

**National Museum of the Pacific War**  
**Nimitz Education and Research Center**

Fredericksburg, Texas

Interview with

**Hannibal Tadlock**

**United States Navy, World War II in the Pacific and in the Atlantic**

Date of Interview: December 7, 2005

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**Mr. Metzler:** This is Ed Metzler and today is the seventh of December, 2005. I am interviewing Mr. Hannibal Tadlock. This interview is taking place at the Nimitz Museum in Fredericksburg, Texas. This interview is in support of the Center for Pacific War Studies archives for the National Museum of the Pacific War the Historical Commission of Texas for the preservation of historical information related to this site.

Let me start out, Mr. Tadlock, by thanking you for spending the time today to share your experiences during World War II with us and to add to our archives. Let me ask you to start by stating your full name and when and where you were born.

**Mr. Tadlock:** My name is Hannibal C. Tadlock. I was born June 29, 1913, in Brenham, Texas.

**Mr. Metzler:** Where did you grow up as a child?

**Mr. Tadlock:** Mostly in Falls County around Marlin. I was in Ranger, Texas, awhile.

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

**Mr. Tadlock:** Farming, mostly.

**Mr. Metzler:** Mostly farming. So you were on the farm then when you grew up.

**Mr. Tadlock:** Yes, mostly.

**Mr. Metzler:** Did you have brothers and sisters?

**Mr. Tadlock:** I had two brothers.

**Mr. Metzler:** Where did you go to school?

**Mr. Tadlock:** I went to school in Marlin, Texas.

**Mr. Metzler:** Is that where you went to high school?

**Mr. Tadlock:** I went to high school there.

**Mr. Metzler:** Did you graduate from high school then?

**Mr. Tadlock:** Yes.

**Mr. Metzler:** Tell me how you came to go into the military.

**Mr. Tadlock:** During the Depression, if you could get a job, it didn't last long. I said, "Well, shoot. I'm just going to join the Navy." That was 1940.

**Mr. Metzler:** You were working doing what when you decided to go into the Navy?

**Mr. Tadlock:** Mostly just farm work a little.

**Mr. Metzler:** Working on the farm.

**Mr. Tadlock:** Yes.

**Mr. Metzler:** Was it pretty tough on the farm during the Depression?

**Mr. Tadlock:** Yes, it was. Especially in 1925, a dry year and we didn't raise anything.

**Mr. Metzler:** That would make it tough.

**Mr. Tadlock:** It does.

**Mr. Metzler:** Why did you choose the Navy?

**Mr. Tadlock:** I had a cousin that went into the Navy and he seemed to like it. I just thought I'd like to be in the Navy.

**Mr. Metzler:** Had you ever been on a Naval ship before you went into the Navy?

**Mr. Tadlock:** No, I hadn't.

**Mr. Metzler:** I bet you hadn't even been down to see the ocean probably.

**Mr. Tadlock:** Not many times. (laughs)

**Mr. Metzler:** So this is a bit of an adventure for you.

**Mr. Tadlock:** Yes, it was.

**Mr. Metzler:** Tell me about when you went to volunteer for the Navy. What happened?

**Mr. Tadlock:** I was assigned aboard the USS *Nevada*, a battleship.

**Mr. Metzler:** Where did you go to boot camp?

**Mr. Tadlock:** San Diego.

**Mr. Metzler:** When you volunteered, where did you go? Houston or San Antonio?

**Mr. Tadlock:** Dallas.

**Mr. Metzler:** You went to Dallas. How did you get to San Diego for training there?

**Mr. Tadlock:** They sent me from Dallas on a train.

**Mr. Metzler:** What was that trip like?

**Mr. Tadlock:** It was okay.

**Mr. Metzler:** That was kind of new for you, wasn't it?

**Mr. Tadlock:** Yes, it was.

**Mr. Metzler:** What did they do to you in San Diego?

**Mr. Tadlock:** I wasn't there too long before the war. I wasn't there too long.

**Mr. Metzler:** Did you do a lot of exercises, running, and getting in shape?

**Mr. Tadlock:** A lot of exercises and all kinds of stuff.

**Mr. Metzler:** Did they tell you what your duties might be when you actually went into the Navy?

**Mr. Tadlock:** Not really. Not at boot camp.

**Mr. Metzler:** When boot camp was over then you were assigned to a ship. Is that correct?

**Mr. Tadlock:** Right. I was assigned to the USS *Nevada*.

**Mr. Metzler:** When did you actually report to Pearl Harbor? Do you remember about when that was?

**Mr. Tadlock:** Best I remember, I believe we rode the *Saratoga*. I believe we boarded it in the islands.

**Mr. Metzler:** How did you get from San Diego to the *Nevada*? On the *Saratoga*?

**Mr. Tadlock:** On the *Saratoga*, I believe.

**Mr. Metzler:** You rode her out to—

**Mr. Tadlock:** I can't remember now, but it was in the islands.

**Mr. Metzler:** You went out to the Hawaiian Islands.

**Mr. Tadlock:** Yes, I was assigned to the *Nevada* then. That's the way I got out there.

**Mr. Metzler:** After you got out there that's when you found out you were going to be on the *Nevada*.

**Mr. Tadlock:** Right.

**Mr. Metzler:** Tell me the first time you saw the *Nevada*. What was that like?

**Mr. Tadlock:** It was quite an experience to get on a big ship with those guns on it. It was like it was going to be okay.

