

National Museum of the Pacific War

Nimitz Education and Research Center

Fredericksburg, Texas

Interview with

Mr. Lee Soucy

Date of Interview: December 7, 2004

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Interviewer: Interviewing Warrant Officer Lee Soucy. Correct?

Mr. Soucy: Well, that's what I ended up as.

Interviewer: And this is December 7, 2004 and we are doing this interview at the Nimitz Museum, in a Quonset hut. Temporary location of the offices. And the next voice you'll hear is Warrant Officer Soucy, who will tell us his experiences at Pearl Harbor and World War II.

Mr. Soucy: Now, do you want me to answer these questions?

Interviewer: No, you don't have to answer the questions. Just sort of give us an idea. Forget about that, now. Tell us where you were born and how did you get in the Navy?

Mr. Soucy: I was born in Canada. French Canada. New Brunswick. And so when I started school, I couldn't speak English. I learned English, you know. I knew a few words, but I really didn't learn English till I started school. I went to school with Greek kids, Polish kids, Lithuanian kids. We were all in the same boat. Their parents, you know, were recent migrants. There was a great demand for labor in post World War I, you know. Shoe factories. We had all kinds of factories. And so, my parents moved to New Hampshire when I was four years old. And so my; in 1936, my father died. This was the depression, you know, the Big Depression. And my father had been sick about a year or

more. Been out of work, you know, he had cancer of the esophagus. And when he died, if he had any money, you have to think at one time they had a little money. But it was all gone when he died. And so, I was intrigued by the posters, which said, "Join the Navy and see the world". That appealed to me. The one that appealed to me more was "Earn while you learn". See, I wanted to go to medical school, way back then. Well, I didn't have but two years of high school. When I was with the Fleet Marines, I went to night school; San Diego High School and correspondence and got my high school diploma. And then, the Navy had some good schools. Like Medical Laboratory School, I was a medical laboratory technologist. There were only two schools recognized. The one in Washington, which is Bethesda Naval Medical Center and the naval hospital in San Diego. So I got my education, which served the rest of my life, in the Navy. So I'm pro-Navy. I did all right. But anyway, and, in. After I got through Hospital Corps School, I was supposed to go to Port Smith, Virginia, to hospital.

Interviewer: What year is this?

Mr. Soucy: This is 1938 now. See, I joined the Navy December 8th, 1937. So my enlistment was up December 7th, 1941. (laughter)

Interviewer: So much for that.

Mr. Soucy: Yeah, so much for that. So, anyway, the transport would come in and they'd be loaded and I was there at the receiving shipment in San Diego for several months. And finally, some chief came over. Funny-looking uniform and he was in the Fleet Marines, you see. And he said, "You guys are going to be

with the Marines.” And we got there and the sergeant says, “You’re going to turn in your sailor suits and we’re going to give you real uniforms. You’re in the Marine Corps now. (laughter) So it was a medical field service school and very high emphasis on poison gas, which was still a scary thing from World War I. And of course, then that interest petered out and now, weapons of mass destruction, mustard gas. But anyway, I went to laboratory school at the naval hospital in San Diego. That was a nine-month course. And then, in due time, I was transferred to the. After my tour with the Marines, I went to the hospital to—

Interviewer: How long were you with the Marines?

Mr. Soucy: Eight months.

Interviewer: And where were you with the Marines?

Mr. Soucy: In San Diego. We conquered San Clemente Island. You know about Santa Clemente? Fifth Regiment and me. We conquered San Clemente. (laughter) It was a naval base. Strictly naval. About a dozen Marines and a dozen sailors on there. And the battleships would use it for target, you know, from twenty miles away. But anyway, then it took over, Richard Nixon, you know, President Nixon built a big place there and it’s a high priced resort, you know, resort island. And it’s off the coast of California. So, anyway, after I’d been, I went through lab school at the naval hospital there, which was a 3,000-bed hospital. And then, I was transferred to the Utah. My roommate, a guy who’d been my friend, he had. I had a 3.4, I mean 3.84 and he had 3.86. He was number one. I was number two. He went to the Arizona. I went to the Utah.

So, you know what, all the medical personnel on the Arizona were done in. So, on the Utah, the Utah was an old battleship that had been disarmed. They removed the main battery. We had five turrets, with two, 12-inch guns. And at that time, it was the most powerful ship in the world. You know, that, the beginning of the dreadnoughts. I think dreadnought was a British term that applied to ships. Mighty, mighty ships.

