I HEARD THAT THE FIRST TIME. WHERE IS TASK FORCE 34? WELL, WE KNEW WHERE IT WAS. THEY GIVE HALSEY KIND OF A BUM STEAR CAUSE THAT WAS ONE FIGHTING MAN. HE WAS GOOD AND SPRUANCE WAS GOOD TOO. SPRUANCE WAS A LOT MILDER, NICER, BULL HALSEY WAS ROUGH.

ED

HE WAS A BULLDOG HUH?

JAMES

I WAS SITTING THERE ON THE MOUNT ONE DAY, NICE, PRETTY SUNSHINY WEATHER, WE WERE JUST LAZING ALONG. YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE, CALM WEATHER AND PRETTY AND THAT EARPHONE CRACKLED FROM CIC ON THE *MISSOURI* 'ANNABELL BAKER, YOU ARE TWO DEGREES OFF COURSE. I'LL GIVE YOU TWO MINUTES TO GET ON COURSE OR I'LL TRAIN OUT MY MAIN BATTERY. I'M GOING TO SINK YOU." WE LOOKED OVER THERE AND THERE ARE THEM 16 INCH GUNS COME AROUND POINTING AT US THAT LEUTENANT ON OUR BRIDGE, HE GOT THINGS IN HIGH GEAR, LET ME TELL YOU.

ED

HE STRAIGHTENED IT OUT? EVEN WITH A CROOKED BOW.

JAMES

HE WOULDN'T PUT UP WITH NOTHING, BULL HALSEY WOULDN'T. HE WAS AN OVERBEARING, HE WAS JUST STRICT. HE WANTED DISCIPLINE AND I HEARD HIM DO THE *PITTSBURGH* THE SAME WAY. THAT WAS A HEAVY CRUISER, AN OLD ONE THAT HAD COME UP TO THAT TASK FORCE BEFORE THE BATTLE OF SURAGIO STRAIT. HE DONE IT THE SAME WAY. HE SAID, 'I'M GOING TO SINK YOU. YOU EITHER GET ON COURSE OR I'M GOING TO SINK YOU.'" WHEN THEM 16 INCH TURRETS STARTED TURNING, COMING AT YOU, YOU PAID ATTENTION.

ED

DURING THE LEYTE GULF CAMPAIGN, WERE YOU BOTHERED AT ALL WITH KAMIKAZES? TELL ME ABOUT THAT.

JAMES

OH BOY. I'LL TELL YOU NOW, THERE WERE SOMETIMES YOU COULD LOOK UP AND YOU SEE 30 OF THEM, 25 OR 30 IN THE SKY AT ONE TIME. THEY WOULD BE A COMIN' FROM EVERY DIRECTION TOO. YOU NEVER DID KNOW WHICH ONE WAS GOING TO COME AT YOU, THERE WASN'T JUST ONE OR TWO, THERE WAS BUNCHES OF THEM.

ED

AND THEY SEARCHED OUT, I GUESS, THE BATTLEWAGONS.

JAMES

YEAH, THEY HUNTED THE BIGGEST SHIPS AND THE CARRIERS WERE THE MAIN THING THEY WANTED TO HIT. THEY DIDN'T CARE TOO MUCH ABOUT THE BATTLESHIPS AT THAT TIME BUT THEY WANTED THOSE CARRIERS. THEY WANTED TO DO AWAY WITH THEM AIRPLANES. THEM AIRPLANES WERE EATING THEIR SACK LUNCH.

ED

WHAT ABOUT THE *MIAMI* ?

JAMES

WE HAD TWO OLD NAVY FIGHTER PILOTS THAT FLEW OUR KINGFISHERS AND LATER WE GOT SC-1,"SEAHAWKS" FOR RECCON, CRUISER PLANES, FLOATPLANES. THEY FLEW RESCUE, THEY PICKED UP GUYS OUT OF THE WATER ONE AT A TIME LIKE HELICOPTERS DO NOW DAYS. THE WOULD LAND THEM OLD KINGFISHERS AND BRING THEM BACK TO THE SHIP, THEN THEY WOULD PUT THEM ON A DESTROYER, TAKE THEM TO A HOSPITAL SHIP OR TO A TASK FORCE FLAG SHIP OR SOMETHING.

ED

DID THE KAMIKAZES EVER SEARCH OUT THE *MIAMI* AND ATTACK HER DIRECTLY?

JAMES

WELL, YEAH, THEY WOULD HAVE. THEY WOULD HAVE HIT IT. IF EVERYTHING WAS QUIET THEY WENT AFTER THE CARRIERS, THEN THE BATTLESHIPS AND US IF THEY COULDN'T GET TO A BIGGER TARGET OR IF THEY WERE HIT OR OUT OF FUEL.

ED

SIDE TWO: JAMES SAUNDERS. GO AHEAD JAMES

JAMES

THE PICKET BOATS, THAT'S WHAT WE CALL THOSE DESTROYERS THAT WERE OUT AWAY FROM THE RADAR GUARD YOU MIGHT SAY. MOST OF THE TIME, THEY WAS OUR EARLY WARNING, YOU MIGHT SAY.

THE JAPANESE ESPECIALLY WANTED TO GET RID OF THEM AND THEY SUNK A BUNCH OF THEM.

ED

I KNOW THEY TOOK A LOT PUNISHMENT.

JAMES

IN THAT BATTLE OF LEYTE GULF AND SURIGUA STRAIT, NOW I HEARD SOME GUYS OVER THERE YESTERDAY TALKING ABOUT THE KAMIKAZE. A LOT OF PEOPLE THINK IT IS WAY UP AT THE END, WHEN WE LANDED AT OIKINAWA, BEFORE WE GOT ANY KAMIKAZES. NOT SO. THEY WAS AT LEAST THREE THOUSAND OF THEM I GUESS, IN THE PHILLIPINES. EVERY ONE OF THEM WERE DEDICATED PILOTS THAT WAS GOING TO BLOW YOU UP IF HE COULD.

ED

WHAT WAS THE CLOSEST CALL THE *MIAMI* HAD. WITH WHAT?

JAMES

WELL, WE GOT A 500 POUND BOMB ONE DAY ABOUT 75 OR 65 FEET OFF OF OUR PORT SIDE. THAT CRUISER BOUNCED ABOUT FOUR FOOT WHEN THAT BOMB WENT OFF. THAT'S AS CLOSE AS WE GOT.

ED

THAT WASN'T A KAMIKAZE AIRCRAFT. THAT WAS JUST A BOMB.