**Mr. Metzler:** What was your assignment there? What were your duties on the *Nevada*?

**Mr. Tadlock:** I was what we called Oil King. You had to test the salinity of the water going to those boys, you know. It couldn't be less than 10% salt. Then we were in charge of all the oil that was on there and all.

**Mr. Metzler:** You were down basically in the engine room then, huh?

**Mr. Tadlock:** Yes, and I did watches in the fire room. That is, when we were underway.

**Mr. Metzler:** This was in what, early 1941 when you first went to Pearl Harbor, or was it still in 1940?

**Mr. Tadlock:** 1940. We operated between the islands and the West Coast.

**Mr. Metzler:** So the *Nevada* went back and forth between Hawaii and the West Coast?

**Mr. Tadlock:** Right. Sometimes we'd anchor there in San Diego and sometimes we'd anchor out in Long Beach.

**Mr. Metzler:** Did you have a lot of training exercises and things like that while you were on board training for combat?

**Mr. Tadlock:** Not really because it was mostly in engineering.

**Mr. Metzler:** Let's talk about what happened on December 7, 1941. Tell me what you were doing and what you remember.

**Mr. Tadlock:** A few days before Pearl Harbor, as far as we could hear, we weren't about to get in a war anyway. A few days before Pearl Harbor, I had an attack of appendicitis. The doctor usually made his rounds about 8 o'clock in the mornings and he said, "I'll probably let you out in the morning," which was the 7<sup>th</sup> of December. I was laying there looking out the porthole waiting for him to come in and dismiss me. We heard a machine gun hitting and I said, "One of them nuts has gone crazy shooting those fish." We didn't think about war. Then in a little bit, a hospital corpsman came in and said, "The Japs are attacking." We thought he'd done cracked up. Then, boom! Boy, then we knew it was business. So we got up out of that bunk. I haven't seen that doctor yet and he hasn't seen me. (laughs)

**Mr. Metzler:** So you're still waiting for that doctor to show up and have a look at that appendix.

**Mr. Tadlock:** Yes.

**Mr. Metzler:** That's sixty-four years ago; he may not be coming.

**Mr. Tadlock:** I don't know whether he made it or not.

**Mr. Metzler:** So, you were in the sick bay.

**Mr. Tadlock:** Yes, when it started.

**Mr. Metzler:** You were looking out a porthole when all of a sudden you see firing going on.

**Mr. Tadlock:** We thought some nut got hold of a machine gun and went to shooting those fish out there is what I was thinking. Way we heard it, we weren't about to

get in the war, you know.

**Mr. Metzler:** Yes, everybody didn't think there was a war coming. So this was a real surprise for you, is that right?

**Mr. Tadlock:** Sure was. That was a surprise.

**Mr. Metzler:** Tell me about the big boom. You mentioned a big boom. That must have been—

**Mr. Tadlock:** I heard a big boom. I guess it hit the ship. You know, usually it takes a long time to get a ship underway because you got to get the steam up, but we got underway in nothing flat. Boy, as soon as we got enough steam to hook 'em, we hooked 'em. But they sunk us before we got out of the harbor. It was the only battleship we got underway, but they sunk us before we got out of the harbor.

We'd go onboard every day. We'd go anyplace we could find to sleep. At the rec hall or somewhere, a place to lay down. Then we'd go back aboard and dig bodies out and stack them from the after-gun turret all the way to the fantail. Shipmates bodies. Then later on every time a ship would come in, we'd put a wartime complement on it.

**Mr. Metzler:** Put a what?

**Mr. Tadlock:** A wartime complement onboard. By just about the fourth day, the *Lexington* came in. I was assigned to it.

**Mr. Metzler:** Let's go back to the *Nevada* for a second. She put underway in record time after the attack.

**Mr. Tadlock:** Yes.

**Mr. Metzler:** But she was hit before she got underway.

**Mr. Tadlock:** Yes.

**Mr. Metzler:** As I remember the story on the *Nevada*, they were afraid she would sink and so they scuttled her, didn't they?

**Mr. Tadlock:** Yes, they did.

**Mr. Metzler:** In the shallow waters to get her out of the way.

**Mr. Tadlock:** Pushed us over there to the bank and we just walked across on planks.

**Mr. Metzler:** Did you ever get out of the sick bay? Tell me what happened during all of this with you. Were you still in the sick bay or what?