Interviewer: What was her hull number, do you recall?

Mr. Soucy: The Utah? BB-31. Then it became AG-16. See, when it was decommissioned. So it was decommissioned in 1932. The guns were removed in accordance to a treaty which England, the U.S., and Japan had entered the 5-5-3 ratio. And so, that satisfied the requirement. It had no guns, therefore, we. And it was made into a target ship. Now, the ship was unique in several ways. One, you never read about in the books, it was radio-controlled. It could be radio-controlled. Now, when I was on it, all that equipment, I didn't know what it was. But we would go, when it was time for bombing run, we would go below deck, below the armored deck. And the bombing runs, in this book, "The Pearl Harbor Child Is a Plan of the Day"—

Interviewer: So you got on that ship in what year?

Mr. Soucy: I got there on February 28th, 1941.

Interviewer: And then it was 1941?

Mr. Soucy: 1941, see. I was there nine months, eight and a half months.

Interviewer: And they were still using it as a target ship?

Mr. Soucy: What?

Interviewer: From February, when you got on it, they were using it as a target ship?

Mr. Soucy: Well, they had been using it for a target ship since 1936.

Interviewer: And they had a pretty good medical service on that ship?

Mr. Soucy: Yeah, because we were in port every weekend. And the people from the smaller ships, where they didn't have doctors or dentists; they would come to the Utah on Saturday and we treated—

Interviewer: In port?

Mr. Soucy: In port. Oh yeah. Well, on dental work, if they needed, you know, they'd had an injury and needed replacement. Extensive dental work. That wasn't being done on any ship in the Navy, except the Utah.

Interviewer: How large a crew did you have on board?

Mr. Soucy: We had, I think the official was like 630. Six hundred and thirty, I think.

Interviewer: When it was a battleship, how many men, do you think, were aboard?

Mr. Soucy: About 1200, I imagine.

Interviewer: So it was a much smaller crew.

Mr. Soucy: We had a smaller crew. Yeah. Like the Arizona, what they had 13, 1400. Well, the Utah was a generation before that. So at the peak, it probably had 1200.

Interviewer: So you were assigned to the ship in February of 1941. And then, when did you go to Pearl, finally?

Mr. Soucy: I reported about, my record says March first but it was actually February 28th. And I was on board about. Well, the first thing, when I got aboard, the Chief

said, "Welcome aboard." And he said, "You're going to volunteer for shore patrol." Shore patrol? A little guy like that? (laughter) Shore patrol—

Interviewer: Big bruisers.

Mr. Soucy: Well, it was a prophylactic station. Medical. I wore a brassard that said SP, but I didn't carry a billy club. And I was in the PE station in Los Angeles. Never got any business. When we shipped, took out to sea, that's when we'd get the business. But never in port. And so, anyway, I think I was there about three weeks. So maybe a month. I've got all the ships logs from that time. About a month later, we took off for Hawaii. It had been refitted in Bremerton, taken on ammunition in Frisco and then took on the timbers in San Pedro or Long Beach and then we went to Pearl for bombing period. And that was like six weeks.

Interviewer: You had your gun put back on?

Mr. Soucy: Those guns never did get back on. We had guns, anti-aircraft—

Interviewer: Okay, it just had the anti-aircraft. Did you have those put on, at that time?

Mr. Soucy: Oh yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: When you were refitted?

Mr. Soucy: Well, you see, I made two cruises. The first time we only had five-inch 25s. Which all the ships, that was the anti-aircraft gun. In September, well, we went to Hawaii, got the bombing runs, then we came back. Went into dry dock in Bremerton Navy Yard to repair. Because those bombs would damage the ship, you know, regardless. And so, on the second, and while we were in dry dock from about June until September. They put on five-inch 38s. No

other ship had the guns and the range finders, fire control. The only ship at Pearl Harbor that had all that. These guys that say the Utah was useless. We had better anti-aircraft defense than anybody in the U.S. Navy.

Interviewer: But this is long before the attack of Pearl Harbor so obviously they were planning for a war at this time.

Mr. Soucy: This was in September, when we left.

Interviewer: They're ready, sort of, you've got in your mind, why are they redoing this old ship. It's not a big surprise to you that we were going to war.

Mr. Soucy: Oh, no. We knew—

Interviewer: Everybody, the prevailing, all of you felt that there was going to be a Pacific war—

Mr. Soucy: When Hitler invaded Poland—

Interviewer: Oh yeah.