JAMES

THAT WAS JUST A BOMB. WE WOULD HAVE GOT HIT ONE DAY BUT WE DIDN'T. WE HAD A PLANE THAT I GUESS THERE WAS THIRTY COME IN THAT DAY. THE ONE THAT I WAS SHOOTING AT, WE PICKED HIM AND WE STARTED SHOOTING AT HIM AT 13,000 YARDS. HE DIDN'T GO UP ANY AND HE DIDN'T GO DOWN ANY. HE DIDN'T MOVE FROM SIDE TO SIDE, HE DIDN'T CHANGE SPEED AND COME IN JUST AS STRAIGHT. THAT PLANE WHEN I FIRST SAW HIM WAS JUST A BLACK DOT IN THE SKY, JUST EYEBALL LEVEL TO ME AND I WAS ABOUT 36 OR 38 FEET ABOVE THE WATER LINE. HE COME THAT A WAY FIRST 13,000 YARDS. HE WOULD HAVE GOT US. HE GOT ABOUT 7500 YARDS FROM US AND EVERY GUN ON THAT SHIP JUST QUIT FIRING, IT JUST SOUNDED LIKE NOTHING, EVERYTHING JUST GOT QUIET AS A MOUSE FOR 3 OR 4 SECONDS. DIRECTLY ONE GUN WENT BOOM AND IT HIT HIM RIGHT STRAIGHT IN THE PROPELLER HUB AND BLOWED HIM ALL OVER THAT OCEAN. HE WAS IN LESS THAN 50 YARDS OF US. IT WAS ALL THAT SHRAPNEL. THAT GUN HAD A HOT LOAD WHEN WE STOPPED SHOOTING AND THAT ROUND HAD "COOKED OFF", WENT OFF ON ITS OWN WITHOUT A TRIGGER PULLED.

ED

FIFTY YARDS FROM THE SHIP WHEN SOMEBODY FINALLY HIT THE PROPELLER.

JAMES

HE WOULD HAVE HIT JUST ABOUT THE FIVE INCH UPPER HANDLING ROOMS ON THE BRIDGE 'CAUSE HE WAS COMING RIGHT STRAIGHT TO THE BASE OF THAT BRIDGE. 'CAUSE THEY WAS RIGHT UNDER THE BRIDGE. HE WOULD HAVE HIT PROBABLY IN THEM HANDLING ROOMS.

ED

YOU WOULD NOT BE SITTING HERE TALKING TO US TODAY IF HE HAD MADE THAT LAST 75 YARDS.

JAMES

NO. THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN AT LEAST FORTY OF US IF HE HAD HIT THAT, THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN AT LEAST FORTY MEN THAT WOULDN'T HAVE COME THROUGH IT.

ED

HOW DID EVERYBODY FEEL AFTER THAT, AFTER THEY SAW THAT ONE, THAT KAMIKAZE GO DOWN?

JAMES

THEY PRACTALLY WERE IN SHOCK WHEN THEY DID.

ED

SOME CHEERING GOING ON, HUH?

JAMES

BUT IF ANY LITTLE GLITCH HAD HAPPENED, AND HELD OFF ANOTHER THIRTY THREE OR FOUR SECONDS, HE WOULD HAVE GOT US. THAT'S ALL HE LIKED. HE WAS CLOSE, I MEAN. I COULD SEE HIM. I WAS SITTING WHERE I COULD SEE THAT PILOT. BOY, HE WAS HEADED STRAIGHT FOR US. HE HAD DONE IT FOR 13,000 YARDS. HE DIDN'T INTEND TO MOVE AROUND ANY. HE WASN'T HUNTING ANOTHER SHIP. HE DONE HAD HIS EYE ONE US.

ED

HE DIDN'T TAKE ANY EVASIVE ACTION EITHER. HE WAS JUST COMING IN STRAIGHT.

JAMES

JUST AS STRAIGHT AS AN ARROW. ONE DAY OUT THERE, WE GOT A BOGEY, UNIDENTIFIED AIRCRAFT, 85 MILES FROM US COMING IN. THAT'S WHEN THEY FIRST STARTED THOSE KAMIKAZES IN THE PHILLIPINES. OUR COMBAT AIR PATROL AND THE *BENNINGTON* GOT WORD OF BOGEYS INBOUND. THE *BENNINGTON* WAS LOADED WITH MARINES. THEY HAD REPAIRED IT AND THEY WAS FLYING AIRCRAFT AGAIN.

ED

THE *BENNINGTON* IS A CRUISER?

JAMES

NO, IT IS A HEAVY, BIG CARRIER. EVERY PILOT ON IT WAS A MARINE. THEY FLEW CORSAIRS INSTEAD OF HELLCATS. THEY GOT THE WORD THAT THERE WERE BOGEYS AND TOOK OFF AS SOON AS THEY HEARD. THERE WAS 18 BOGEYS AND THEY SHOT EVERY ONE OF THEM DOWN. EVERY ONE OF THEM WAS WOMEN FLYING NAVY BOMBERS; REPLENISHING MINDANAO. THEY WAS GOING TO SOME AIRFIELD DOWN THERE ON MINDINAO.

THEM FIGHTERS SHOT EVERY ONE OF THEM DOWN AND EVERY ONE OF THEM WAS WOMEN, FERRY PILOTS. THAT WAS NORTH AND A LITTLE BIT WEST OF SAM MAR, WHERE THAT HAPPENED. THEY WAS COMING DOWN FROM FORMOSA. THAT'S WHERE THEY WAS COMING FROM, I'M SURE. THOSE CARRIER PILOTS SHOT 'EM DOWN AND THERE WAS 18 OF THEM, THEY SAID.

ED

THEN YOU MENTIONED DUTY AT IWO. TELL ME A LITTLE MORE ABOUT THAT.

JAMES

WE GOT THERE AT IWO JIMA AND THE 7TH FLEET AND THE 5TH FLEET JUST CIRCLED IWO JIMA FOR ABOUT TWO WEEKS AND THEY JUST FIRED ALL KINDS OF SHELLS AT THE ISLAND. THE 7TH FLEET WAS THE PEARL HARBOR BATTLESHIPS THAT WERE SUNK AT PEARL HARBOR AND THEY JUST ANCHORED THEM AROUND THE ISLAND. THEY DONE THE SAME WAY AT OKINAWA LATER. ANYHOW, THEY JUST SET THERE AND EMPTIED THEIR MAGAZINES. AN AMMUNITION SHIP WOULD COME UP, LOAD THEM UP AGAIN AND EVERYBODY WAS SHOOTING. WHEN THEY LANDED ON IWO JIMA, IT WAS ABSOLUTELY NOTHING. IT WAS OLBITERATED. IT WAS NOTHING BUT A SAND BED. THOSE JAPS COME OUT OF THAT SAND LIKE YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE WHEN THEM SHORE BOMBARDMENTS QUIT. THAT'S WHEN THEM LANDING CRAFT BEGAN GETTING THERE. THEY KILLED A BUNCH OF BOYS.

ED

WHERE WAS THE *MIAMI* WHEN THE LANDINGS TOOK PLACE.

JAMES

WE WAS SOUTH, SEVEN THOUSAND YARDS OFF THE BEACH. WE HAD TO STAY OUT WHERE THE WATER WAS DEEP ENOUGH FOR US TO MANEUVER. THE DESTROYERS WERE IN AT 3,000 YARDS. WE WERE 7,000, THE BATTLESHIPS WAS OUT THERE ABOUT 18 MILES. WHEN THEM BATTLESHIPS WOULD FIRE A BIG SALVO, YOU COULD HEAR THEM SAY, THEY WOULD GIVE THEIR CODE NAME AND THEN THERE WOULD BE LISTENERS AIRPLANE, THERE WOULD BE A SPOTTER PLANE SCORING THE IMPACT. HE'D TELL WHERE IT HIT AND THOSE MAPS WAS LAID OUT ON A GRID, FIRE CONTROL MAPS LIKE A BINGO CARD. THAT'S WHAT YOU DESTROYED, THE GRID. YOU DIDN'T SHOOT AT A BUILDING OR A PART OF THIS OR THAT, YOU FIRED ON TO THAT.

THE BATTLESHIPS WOULD SAY, "THE NEXT SALVO IS ON THE WAY. IT WILL BE THERE IN ABOUT 23 SECONDS." YOU JUST KEEP WATCHING AND DIRECTLY THREE OF THEM BUGGERS COME OVER JUST LIKE A BOX CAR COMING OVER YOU.

ED

SO, YOU COULD PHYSICALLY SEE THEM?

JAMES

YEAH, AND SOMETIMES YOU COULD HEAR THEM IF THE WIND WAS RIGHT. THERE WASN'T VERY MUCH ELSE GOING ON.

ED

AND THEY WERE PRETTY ACCURATE?

JAMES

OH, DEAD ON. MAN, I'M TELLING YOU, THAT BATTLESHIP *MISSOURI*, *WISCONSIN*, *SOUTH DAKOTA*, *NEW JERSEY*, *IOWA* ESPECIALLY THE *IOWA*. AT 20-30 MILES THEY CAN PUT ONE ON YOUR DINNER PLATE. THEY WAS THAT GOOD. I TOLD THEM, MY CREW, I MAY NOT HAVE HIT AT 12 MILES, I MIGHT NOT HIT A WINDOW ON THE SECOND SHOT, BUT THE THIRD ONE WOULD GO THROUGH IT. THEM OLD BIG GUNS, THEY INSTEAD OF COUNTING YARDS, THEY WENT BY MILES.

ED

ISN'T THAT SOMETHING? YOU WERE THERE WITH YOUR FIVE INCH?

JAMES

FIVE INCH 38. AT THAT TIME I WAS FIRST CLASS GUNNERS MATE AND I HAD THREE FIVE INCH MOUNTS, THREE FORWARD. THE NEXT GUY UP OVER ME THEN WAS DOWN IN THE CIC.

ED

WHAT KIND OF FIRE CONTROL DID YOU HAVE THEN FOR AIMING THESE? DID YOU HAVE RADAR?

JAMES

YEAH, THEY HAD RADAR. WE HAD VISUAL OR I COULD DO IT FROM THE TOP OF THE MOUNT. MOST OF THE TIME, WE JUST PUNCHED THE BUTTON THAT SWITCHED TO WHAT WE CALLED AUTOMATIC, AND THOSE GUNS AUTOMATICALLY FOLLOWED THE RADAR, FIRE CONTROL RADAR. THE CIC THEN, OFF THE COMPUTERS, THEY DONE ALL THE SHOOTING. THAT WAY, THAT ELIMINATES ANY HUMAN ERROR.

ED

YOU PUNCHED IN CIC. EXPLAIN THAT A LITTLE MORE.

JAMES

COMBAT INFORMATION CENTER. THAT'S THE BRAINS OF ALL THE FIGHTING ABILITY ON A SHIP, IS THE CIC. THAT IS WHERE ALL OF IT COMES FROM. ALL THE COMPUTERS IS IN THERE. ALL YOUR SPEEDS, COURSES, AIN'T NO DIFFERENCE HOW MANY OF THEM THERE ARE, THEY ALL COME OUT OF CIC.

ED

AFTER THE MARINES GOT ON IWO, THEN WHAT?

JAMES

WE WENT BACK TO ULITHI AND THAT'S WHEN WE STARTED ON WORKING ON THE BONIN ISLANDS. TWICE BEFORE THAT, THEY LANDED ON OKINAWA. TWICE, WE WENT UP AND BOMBARDED IN THE RYŪKYŪ ISLANDS. THAT IS THE SOUTHERN PART OF JAPAN, THE ISLANDS SOUTH OF JAPAN. WE BOMBARDED THEM THERE AND MADE SEVERAL AIR STRIKES UP IN THERE TOO. WHEN WE FIRST STARTED BOMBARDMENT ON OKINAWA, WE DIDN'T GET VERY MANY KAMIKAZES. BUT, MAN, WHENEVER THEY STARTED THEM LANDING BOATS AND THEM TROOP TRANSPORTS COMING IN THERE, THEN THEM KAMIKAZES GOT BUSY AND COME OUT OF THE WOOD WORK. THE WAY WE KNEW WAS THEY HAD ABOUT 7,000 OF THEM. WE KNEW WHAT TO EXPECT AT OKINAWA. WE HAD BEEN THROUGH IT IN THE PHILLIPINES.

ED

SO, HOW FAR OFFSHORE WERE YOU AT OKINAWA WHEN YOU WERE BOMBARDING?

JAMES

I'D GUESS WE WERE 7-8,000 YARDS. USUALLY, THAT WAS ABOUT THE RANGE FOR US. MY BATTERY, WE TOOK CARE OF ARMY BARRACKS THAT WE COULD SEE. THE RADIO STATION, FRIEGHT TRAINS AND THE LIKE. I GOT ME A FRIEGHT TRAIN IN SAIPAN COMING OUT OF A SUGAR FACTORY. WE WAS CLOSE ENOUGH WE COULD SHOT VISUALLY, THE GUNNERS MATES, IN CHARGE OF THE MAPS, COULD ACTUALY SEE AND TELL WHAT THEY WAS SHOOTING AT.

ED

WERE YOU WORKING ON A GRID SYSTEM FOR BOMBARDMENT LIKE YOU WERE ON IWO?

JAMES

OH, NO, NO. THAT LONG RANGE STUFF WAS GRID WORK. WE HAD INDIVIDUAL TARGETS. THEY SAID, "ANYTHING PERTAINING TO SUPPLY AND DEMAND OF AN ARMY". ANY MILITARY TARGET, ANY RADIO STATION, ANY HEADQUARTERS OF ANY KIND. WE WAS SHOOTING AT SAIPAN, WE COME AROUND TO THAT BIGGIST TOWN THERE. THERE WAS A BIG SUGAR FACTORY THERE AND A RAILROAD GOES THROUGH IT AND THERE. THERE WAS A SUGAR TRAIN PULLING OUT OF THAT SUGAR FACTORY WHEN WE WENT BY. I CALLED SKY FORWARD AND ASKED FOR PERMISSION TO FIRE ON THAT SUGAR TRAIN. I DONE HAD THE

GUNS LOADED AND TRAINED, THEY KNEW WHAT WAS FIXIN' TO HAPPEN. THAT OFFICER ON SKY FORWARD WATCH SAID I HAD PERMISSION TO FIRE AND HE SAID, "FIRE AT "AND HE DIDN'T SAY WILL BEFORE I FIRED. WE HIT IT AND ABOUT 50 YARDS OF THEM RAILROAD RAILS WENT STRAIGHT UP AND THAT ENGINE ROLLED JUST LIKE A FOOTBALL FOR ABOUT 40 FEET. TWO OF THEM FIVE INCH SHELLS HIT IT JUST ABOUT 5 OR 6 FOOT FROM THE TRACK AND I MEAN IT DID SOME STOPPING.