Mr. Soucy: There was no question. It was a matter of time. What was that guy that would come on, that imitated—

Interviewer: Coughlin.

Mr. Soucy: Yeah. I'd listen to that news—

Interviewer: Father Coughlin.

Mr. Soucy: You could tell that something was developing—

Interviewer: But, you as a young man and everything, really were aware that this was going to happen. Eventually. You thought maybe Europe—

Mr. Soucy: Well—

Interviewer: Did you think it was going to come out of Japan?

Mr. Soucy: Oh, no! Who would have thought that those little pip-squeaks, see, that's what we referred—

Interviewer: But you were outfitting the ship in the Pacific Fleet though.

Mr. Soucy: Yeah.

Interviewer: Seems to me, somebody took this old ship, nineteen what?

Mr. Soucy: 1911.

Interviewer: And suddenly they're re-outfitting it. In other words, do you feel that there was a knowledge that—

Mr. Soucy: It was a gradual thing. That's why so many of these admirals and historians are confused. It occurred in degrees. See, all guns were removed. Everything. Then, in 1936, somebody decided to make a fleet, anti-aircraft gunnery school. We, the fifty-caliber machine guns were developed aboard the Utah. They wrote the manual, you know, for upkeep and repair, whatever they do to guns. And, so it was first, machine guns. And those could be moved below the armored deck and didn't change the contours of the ship. But in July and August of 1941, we put on the five, we had four five-inch 25-caliber anti-aircraft guns. We took on four, five-inch 38s. There was a couple of cruisers at Pearl Harbor that had the 5-38s, but they didn't have the equipment yet.

Interviewer: Now, then, you were re-assigned to Pearl Harbor as your home port then?

Mr. Soucy: No. No. We always floated in and out before I got on. We would go to Pearl. The Fleet, you know, had moved—

Interviewer: Was in and out of Pearl.

Mr. Soucy: The Fleet had moved from Long Beach in what, 1940? And Roosevelt, you know, Richardson, Admiral Richardson lost his, he was retired because he told Roosevelt that that was the wrong thing to do. He didn't think the Fleet should be in Hawaii. But anyway, as far as the Utah, that was its purpose. It was a mobile bombing target and you would go to where the ships were, and the ships were in Hawaii. And then, after so much bombing, we'd come back to the States and get refitted. And so, the extensive re-fitting, with the five-inch 38s. See, they became the workhorse of all the navies of the world. For, all during World War II, during Korea, during Vietnam and even after guided missiles were developed. The five-inch 38 was still a workhorse.

Interviewer: So, what found you in Pearl Harbor on December 7th, '41. It's not your home port. It was just one of your rotations, back and forth?

Mr. Soucy: Yeah. See, my, I told you, my enlistment was up December 7th. And the ship was due to go back to the states. I had \$480.00 on the books. I wanted to be a doctor. As we say in Texas, I wanted to make doctor. (laughter)

Interviewer: We covered that before! (laughter)

Mr. Soucy: 'Cause some doctors wouldn't mind making. But then, they were all males! (laughter) And, so, I had \$480.00 on the books and I was gonna go to school. By then, I'd gotten all my high school thing, and I was a good student, you know. So, but then, the ship was sunk and you know, people say, "Did they ask you to reenlist?" Well, they didn't ask me a thing! (laughter)

Interviewer: But this was your final cruise then?

Mr. Soucy: Yeah, oh yeah.

Interviewer: You were there December 7th but as soon as that thing came back, you were off it? Or were they going to let you off in Pearl Harbor and come back on another ship?

Mr. Soucy: Well, if it hadn't been bombed, you mean? If we hadn't been sunk, we would have come back to the States, —

Interviewer: And you would have been discharged?

Mr. Soucy: I would have been discharged and I would have gone on to college.

Interviewer: So much for being a doctor, then. Then you were in the attack and all that. Then you were re-assigned to the hospital at Pearl.

Mr. Soucy: Yes.

Interviewer: And that's where you spent the rest of the war, in that—

Mr. Soucy: Yeah.

Interviewer: In that hospital.

Mr. Soucy: Well, I spent until, May, April or May of '45. And then I was a new Warrant, and I was assigned Bethesda Naval Medical Center. I took a malariology course.

Interviewer: I see.

Mr. Soucy: And I was. All the guys in that class of about twenty. They all college graduates, you know, had BS degrees, some MS, I don't think any PhDs.