THEN WE WENT AHEAD. WE DIDN'T LEAVE NOTHIN' STANDING UP OF THAT BIG SUGAR FACTORY. WE DIDN'T LEAVE NOTHIN' STANDING UP AT ALL, WE KNOCKED EVERY BIT OF IT DOWN.

ED

HOW LONG WERE YOU BOMBARDING THEN BEFORE LANDINGS BEGAN ON OKNAWA?

JAMES

WE GOT THERE AND JUST ABOUT DEPLETED OUR AMMUNITION. SOME TIMES WE COULD DO IT IN A DAY, SOME TIMES IT WOULD BE A WEEK. IT DEPENDED ON THE CONDITIONS AND EVERYTHING. I THINK WE TOOK ON AMMUNITION ABOUT 4 OR 5 TIMES. WE WAS UP THERE ABOUT 20 SOME ODD DAYS I IMAGINE, BOMBARDING BEFORE THEY LANDED.

ED

A LONG TIME.

JAMES

WHEN THEY LANDED ON SAIPAN, WE WAS CLOSE ENOUGH WE COULD SEE THAT.

ED

ON OKINAWA YOU MEAN?

JAMES

ON SAIPAN.

ED

OK. ON SAIPAN?

JAMES

AND I SAW FOUR THOUSAND, TWO HUNDRED SOME ODD MARINES DIE IN TWO HOURS.

ED

YOU WERE CLOSE ENOUGH TO SEE IT?

JAMES

YEP. BOY, YOU TALK ABOUT THEM LANDING CRAFT. THERE WASN'T A WHOLE LOT OF COVER WHEN THEY WENT ASHORE WHEN HOWITZERS AND FIELD ARTILLERY GOT THROUGH WITH THEM. THEY' D BLOW THE THINGS TO PIECES.

ED

I 'LL BET THAT WASN'T FUN TO WATCH THAT. AFTER OKINAWA, THEN WHAT?

JAMES

THEN WE LEFT, THAT WAS ALL WE COULD TAKE, THE BEARINGS ON THE SCREWS AND THE RUDDER WE WORN OUT AND WE COULD NOT KEEP A STRAIGHT COURSE. THEY SENT US BACK TO THE STATES FOR REPAIR. WE COME BY PEARL HARBOR. WE COME BY PEARL HARBOR, WE PICKED UP PASSENGERS THAT WERE GETTING DISCHARGED AND BROUGHT THEM BACK TO LONG BEACH, CALIFORNIA. WE WENT TO DRY DOCK AND THEY HAD TO REBUILD THAT OLD CRUISER 'CAUSE WE WERE WORN OUT. IT WAS WORE OUT FROM ONE END TO THE OTHER. THEY DONE A BUNCH OF YARD WORK ON IT. WE WAS IN LONG BEACH ABOUT 3 OR 4 MONTHS I GUESS.

ED

DID YOU THINK YOU WERE GOING TO BE PART OF THE TASK FORCE THAT INVADED THE JAPANESE ISLANDS, BECAUSE THAT WAS THE NEXT STEP?

JAMES

WE WOULD HAVE BEEN, BECAUSE BEFORE THEY SIGNED THE PEACE TREATY, WE HAD FINISHED OUR REBUILDING ON THE WEST COAST AND THEY SENT US BACK TO GUAM. WE TOOK AN ADMIRAL ALONG. THEY FLAGGED US C.T. DURGIN AND HE WENT WITH US, D U R G I N, DURGIN. HE WAS A REAR ADMIRAL IN THE NAVY. HE MADE THE FLAG. HE USED THE *MIAMI* FOR HIS FLAG. OF COURSE, IT WAS THE ONLY SHIP IN THE FORCE, BUT ANYHOW, THEY SENT US TO YUKOSUKA AND THEN TO TRUK AND HE HAD A BUNCH OF TECHNICAL WORK AND A CREW THAT WENT WITH HIM, THEY HAD TO DO. OUR JOB, THE MILITARY PART OF IT, WE TOOK ALL THE LIVE AMMUNITION AND DESTROYED IT IN THE LAGOON AT TRUK.

ED

WHERE WERE YOU WHEN YOU HEARD ABOUT THE ATOMIC BOMB BEING DROPPED? WAS THAT A BIG PIECE OF NEWS FOR YOU GUYS WHEN THAT HAPPENED?

JAMES

THAT WAS , LET'S SEE, THAT WAS IN AUGUST. THAT WAS BEFORE WE COME BACK TO THE STATES.

ED

OK. THAT WAS BEFORE YOU WENT BACK. WHERE WERE YOU THEN WHEN YOU HEARD ABOUT ----?

JAMES

I DON'T KNOW. WE WERE ABOUT A THOUSAND, SOMEWHERE ABOUT A THOUSAND, OR TWELVE HUNDRED MILES SOUTH OF HIROSHIMA. I REMEMBER THAT LITTLE, TSUNAMI OR WHATEVER THEY CALL THEM FOR THAT HIROSHIMA BLAST. WE WAS SOMETHING LIKE 1000 MILES FROM THERE. IT WAS ABOUT 12-15 FEET HIGH WHEN IT HIT US. TSUNAMI OR WHATEVER THEY CALLED IT.

ED

IT WAS JUST A WAVE, YEAH.

JAMES

WE CALLED IT A TIDAL WAVE. IT WAS PRETTY GOOD SIZED WHEN IT HIT US. I DON'T KNOW HOW FAR IT WENT. I IMAGINE A LONG WAY.

ED

THEN WE HAD, YOU KNOW, THE PEACE TREATY BEING SIGNED IN TOKYO HARBOR. WHERE WAS THE *MIAMI* WHEN THT HAPPENED?

JAMES

WE WAS ANCHORED ABOUT 3 OR 4 MILES FROM WHERE THEY BURNED THE *NAGATA* IN YOKOSUKA. WE TOOK A HIGGINS BOAT. OUR LIBERTY PARTY, I HAD SHORE PATROL 2 OR 3 DAYS AFTER THEY SIGNED THE DEAL. WE HAD TO RIDE A HIGGINS BOAT OVER AN HOUR TO GET TO THE DOCK IN TOKYO.

ED

WHAT DID THINGS LOOK LIKE WHEN YOU LANDED THERE?

JAMES

THEY WASN'T NOTHING THERE. IT WAS JUST ABSOLUELY RUINED. IT WASN'T NOTHING THERE. THE STINKINGEST MESS IF THERE EVER WAS ONE. THAT TOKYO RIVER

RUNNING JUST AS BLACK AS TAR. THEM KIDS BY THE THOUSANDS AND THOUSANDS LINED THE BANK OF THAT RIVER FISHING, CATCHING LITTLE FISH ABOUT 2 OR 3 INCHES LONG. THEM LITTLE OLD FISH AND ATE THEM RAW OFF THE HOOK. ONE CAUGHT A FISH AND THE DANGEST FIGHT YOU EVER SAW IN YOUR LIFE. ANOTHER ONE TRIED TO TAKE IT AWAY FROM HIM. THEY WAS HUNGRY.