Interviewer: That's when those degrees mattered to some degree.

Mr. Soucy: I was number one in that class. I'd done. You know, like malaria, we had it every day—

Interviewer: And when did you get married now?

Mr. Soucy: In January, 1945.

Interviewer: So, and then it was May that you went to Bethesda. Did your wife get re-assigned with you?

Mr. Soucy: No, no. They tried to separate us! (laughter)

Interviewer: You were already married at the time?

Mr. Soucy: We got married in Honolulu. And about—

Interviewer: But they re-assigned you—

Mr. Soucy: About two weeks after marriage, she got orders to go to St. Albans Naval Hospital. As I told you, I was a plank owner. He knows what that is. I'd been there twice as long as anybody. So I just went to the Personnel Office and I told the guy, former Chief, he was a JG, I think, by then, I said, "You know? I think you got my records must have fallen between the cracks. I've been here for three years, four years, whatever." So anyway, it was just a few days, I got my orders. I was transferred to Chelsea Naval Hospital. And I had ten days or something, delayed leave. Well, before I could report. Well, I did report but a couple of days later I was told to report to Bethesda. And I went to this malaria control school. I was a good student. I made very high grades. In fact, I was way ahead—

Interviewer: Really. And then what happened after you finished that program?

Mr. Soucy: I was transferred to the Marine base in Camp Lejeune, North Carolina.

Interviewer: Down where the malaria is?

Mr. Soucy: Well, you see. They had a few cases sporadically—

Interviewer: It's pretty swampy down there, isn't it?

Mr. Soucy: Camp Lejeune? Yeah, I don't know how many miles—

Interviewer: That's why I was in the Air Force. We didn't go to places like that.

(laughter) So is that where you were when the war ended?

Mr. Soucy: Yeah, well. Again, a unique thing. I reported to Camp Lejeune on, well, whatever day the Japanese surrendered. I got in there to report, you know, and I asked somebody where the Administration Building. I went in and nobody. A hundred desks and nobody in there! And then finally, some guy came out of the head and I said, "Well, I have orders here. This is the Administrative Office?" He said, "Yes, sir." I said, "Well, I have orders here." He says, "You're not going to get anything done here sir." He said, "Don't you know about the Japanese?" I said, "What about the Japanese?" They'd surrendered, you know!

Interviewer: They became pacifists. Two bombs made them pacifists.

Mr. Soucy: That's right. That's right.

Interviewer: We erased centuries of militarist background. Permanently too.

Mr. Soucy: Yeah. Well, you know. For years, people of my generation cannot understand why people of your generation were buying these damn Japanese cars! (laughter)

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Mr. Soucy: Well, my oldest daughter just retired from school teaching. She's 58. And, when she was in high school, one of her rich boyfriends came over and had a new Toyota. And my daughter said, "I want you to see Richard's new car." And I got out there and said, "Toyota. That's the Japanese car, isn't it?" He

said, "Yeah." I said, "You can't park that in my driveway. You go park it across." (laughter)

Interviewer: So, this reconciliation came a little slower in your particular case?

Mr. Soucy: Yes, but you see. I just bought a new car a few months ago. I made sure it was American. Chevrolet Aveola, little car?

Interviewer: All parts made in Japan?

Mr. Soucy: I think Chevrolet. Detroit. But the engine came from Japan and the transmission came from Korea. But I'm reconciled.

Interviewer: My Toyota was made in Kentucky.

Mr. Soucy: Yeah. See we got Kentucky and have one in Tennessee, too, I think.

Interviewer: Yeah. I think so. There's a Toyota plant coming in San Antonio.

Mr. Soucy: So, they're all right. (laughter)

Interviewer: Seems like we have enough Japanese and German cars. It's terrible. But. So, I always ask this. And of course you learned of the atom bomb was dropped. Now, people second-guess that decision today. How did you feel about it at the time?

Mr. Soucy: Ah, I feel that Smithsonian Institute; they're so far radically off. That bomb saved, in my estimation. I'm not an analyst or anything, but I. Just judging on the behavior on Guadalcanal and Iwo Jima. I think that atomic bomb saved at least a million Japanese lives. Probably kids and women. And it saved maybe a million Americans. So.

Interviewer: Absolutely.

Mr. Soucy: And these people that get so. Every once in a while you see these Japanese, they think that we should apologize for dropping the atomic bomb.

Interviewer: Where is this stuff coming from, in your opinion? This kind of?

Mr. Soucy: Why are these guys, like Brokaw and Jennings and of course, Rather, he's so far out. They're anti-American! (laughter)

Interviewer: Your generation as a whole. I have not met a single person that I've interviewed, who didn't have the same opinion you do. What happens, what happens? How did this creep in?

Mr. Soucy: I'll tell you. Something comes to mind. You know during the election that the swift boat guys. Cary had seven or eight saying he was a good guy and then there's 218 saying he wasn't. And that Carlton girl, she's on CNN. There's a Carlton or Carolton that wears a bow tie but they're not related. Anyway, they're on kind of a round table. And she is, of course, a pro-liberal from way back. And she said, "Those liars!"

Interviewer: You're not taking about Katie Couric, are you?

Mr. Soucy: No, no. This one is part of a four-panel. No, but Katie is the same school though. I have more time probably than you guys. I spend valuable time watching TV. (laughter)

Interviewer: I watch TV. I like it in some cases.

Mr. Soucy: But anyway. Now, there's 218, whatever the number is. Admirals, enlisted men, all ranks saying he's not fit for service. And these things, like this guy says, "He saved my life." Well, I saved a guy's life and I didn't get a medal for it. And you know how I saved his life? The second guy that came from

the Utah. And when I was a kid, I didn't like to go barefoot at all. I always wore shoes. And when the ship, it's going down and I think it's going to suck me down, you know. I didn't know sixty feet or 6,000 feet. I just imagined it was going to suck me down and blow up. So I tied double-knots in my shoes. Now, I said, I was an excellent swimmer. I was first on the beach. This other guy was a good swimmer but he had his first-aid kit wrapped around him. When I was running down the passageway to my battle station, the second torpedo hit. And it got me against a bulkhead. That's wall to you. I don't know if it knocked me out. They say you could be out for fifteen seconds or fifteen minutes. Is that right? It all seems the same. But I know that when I got up, I was stunned and I had to look around. But I wanted to get below the armored deck because I figured by then that somebody was mad at us. They were shooting us. So, but anyway. Now, this guy that says that he was, that John Carey saved his life, and the other guys have an opposite view. Now who's lying? (pause) Nobody's lying! They believe what they want to believe! This guy was in the water, supposedly knocked over. What in the hell are they supposed to do? Say, "drown you SOB?" So he pulled him out. And that story I started to tell you. When this guy got waist deep, now he's walking like this on the sharp stones. So I put one foot, I've got a shoe on, in about six feet of water and I held out my hand and I pulled him. Now, I didn't get the Navy Cross for that. I didn't get any medal. Joe Kingley, you know at reunion, I said, "I saved that guy's life. Look at how he treats me." Well, I'd bet if you went to a reunion and you asked some of those guys, they'd say,

“Oh yeah, Soucy. He saved that guy’s life.” You see? So, these guys, the bullets going around. Well the bullets may have been going around ten or fifteen minutes before time. But when he was pulled out of the water, according to the majority, there was no firing going on. And Carey would have had to be the SOB of the highest order to ignore a guy in the water! You know, whatever, he got blown out or slipped off or whatever. And so, nobody’s lying—

Interviewer: Perception.

Mr. Soucy: Yeah. Perception.

Interviewer: Now, tell me the attitude and the camaraderie of the people. I mean, I always seem to get the impression that the camaraderie and the buddy system and everything was so strong. And to this day, I talk to people of your age and so many of them say, “I didn’t want to let down my buddies. My buddy was the most important thing to make sure he was okay.” Was that really prevalent?

Mr. Soucy: That thing, like on submarines for instance.

Interviewer: I interviewed the submariners here not too long. They were really—

Mr. Soucy: One guy goofing off and the whole damn thing—

Interviewer: Oh, those guys were tight—

Mr. Soucy: So there’s never been. I don’t know what it is. There’s never been a strong camaraderie as men in the service, especially those who served under fire. See, I was luckier than most. Other than that couple of hours at Pearl Harbor, I didn’t see any action. But, you know, you depended on the guy. You knew that if he doesn’t do his job, you could get killed too. You know. And the age

at which we served. That formative years, you know, this is my buddy. Like, here's a guy, this Sumner. He was a dental technician or something. I hadn't seen him for fifty years. And I went to a reunion and I saw him. It was just like, we just got off the liberty boat together.

Interviewer: What was a day like, say mid-war, at the hospital? I mean, what was going on? Did you get a lot of injured guys coming in? How would you describe that?