ED

LIKE SEA GULLS FIGHTING OVER SOMETHING.

JAMES

THE SAME WAY.

ED

THEY WERE IN DESPEATE STRAITS. YOU HAD SHORE PATROL THEN?

JAMES

I DIDN'T LIKE THE WAY THEM JAPANESE WERE A-DOING. THEY HAD FISHING BOATS OUT ALL THAT TIME. THEY CAUGHT FISH. WHEN THE FISHING BOATS GOT TO THE DOCK, THEY CLEANED THEM FISH. THE MEN GOT THE MEAT. THE WOMEN AND THE KIDS GOT THE EYEBALLS AND THE ENTRAILS.

ED.

THEY DIDN'T LEAVE ANYTHING HUH?

JAMES

NO. THEY ATE THEM ALL. THE MEN THEY GOT ALL THE MEAT. THE WOMEN AND THE KIDS, THEY ATE THE EYEBALLS. I SEEN SOLID FISH EYEBALLS, ENTRAILS THAT THEY WOULD SELL FOR 20,000 YEN APIECE TO EAT. IT WAS A STINKING MESS. IT WAS, I GUESS, I SAW FOUR OR FIVE DIEHARD SOON AS I HIT THE BEACH. I HIRED A KID, JAPANESE KID THAT COULD TALK GOOD ENGLISH AND HE WAS ABOUT 10 YEARS OLD, I GUESS, FOR A GUIDE, AN INTERPRETER. AND A HELPER. JUST STRICTLY TO HELP ME AND MY MAN. I HAD ANOTHER MAN WITH ME. HE'D SAY, "B-29 COME OVER AND GO BOOM WHEN THREE THOUSAND PEOPLE WOULD BE PILED UP OUT THERE, THREE OR FOUR THOUSAND IN ONE BUILDING SITE. JUST BIG PILES OF PEOPLE.

ED

LIKE CORDWOOD.

JAMES

YEAH. THEY HAD BEEN THERE FOR MONTHS. SOME OF THEM 2 AND 3 MONTHS. THAT WAS THE STINKENIST MESS YOU EVER SAW IN YOUR LIFE. I NEVER WAS AS GLAD TO GET OUT OF A PLACE IN MY LIFE AS I WAS TOKYO.

ED

HOW LONG WERE YOU THERE?

JAMES

EIGHT HOURS. ALL THAT LONG.

ED

HOW MANY DAYS WERE YOU THERE?

JAMES

JUST ONE DAY I WAS THERE.

ED

THAT WAS ENOUGH FOR YOU?

JAMES

FIFTY YEARS LATER, NOT THE BOY THAT'S WITH ME TODAY, BUT THE ONE JUST YOUNGER THAN HIM RETIRED OUT OF THE NAVY TOO. HE WAS ON AN AIRCRAFT CARRIER, THE *ORISKANY* AND THEN LATER, THE *MIDWAY*. THEY HAD TO PULL INTO YOKOSUKA TO THE DRY DOCK AND THEY REDONE THE *MIDWAY*. HE COME HOME ON LEAVE AND I WENT BACK OVER THERE WITH HIM AND SAW TOKYO FIFTY YEARS LATER.

ED

A LITTLE DIFFERENT?

JAMES

DIDN'T RECOGNIZE IT. HE HAD TO POINT OUT THE IMPERIAL PALACE. I WALKED RIGHT BY IT WHEN I WAS ORIGINALLY OVER THERE.

ED

THE IMPERIAL PALACE WAS NEVER HIT.

JAMES

NOT A SCRATCH.

ED

BUT EVERYTHING AROUND IT WAS IN ROUGH SHAPE.

JAMES

THE AMERICAN HOTEL OUT THERE SOUTH OF THE PALACE WAS WEST OF THE PALACE, THERE WASN'T A WINDOW BROKE IN IT. FOR A MILE AND A HALF IN EVERY DIRECTION, THERE WAS NOTHING STICKING UP. THEY BOMBED IT, I MEAN PLUM TO THE GROUND, CLEAN AS A WHISTLE ALL ROUND IT. THEY DIDN'T EVER BREAK A WINDOW IN THAT HOTEL.

ED

THAT'S ACCURATE BOMBING.

JAPAN

THAT WAS THE HOTEL THAT THE DIGNITARIES FROM THE UNITED STATES STAYED IN WHEN THEY WENT TO JAPAN BEFORE THE WAR. THEY LEFT IT. THEY DID NOT TEAR IT UP. IT WAS THE ONLY BUILDING WITHIN A MILE AND A HALF LEFT STANDING. RIGHT ACROSS THE STREET IT WAS COMPLETELY GONE. I DON'T SEE HOW THEM BIG BOMBERS, THEY DONE THAT. THAT MUCH PRECISION.

ED

SOME OF THAT MAY HAVE BEEN FIRES THAT BURNED UP -----

JAMES

YEAH, LOTS OF THAT. MOST OF TOKYO I WOULD SAY WAS FIRE BOMED, INCINDIARIES. I SAW LOTS OF FLOORS WHERE THOSE INCINDIARY BOMBS HIT AND THEY ARE ABOUT THIS BIG AROUND, ABOUT THAT LONG. WHEN THEY HIT, THEY WERE FLATTENED AND THEY STICK AND THEY JUST BURN A HOLE THROUGH THAT CONCRETE FLOOR. WHEN IT BURNS OUT, IT WILL JUST QUIT BURNING. IF THERE IS ANYTHING UNDER THAT CONCRETE, THEY'LL GO THROUGH THAT MUCH CONCRETE.

ED

TWELVE INCHES OF CONCRETE

JAMES

IT WOULD JUST BURN A HOLE RIGHT THROUGH IT. MOST OF TOKYO BURNED. A LOT OF IT WAS TORE UP WITH BOMBS TOO.

ED.

AFTER YOUR EIGHT HOURS OF DUTY IN TOKYO, THEN IT WAS BACK TO THE SHIP AND THEN WHAT?

JAMES

THEY SENT, US TO GUAM. OF COURSE, EVERYTHING WAS WINDING DOWN THEN, FLEETWISE. THEY SENT US TO GUAM AND WE PICKED UP 485 PASSENGERS AND BROUGHT THEM STRAIGHT TO LONG BEACH TERMINAL ISLAND IN LONG BEACH, CALIFORNIA, SAN PEDRO. THAT'S WHERE I LEFT THE SHIP. I STAYED THERE AND GOT A DRAFT COMING TO TEXAS. THEY PUT ME IN CHARGE OF A DRAFT OF DISCHARGED PEOPLE THAT WAS GOING TO GET DISCHARGED AT CAMP WALLACE, HOUSTON. I HAD 485 MEN THAT I HAD TO GATHER UP. TOOK ME ABOUT A MONTH AND A HALF TO GET THEM GATHERED UP, A TRAIN LOAD OF THEM AND BROUGHT THEM TO CAMP WALLACE AND THEY DISCHARGED THEM. THAT'S WHEN I TOOK MY BIG SEVERENCE. THEY SAID, 'YOU WANT TO SHIP OVER?' I SAID, "I WANT TO SHIP OUT THROUGH THAT GATE JUST AS QUICK AS I CAN GET OUT." I WAS TIRED.