Mr. Soucy: We would get four or five hundred patients at a time, sometimes.

Interviewer: Off a hospital ship or something?

Mr. Soucy: Yeah, well. Hospital ships, not so much, but battleships, cruisers, aircraft carriers.

Interviewer: They brought their wounded to you?

Mr. Soucy: Yeah. They were brought back. And—

Interviewer: Did you have a pretty good triage system? Did you get to the worst ones first? How did it go? Was it organized?

Mr. Soucy: Yeah. No. I think it was the guys like, that needed the aid first. Like, I was on the first convoy that left Pearl Harbor Naval Hospital to deliver the wounded, burnt to Mare Island Naval Hospital. Now, we, the Matsonia was a luxury liner. And I was on there and they're sick bay, we had, I think, sixteen burn patients. Burnt from head to toe. A few of them, if they had socks on, they had an area. Being a medical laboratory technologist, I did all the transfusions, started the IVs. Because, yeah, in those days, you know, the

trick was sharp needles. It was an art to sharpen the needle. We didn't buy.
Now—

Interviewer: So, you went back on a few ships to the States with wounded?

Mr. Soucy: I was on the first convoy that went, took these burnt patients to the States.
And I was on the first convoy from the States to Pearl Harbor. It took us four days to go and twelve days to come back. Ship convoy moves only as fast as the slowest ship. And there were hundreds of ships. You know. You could—

Interviewer: The wounded, you know. Pearl Harbor we always hear the dead, with 2,400 was it? Wounded, what would you estimate there?

Mr. Soucy: Well, when I went to the hospital, that night, around midnight. We weren't assigned anything. We would given mosquito nets with the bed and we got, somebody came around and roused us up about 5:30. From then on, it was, the first two days, it was day and night. And being a laboratory technician, I was one of those doing the lab tests to see who needed what. And blood, you know, blood transfusions. We didn't have blood banks—

Interviewer: Did you give blood?

Mr. Soucy: Yes! I worked, the first day, oh, I don't know. The second day, you know, the starting of the second day, mid-afternoon—

Interviewer: The eighth?

Mr. Soucy: The doctor came by and said, "We're going to have to get some more blood." We got some from Queens Hospital in Honolulu. They sent a bunch of blood. There was, all the girls, on the hotel street, you know, the girls of the night? They were all there. They were protecting their investment, you know.

Interviewer: Absolutely! (laughter)

Mr. Soucy: But I know of one of those prostitutes that gave blood. Well, today, you wouldn't even consider. And in those days, the only thing we did cross-matches, you know. The only test we did was for syphilis. You see. No hepatitis, and of course AIDS hadn't been invented yet. So, it was a matter, we'd get the blood, and do the cross-match and we could do the—

Interviewer: Wassermann.

Mr. Soucy: Well, it was the Kahn then. We'd graduated from the Wassermann.

Interviewer: That's the only rejection mechanism you had was for syphilis? Everything else was okay?

Mr. Soucy: Oh yeah. Well, no, I think, orally, if you had like hepatitis, see.

Interviewer: You asked questions.

Mr. Soucy: Yeah, questions. Not tests. We couldn't test—

Interviewer: Have you had yellow eyes lately, my friend?

Mr. Soucy: Well, yeah. For hepatitis, you know, and we didn't have any, no test had been developed. But if a guy had had jaundice of any kind, then he was rejected. It might be gallstones, but—

Interviewer: So, now the hospital, how many beds did that hospital have?

Mr. Soucy: It was about, let's see, what did they, I forget the numbers.

Interviewer: A little more than a thousand, I think.

Mr. Soucy: But when I got there, the next morning when we got up. You know, we didn't have any clothes. All I had was the skivvy shirt and shorts.

Interviewer: That's it? You're walking around in shorts and skivvy shirt?

Mr. Soucy: Well, you know, shorts like—

Interviewer: Bermudas.

Mr. Soucy: And that was the uniform of the day in port. I mean, at sea, but in port, as long as you didn't go ashore, that's what you wore. You know, having bow legs, I never was too fond of—

Interviewer: I can appreciate that. So when you got on shore, all you had was the clothes on your back!

Mr. Soucy: That's right.

Interviewer: Which were wet. And your shoes were wet. So you're sitting the first night, you're sleeping in wet clothes?

Mr. Soucy: No, No. All of us took showers. When I say all, most of us, with our underwear on. So, this was common, even before the war.

Interviewer: But you had no clothes. You didn't have anything.

Mr. Soucy: No.

Interviewer: Did you have your wallet?

Mr. Soucy: Well, I had twenty dollars. I was one of the few guys with money.

Interviewer: You swam with that wallet—

Mr. Soucy: I had that wallet with twenty dollars. I had about a hundred dollars or eighty dollars in my locker. I was going to go play poker with the snipes. You know what a snipe is? That's the engine gang. The ones that ran the engines. And they were, we were smarter—

Interviewer: So you lost that money?

Mr. Soucy: Sure.

Interviewer: It went down with the ship.

Mr. Soucy: Yeah, what I had in my locker—

Interviewer: So you have personal possessions on the Utah yet.

Mr. Soucy: Yes.

Interviewer: You might lay claim to that and make them go get it for you. (laughter)

Mr. Soucy: I've dreamed of it. (laughter)

Interviewer: You want that hundred bucks back. You could have turned it into a thousand.

Mr. Soucy: Well, I had \$480.00 on the books. Now, in 1941, the second-class petty officer made, I think it was \$84.00. If you were a lieutenant, you probably made a couple of hundred. You probably know more about the. So it wasn't big money. So, to save \$480.00—

Interviewer: You did pretty well.

Mr. Soucy: Ah, you don't get that out of your paycheck. That came off the poker table.

Interviewer: And you paid taxes on it, of course. On your winnings.

Mr. Soucy: (unintelligible) (laughter)

Interviewer: What I have found, almost universally, all depression people, all people of this era, really all remain frugal to the day they met their makers. So to this day, you probably think a little bit about blowing any money.

Mr. Soucy: Well, two years ago, the 55th anniversary? I took my family, nine of us. And I got a little. I had a brother that died, and I. Anyway, I ended up with some money and I distributed some to my children but then we all went to Hawaii. They, you know—

Interviewer: So being a French Catholic, right?

Mr. Soucy: Yeah.

Interviewer: So you still have your communion money, probably.

Mr. Soucy: No. I'm Episcopalian now. My wife converted me.

Interviewer: I see. That's what we used to say, in my neighborhood. I'm a Polack. So Polacks, when something is really, really—

Mr. Soucy: (unintelligible)

Interviewer: Dogshit. See, most people don't pick that up. (laughter)

Mr. Soucy: I'm going to have to remember that. (laughter)

Interviewer: Well, I grew up in a bilingual. My dad was one of those immigrants that came over for the work, you know. He came over in early 1910 or something. Started at the bottom and finished there but he was a good guy. (laughter) So, what kind of hour/days were you spending in the hospital. After, originally you were there day and night but after—

Mr. Soucy: Day and night for two days straight and I gave a pint of blood in between. And then, after that, we went to about a nine or ten-hour day, and night and day became a little separate. But when I got there, all the beds were occupied. And in between the lanais, you know, the porch outside, there would be bodies laying. No beds. So we had probably four or five hundred more than whatever the capacity of the hospital was. And the doctors, they were, they worked day and night. You know, because there were so many. It was so unbelievable. And the burn patients, I started to tell you. We took those to Mare Island. And to this day, I have not been able to find what happened to those guys? And, you know, I've seen a couple of these guys, that, real

distorted face, recently from Iraq, you know, they're really disfigured. And, what happened to those guys that were burnt from head to toe?

Interviewer: Most of them died.

Mr. Soucy: Yeah. Well see, we had two guys at the naval hospital. They died in June. And, you know, penicillin hadn't been developed, but if it had, it wouldn't have done any good because what the main organism was (unintelligible). So you can grow it in that. But we'd go around the doctors. See, being a laboratory, I was concerned more with intravenous. 'Cause these guys would get really dehydrated. And I did blood counts, of course, for cross-matches. But the one doctor would have a nurse and they'd go, it would take them about twelve to fourteen hours to go, and they'd tap (sound of tapping) here, you know, like you're tapping for a stud, and they'd cut that skin out. Just that green puss. And veins would even come out! I seen them do, skin like that that's burned, the veins and everything would come out. And I was supposed to start IVs on that. Now, the ones that had socks on, you know, in the foot they're not the easiest veins to hit, you know. That would—

Interviewer: But that's all you had. Perhaps I've already forgotten, but what did you do after the war. What kind of work were you in? Did you stay in the medical business?