ED

I'LL BET. THAT WAS A LONG 3 OR 4 YEARS.

JAMES

YEAH. IT SURE WAS. IT LASTED A LONG TIME. I WENT TO SEE A DOCTOR. OF COURSE, THE NAVY, THEY CHECKED ME OVER PHYSICALLY BEFORE THEY WOULD DISCHARGE ME. THEY WANTED TO OPERATE ON ME FOR THIS AND WANTED TO OPERATE ON ME FOR THAT, PUT ME IN A HOSPITAL. I SAID "NO, I'M GOING HOME. AIN'T NOBODY GOING TO OPERATE ON ME." I WENT TO MY DOCTOR AND HE CHECKED ME OVER AND SAID, "I TELL YOU WHAT, JAMES YOU'RE IN PRETTY GOOD SHAPE FOR A MAN 135 YEARS OLD. I WAS 21 YEARS OLD TWO DAYS AFTER THEY DROPPED THE BOMB ON NAGASAKI.

ED

SO, HE WAS SAYING YOU WERE PRETTY BEAT UP, HUH?

JAMES

WELL, I STILL AM, I'VE BEEN TIRED EVER SINCE. I STILL WEIGH WITHIN 2 OR 3 POUNDS OF WHAT I WEIGHED THEN. I NEVER VARY. I DO WORK. I DO A LOT OF WORK THAT OTHER PEOPLE WON'T DO.

ED

YOU WERE 21.

JAMES

YEAH. I GOT 2 OR 3 VOTES. ONE GOOD THING ABOUT THE SERVICE, I GOT THREE VOTES OUT OF IT. I DID NOT HAVE TO PAY TO VOTE IN 1945, AUGUST 16TH I WAS 21 AND I GOT A FREE VOTE THAT YEAR. THE NEXT YEAR I WAS A DISCHARGED VETERAN SO I GOT A FREE VOTE 'CAUSE I WAS 21 YEARS OLD.

ED

HOW HAD YOU CHANGED IN THAT FOUR YEARS? HOW DID THE WAR CHANGE YOU?

JAMES

IT IS SOMETHING I DON'T THINK ANY HUMAN WILL EVER GET OVER. I STILL HAVE THEM MAD FITS I CALL THEM. I STILL HAVE THEM NIGHTMARES.

ED

NIGHTMARES ABOUT THE TIMES.

JAMES

SILLY NIGHTMARES. I HAD ONE ABOUT 20 YEARS AGO, MY WIFE PUNCHED ME ONE NIGHT, WOKE ME UP IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT. I WAS HAVING THE DANGEST NIGHTMARE I EVER HAD, I RECKON. IN THAT DREAM, WHEN I WOKE UP, I WAS ON MY KNEES UP IN THE BED. IN THAT DREAM, I HAD A COAT HANGER IN ONE HAND AND A HAND SAW IN THE OTHER AND LIKE SIX JAPANESE IMPERIAL MARINES. CAN YOU IMAGINE ANYTHING LIKE THAT?

ED

FOUGHT THEM OFF TOO, I IMAGINE.

JAMES

I WAS DOING ALL RIGHT.

ED

YOU WERE DOING OK. ISN'T THAT SOMETHING?

JAMES

THOSE PEOPLE IN BLACKWELL, I TOLD THEM, I SAID, "THEY GET YOU TO WHERE IN THE SERVICE, YOU DON'T CARE WHAT YOU KILL IF THEY SAY, KILL." YOU JUST SOON KILL A HUMAN AS YOU HAD A DOG OR ANYTHING ELSE. IN THAT PART, THEY THINK IT AIN'T RIGHT. THAT'S THE WAY IT IS. I SHOT A DOG ONE TIME, THEY DIDN'T TELL ME NOT TO SHOOT HIM. PUT ME ON GUARD AT ONE OF THEM GATES IN THE NAVY YARD, JUST A RAILROAD TRACK WENT THROUGH IT. GIVE YOU AN OLD 1903 RIFLE. SO I STOOD A LOT OF

SHORE PATROL WHILE I WAS IN THE NAVY. ANYHOW, THEY SAID, 'NOW, FROM SUNDOWN TO SUNUP, NOBODY COMES THROUGH THIS GATE AND THIS GATE IS NEVER OPENED. THERE WAS JUST A RAILROAD SPUR RUNNING THROUGH HERE; A HIGH STEEL GATE. THERE WAS A GAP AT THE BOTTOM OF IT ABOUT THAT DEEP, ABOUT THAT HIGH AND YOU DON'T LET NOBODY COME THROUGH THAT GATE. I SAID, "WELL, THERE AIN'T NOBODY GONNA COME THROUGH IT." THERE WAS SOMEBODY'S OLD DOG TROTTED UP, I HOLLERED "HALT" THREE TIMES AND I SHOT HIM. THAT OLD GUN, YOU COULD HEAR IT SHOOT PLUMB DOWN TO BALTIMORE.

I HUNTED ALL MY LIFE. IT WASN'T TWO MINUTES AND HERE COME THE GUARD P.O. HE WANTED TO KNOW WHAT HAPPENED. I TOLD HIM, THAT DOG COME OUT OF THAT GATE AND I HOLLERED AT HIM THREE TIMES. HE WOULDN'T IDENTIFY HISSELF SO I SHOT HIM. HE SAID, "WELL, THAT'S ALL RIGHT." WE JUST WENT ON ABOUT OUR BUSINESS. IT'S JUST STUFF LIKE THAT YOU DON'T DO AT ALL.

ED

YOU HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO BE BACK IN JAPAN THAT ONE TIME IN TOKYO?

JAMES

YEP, I WENT BACK JUST TO SEE HOW MUCH IT CHANGED. THAT'S A BEAUTIFUL CITY.

ED

WHAT ARE YOUR FEELINGS ABOUT THE JAPANESE HAVING HAD THEM AS AN ADVESARY DURING WORLD WAR II?

JAMES

WELL, IT JUST LIKE THIS, IF THEY HAD HAD OUR GENERALS, THEY MIGHT HAVE WON THAT WAR, AND OUR LEADERS. I'LL PUT IT THAT WAY, THAT'S MY WAY OF THINKING BECAUSE THEY, GROUP OF PEOPLE IN TOKYO COULDN'T CHANGE THEIR MIND. I'LL PUT IT THAT WAY AND THAT'S WHAT WAS THEIR DOWNFALL.

ED

BUT NO-----

JAMES

PEOPLE GOT TO GIVE THEM CREDIT. I STOOD SHORE PATROL ON TRUK, WE HAD FIVE DAYS OR SO DOWN THERE AND I MET A JAPANESE FINE LIEUTENANT, HE FLEW A FLOATPLANE. HIS PLANE WAS SITTIN' RIGHT THERE ON THE RUNWAY. I WALKED RIGHT UP TO HIM, BRAND SPANKIN' NEW PLANE. HE SAID, IT HAD NEVER HAD A DROP OF GAS IN IT. HE SAID, WE GOT A NEW PLANE, EVERYTHING BUT NO GAS. COME TO FIND OUT HE WAS

BORN IN SAN FRANCISCO, GRADUTATED FROM SAN JOSE STATE UNIVERSITY. NICEST FELLOW YOU EVER WANTED TO MEET IN YOUR LIFE. I SWAPPED HIM OUT OF HIS PISTOL.