Mr. Soucy: Yeah, oh yeah. I was enrolled at Cambridge Junior College, waiting to get into Harvard. I'd already talked to a couple of professors. And I was offered this job in Plainview. I started at about the salary that doctors made. I started at four hundred. Doctors would maybe five or six hundred—

Interviewer: In 19?

Mr. Soucy: 1946.

Interviewer: Doing what you've always done?

Mr. Soucy: Yeah, oh yea! I went in charge of. My experience in the Navy was what they, fitted more to what they wanted. And so these two doctors, Doctor Nichols, father and son. They had illusions of grandeur. Of a Mayo Clinic of North Texas, that sort of stuff. So they, we had good doctors.

Interviewer: Did you stay in that field all your life? Where in north Texas? What city?

Mr. Soucy: Plainview. Yeah, I stayed. I was there from 1946 to 1952. In 1952, there was some clashes going on there with the medical doctors and two or three doctors said, "Why don't you put in a medical lab downtown?" Anyway, I resigned there and got a laboratory in town and—

Interviewer: You started your own commercial lab?

Mr. Soucy: Yeah, I had my own—

Interviewer: And you did that until?

Mr. Soucy: Until I died. No, until, I'm still alive. 1985 I retired completely.

Interviewer: So you really, you've been current—

Mr. Soucy: Well, my. The Navy schools were really good, you know, in laboratory technology. And, well. You know in the Navy, you do an autopsy on everybody that died. Doesn't matter whether you saw them shoot the brains out. You did an autopsy. And one time, about July or August, somewhere along there, we got 154 prisoners of war. Japanese on a small island. There were Japanese and Koreans. And the Koreans, of course, they do not like the

Japanese. They were slave labor. Anyway, the first one of those guys that died, the pathologist is there, you know, and all the medical staff, they have to attend so many. He cuts this guy open, and here comes this, the guy was loaded with ascaris? Worms! You know, they're about this big around and that long. And, Doctor Ethly (pounding sound. Laughter) Well, all the doctors, you know. (unknown medical term) We thought, "How the hell could those guys be fighting us?" They all had malaria, they all had parasites and (unknown medical term) and some parasites that I'd never seen before or since.

Interviewer: They were in bad shape.

Mr. Soucy: Oh yeah. "How in the hell could they be fighting us?"

Interviewer: I've also heard that they're blood loss is critical. They can't lose much blood.

Mr. Soucy: The Japanese? Yeah, they don't have—

Interviewer: They didn't have much. They were small people. You and I are as big as some of the bigger Japanese.

Mr. Soucy: Well, yeah. I think I was telling you, no I was telling that big guy—

Interviewer: Metzler.

Mr. Soucy: One of my close friends was with the Marines. And he was taken prisoner. And those guys, he went from 193 to 98 pounds. They took pictures, you know, when the Americans first took over the prisoner of war camp. You could see the ribs and all, you know.

Interviewer: Did you deal with any of those? Did you see any of those in your capacity?

Mr. Soucy: No. Well, I saw the ones from this island. I forgot the name of the island now. But when we got Japanese prisoners of war, they were treated exactly the same. They ate the same food we did, they got the same medical attention. There was nothing. And at first, I remember. There was an ensign, and he was very closed-mouth, you know. He was one of those that probably thought it was a disgrace to surrender. But about the third or fourth day, I was getting blood every day. He had a low blood count, his laboratory picture was real bad and. So one day, I went in there and I said, "Good Morning." And he spoke for the first time. I'd tell him, you know, I'd want to draw blood from him, not knowing if he understood any English at all. He didn't speak well, but he knew English and when I said I want to get blood from your vein. Very passive. More passive than Admiral Halsey. I drew blood on him too.

Interviewer: Did ya?

Mr. Soucy: Oh yeah. That's a story. That's apart from. That was in June.

Interviewer: Now he was an altar boy—

Mr. Soucy: Halsey was?! Well, you know—

Interviewer: (laughter) No, I'm putting you on.

Mr. Soucy: No! I've got a picture of his youngest daughter! She was a nun. She's a PhD. She taught at the University of California, one of those schools. And she was, two years ago we had a seminar here, were you guys around? The Call to Commanders? And she was here. I got my picture taken with this nun. She said she was an after-thought. (laughter)

Interviewer: I think what we'll do now is end the formal interview with Warrant Officer Soucy. But for those lucky enough to be here and hear the other antidotes, you'll have to tune in another time. Thank you again.

(end of CD)

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