ED

HE SPOKE PERFECT ENGLISH.

JAMES

OH YEAH. I ASKED HIM HOW COME YOU IN THE JAPANESE AIR NAVY? HE SAID, WELL IN 1938, MY GRANDDADDY DIED OVER HERE. WE COME OVER HERE FOR THE FUNERAL, MY DAD, MOTHER AND I. THEY WOULDN'T LET ME GO BACK. THEY SAID BEFORE THEY WOULD LET ME LEAVE JAPAN, THEY WOULD KILL ME, I'D EITHER BE IN THE JAPANESE SERVICE OR THEY WOULD KILL ME. I TOOK THE ONLY THING THAT I COULD TO KEEP ME OUT OF THE FIGHTING THAT I COULD. HE WAS AN OBSERVATION PILOT AND A NICE FELLER. I STILL GOT HIS OLD PISTOL. I GOT HIS STRAP FROM OVER HIS SHOULDER AND HIS BELT WITH HIS NAME ON IT AND HIS SCABBARD, SWORD AND EVERYTHING. I ASKED HIM IF HE WAS COMING BACK TO THE STATES. HE SAID, "YOU BETTER BELIEVE I AM, AS QUICK AS THE DAY THEY WILL LET ME."

ED

AS FAR AS YOU KNOW, HE IS BACK IN THE STATES?

JAMES

YEAH, SURE. HE'S BOUND TO COME BACK, YEAH. HE WAS A GOOD FELLER.

ED

WERE YOU IN CLOSE CONTACT WITH YOUR PARENTS AND FAMILLY DURING THAT PERIOD OF TIME YOU WERE OVERSEAS?

JAMES

I GOT TO COME HOME ONCE.

ED

OH, YOU DID?

JAMES

I GOT A TEN DAY LEAVE WHEN I FINISHED BOOT CAMP.

ED

BEFORE YOU WENT OVERSEAS.

JAMES

I GOT A TEN DAY LEAVE AND THEN I GOT TEN DAYS DELAYED ORDERS GOING FROM SAN PEDRO TO PHILADELPHIA. THAT' THE ONLY TWO TIMES I HAD LEAVE OR DELAYED ORDERS.

ED

I GUESS YOU WROTE LETTERS HOME AND GOT LETTERS.

JAMES

I WAS GOING TO TELL YOU ABOUT THAT REPORT, BEING ON REPORT ON THE LAW AND THE REGULATIONS PART OF IT. I HAD THAT JUNGLE ROT DOWN THERE AT THE PHILLIPINES.

ED

TELL ME ABOUT THAT.

JAMES

I JUST ROTTED FROM MY BELT UP, MY HAIR ALL COME OUT AND I HAD A HEADACHE FOR 23 DAYS AND NIGHTS AND A FEVER LIKE YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE. THEY TELL ME THAT A MAN IS SUPPOSED TO DIE WHEN HE HAS A FEVER THAT HIGH, BUT I DIDN'T. IT RUINED MY EARS. IT PLUGGED THEM UP AND I WENT ON WATCH ONE NIGHT AND I COULDN'T HEAR OVER THE PHONES. THE LIEUTENANT IN SKYFORWARD PUT ME ON REPORT FOR BEING ASLEEP. OUR COMMANDER, OUR EXECUTIVE OFFICER ----- I HAD TO GO TO EXECUTIVE OFFICERS MAST THE NEXT DAY. I COULDN'T TELL WHAT HE WAS SAYING, JUST GUESSING AT IT. I TOLD HIM, I CAN'T HEAR." HE ASKED THAT LIEUTENANT, OF COURSE HE HAD TO BE THERE TOO, "WHY DID YOU BRING HIM DOWN HERE?" HE SAID, "WELL, HE WAS ASLEEP ON WATCH." I TOLD HIM, "COMMANDER, I WASN'T ASLEEP ON WATCH, I COULDN'T HEAR." AND I STILL CAN'T HEAR.

HE SAID, "YOU JUST WAIT A MINUTE SAILOR." HE TOLD THAT LEUTENANT, YOU TAKE THIS MAN TO SICK BAY AND I WANT A WRITTEN SHEET, A REPORT FROM THAT DOCTOR." HE (THE DOCTOR) HUNG UP A TWO GALLON JUG OF WATER AND WASHED MY EARS OUT, GOT THAT FUNGUS OUT OF MY EARS, WHITE LOOKING STUFF. IT LOOKED LIKE GINNED COTTON TO ME. HE WASHED THAT STUFF OUT OF MY EARS AND I COULD HEAR GOOD. I WENT BACK UP THERE AND OLD COMMANDER SEWARD SET THAT LIEUTENANT STRAIGHT, THAT WAS A GOOD LIEUTENANT. HE WAS CAPTAIN OF THE ANNAPOLIS FOOTBALL TEAM THE YEAR BEFORE HE GOT ASSIGNED TO THE *MIAMI* HE WAS AN ATHELETE. HE WAS A GOOD FELLER. HIS NAME WAS MONTGOMERY. I NEVER WILL FORGET HIM. HE WAS A BLACK IRISHMAN.

COMMANDER SEWARD TOLD HIM, "LIEUTENANT, I AM GONNA DO AWAY WITH ALL THESE PAPERS. IF YOU EVER BRING ANOTHER SAILOR TO ME IN THIS SHAPE, I GONNA SEND YOU TO ALSASKA AND YOU'LL DIE WITH A LONG GREY BEARD UP THERE AS A SEAMAN 2ND CLASS." THAT'S EXACTLY THE WORDS HE USED. HE WAS FIFTY YEARS OLD OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT. HE HAD BEEN IN THE NAVY A LONG TIME. HE SURE WAS A GOOD FELLER. I NEVER DID HAVE ANY MORE TROUBLE THAT A WAY.

ED

YOU SURVIVED THE JUNGLE ROT. OH BOY, THAT WAS A HEADACHE. DID THEY GIVE YOU MEDICINE FOR IT?

JAMES

OH YEAH. TWICE A DAY, THEY BATHED ME WITH SULFA DRUGS, MADE A WHITE PASTE OF THE STUFF; JUST OLD GREEN ROT. MY HAIR SLIPPED OUT, JUST SLICK AS A PEEL. IT WAS BAD.

ED

WHERE DO YOU FIGURE YOU GOT IT? JUST FROM THE JUNGLE THERE?

JAMES

THERE WERE FIFTY CASES OF IT ON THE SHIP. THERE IS A LOTS OF THEM OLD BOYS THAT NEVER DID GET OVER IT. IF THEY EVER GOT IT ON THEIR FEET, THE DIDN'T NEVER GET OVER IT. I HAVEN'T NEVER HAD ANY BUT MY DOCTOR ON THE SHIP, HE TOLD ME, "YOU'RE LIABLE TO HAVE TROUBLE WITH YOUR EARS ALL OF YOUR LIFE." SURE ENOUGH, MY HEARING IS 15 DECIBLES DOWN FROM WHERE IT OUGHT TO BE. IF ANYBODY'S GOT THEIR BACK TURNED TO ME, I CAN HARDLY TELL WHAT THEY ARE SAYING. I PERT NEAR GOT TO SEE THEM TO TALK TO THEM.

ED

THAT WAS INTERESTING FOUR YEARS OUT OF YOUR LIFE. PROBABLY THE MOST EXCITING FOUR YEARS.

JAMES

OH YEAH. I TOLD ALL THE KIDS THAT I SURE WOULD TAKE NOTHING FOR WHAT I WENT THROUGH. I SURE DON'T WANT TO GO THROUGH IT AGAIN.

ED

WHY WOULD YOU NOT TAKE ANYTHING FOR HAVING GONE THROUGH THAT? I MEAN, YOU LOOK BACK ON THOSE YEARS FONDLY, IS THAT RIGHT?

JAMES

YEAH.

ED

WHY IS THAT?

JAMES

I GUESS THAT I WAS SCARED, SUPPOSED TO BEEN BACK THERE IN THEM TIMES. I DON'T REMEMBER BEING SCARED. IT WAS JUST ROUTINE. I NEVER DID HAVE ANY KIND OF FEAR WHATSOEVER, THE WORST FEAR THAT I HAD WAS WHEN I HAD TO TAKE THAT DANGED SWIMMING TEST AND GET IN THAT SWIMMING POOL AND PULL THAT DANG WHITE JUMPER OFF OVER MY HEAD. I DANG NEAR DROWNED AND I WAS A GOOD SWIMMER. THAT'S THE ONLY TIME I EVER GOT THE LEAST BIT SCARED. BUT, I HAVE SEEN GUYS THAT WERE SCARED. WE HAD ONE BOY IN MY DIVISION THAT FEAR GOT THE BEST OF HIM. HE WENT AND HID IN THE PEACOCK LOCKER. DANG, WE HUNTED THAT BOY FOR A DAY AND A HALF 'FORE SOMEBODY LOOKED IN THAT PEACOCK LOCKER AND FOUND HIM. HE WAS JUST A YOUNG KID, 17 YEARS OLD. WE HAD BEEN AT SEA A LONG TIME THEN. ANYHOW, THEY SHIPPED HIM BACK TO THE STATES. HE WAS A GOOD KID, HE JUST COULDN'T TAKE IT.

THAT RACKET, GUN, THAT IS SOMETHING ELSE TOO THAT GOT A LOT OF MEN SCARED, WAS THE RACKET THAT SHIP MADE AND THE RACKET THOSE GUNS MADE. I'LL TELL YOU WHAT, THERE IS A LOT NOISE FROM THE GUNS, THAT'S A LOT OF RACKET.

ED

WHAT ABOUT SOME OF YOUR SHIPMATES. ARE YOU STILL IN TOUCH WITH SOME OF THEM? THERE IS ONE GENTLEMAN HERE -----

JAMES

WELL, WE HAVE A SHIP REUNION EVERY YEAR AND I WENT TO FIVE, FOUR OR FIVE OF THEM AND I'VE BEEN IN TOUCH WITH A LOT OF THEM. GOOD PEOPLE. THEY'RE NEARLY ALL DEAD NOW. I'M SURPRISED. A LOT OF THOSE GUYS YOUNGER THAN ME ARE GONE. THEY'RE ALREADY PASSED ON.

WE HAD REAL GOOD CREWMEN. FACT IS I DON'T REMEMBER BUT ONE ARGUMENT ON THAT SHIP AND THAT WAS BETWEEN A COUPLE OF 2ND CLASS GUNNERS MATES. I TOLD THEM, "JUST GO OUT ON THE DECK AND DUKE IT OUT. YOU ARE THE SAME RANK, BEEN IN THE NAVY THE SAME LENGTH. YOU HAVE MY PERMISSION. JUST GET UP THERE AND FISTICUFF IT OUT." THEY DIDN'T DO IT.

ED

THAT SETTLED IT.

JAMES

THEY DIDN'T LIKE THEM BRUISES.

ED

WHAT ELSE CAN WE DISCUSS JAMES ABOUT THAT PERIOD IN THE WAR?

JAMES

I GUESS THAT'S ABOUT IT.

ED

WHAT ELSE COMES TO MIND?

JAMES

I SAW ANOTHER THING I DIDN'T LIKE. I SURE DIDN'T LIKE THAT. AT SAIPAN, THEY BROUGHT A SHIP, SUPPLY SHIP IN ONE TIME THAT WAS LOADED WITH BEEF QUARTERS, FROZEN BEEF QUARTERS. I'M NOT TALKING ABOUT SUPER MARKET SIZE, I MEAN THOUSANDS OF TONS OF IT. THEY STACKED IT UP ABOUT 12 FEET DEEP ON THE BEACH OUT THERE AND PUT 100 GUARDS AROUND IT AND IT SET RIGHT THERE AND ROTTED. I'LL BET YOU THERE WERE AT LEAST 6,000 TONS OF IT.

ED

JUST WASTED.

JAMES

GOOD PRIME BEEF. THERE WAS ALL THEM MEN ON SAIPAN, HAD BEEN A-FIGHTING IN THERE, SCATTERED ALL OVER THAT ISLAND AND THEY COULDA EAT THAT MEAT, WOULD LOVED TO A HAD IT. THEY LET THAT GO TO WASTE. OUR GOVERNMENT OR SOMEBODY, THEY SET RIGHT THERE AND LET IT ROT.

ED

NEVER UNDERSTAND THAT.

JAMES

PEOPLE BACK HERE IN THE UNITED STATES, YOU KNOW, DOING WITHOUT MEAT. I TELL YOU FOR SURE, THERE WILL BE VERY FEW TIMES IN OUR LIFETIME THAT WE SEE ANYTHING LIKE WORLD WAR II WAS.

I NEVER DISOBEYED AN ORDER. I JUST DO NOT BELIEVE IN NOT GOING ALONG WITH

THE RULES AND REGULATIONS AND THE LAW. I HAVE TROUBLES MY FAMILY WAS IN TOO. I HAD TWO BROTHERS THAT WAS BEER HEADS. BOTH OF THEM NEEDED KNOCKING IN THE HEAD BUT NOBODY WOULD DO IT. THEY BEEN IN MORE JAILS IN TEXAS THAN YOU CAN SHAKE A STICK AT. I NEVER LIVED THAT WAY.

A HIGHWAY PATROLMAN STOPPED ME ONE TIME RIGHT THERE SOUTH OF SWEETWATER. HE SAID, "I'M CHECKING LICENSES AND SAFETY INSPECTIONS" I SAID, "WELL, HERE'S MY LICENSE." HE WENT OVER TO HIS CAR AND PUNCHED THAT COMPUTER TO AUSTIN. HE CAME BACK GRINNING AND SAID, "BOY, YOU'VE BEEN A GOOD LITTLE BOY, HAVEN'T YOU?" I SAID, I'VE NEVER HAD A TICKET OR BEEN IN ANY TROUBLE.