**Mr. Tadlock:** No, I got out.

**Mr. Metzler:** You got out even with appendicitis.

**Mr. Tadlock:** The doctor was going to dismiss me.

**Mr. Metzler:** Oh, he did; tell me about it.

**Mr. Tadlock:** That was a few days before Pearl Harbor. On the morning of the seventh when he said, "I'll probably dismiss you because you're doing okay." While I was laying there waiting for him to come by and dismiss me, I heard shooting out there. The hospital corpsman came in and we thought he was nuts. But when we heard that boom—

**Mr. Metzler:** Where did you go when you heard the boom?

**Mr. Tadlock:** I went to a fire room as Oil King and got underway.

**Mr. Metzler:** So you went down to your station.

**Mr. Tadlock:** Yes.

**Mr. Metzler:** How were you feeling about then? You were okay; you had recovered?

**Mr. Tadlock:** Oh, yes. I felt fine.

**Mr. Metzler:** Where were your officers during this period of time? Were they ordering you all around and telling you what to do or how did that work?

**Mr. Tadlock:** You just automatically went to your battle station. You knew what to do.

**Mr. Metzler:** After the *Nevada* was run aground, you then were taken off the ship and billeted onshore, is that correct?

**Mr. Tadlock:** Yes.

**Mr. Metzler:** This is before the *Saratoga* came in though. The first four days or so, were you still onboard the *Nevada* or were you onshore and then going back and



forth to the *Nevada*?

**Mr. Tadlock:** Yes, we go back on the beach and sleep.

**Mr. Metzler:** Sleep on the beach.

**Mr. Tadlock:** Yes, in a recreation hall, I believe. Then we'd go onboard and dig out bodies every day.

**Mr. Metzler:** Digging out the bodies. Did you have to do that?

**Mr. Tadlock:** Yes, we'd stack them back on the main deck from the after-gun turret all the way to the fantail.

**Mr. Metzler:** That must have been a terrible thing.

**Mr. Tadlock:** It was. Shipmates. I don't know how many there were, but it was a gruesome picture.

**Mr. Metzler:** Yes, yes. That went on for several days?

**Mr. Tadlock:** Seems like it was about four days, the best I can remember. But every time a ship would come in, they'd put a wartime complement on it.

**Mr. Metzler:** Tell me about when you were transferred then to the *Saratoga*.

**Mr. Tadlock:** I can't remember where I got aboard but I believe it went to the islands. But I was assigned to the *Nevada*.

**Mr. Metzler:** When you started out you were assigned to the *Nevada*.

**Mr. Tadlock:** Yes.

**Mr. Metzler:** How long were you a crewman on the *Nevada* then?

**Mr. Tadlock:** It was over a year.

**Mr. Metzler:** How long did you stay with the *Nevada* after she was hit during Pearl Harbor before you went to another ship?

**Mr. Tadlock:** About three or four days.

**Mr. Metzler:** Then you went to which ship?

**Mr. Tadlock:** I went to the *Lexington*.

**Mr. Metzler:** The *Lexington* was one of the aircraft carriers that was out on maneuvers.

**Mr. Tadlock:** Right.

**Mr. Metzler:** When she came back in, you were assigned to the *Lex*.

**Mr. Tadlock:** Yes.

**Mr. Metzler:** This was the first *Lexington*, wasn't it? The original *Lexington* not the one that came along later.

**Mr. Tadlock:** Yes.

**Mr. Metzler:** What was your station on the *Lexington*?

**Mr. Tadlock:** I was in the fire room, mostly.

**Mr. Metzler:** Mostly in the fire room.

**Mr. Tadlock:** Yes, we had watches in the fire room.

**Mr. Metzler:** You were doing similar things to what you were doing on the *Nevada*.

**Mr. Tadlock:** Right.

**Mr. Metzler:** How was the *Lexington* different from the *Nevada*? Was it more modern, bigger, easier to work there?

**Mr. Tadlock:** It was bigger. It was a pretty good sized ship. The *Lexington* and *Saratoga* were the biggest carriers we had when the war started.

**Mr. Metzler:** So you were in a bunk along with a lot of other guys.

**Mr. Tadlock:** Yes.

**Mr. Metzler:** Did you have any good buddies that you got to know pretty well on the *Lex*?

**Mr. Tadlock:** Oh, yes. In fact, there's one buddy, we were on the *Nevada* together when it got sunk. We were on the *Lexington* together when it got sunk. We were sent on the *Core* that was commissioned in Tacoma, Washington. They sent us over to the Atlantic to hunt down German U-boats and escorting those

convoys that were there. Then when we got separated in 1945, we were still in the Atlantic. We were building a big carrier in Newport News, Virginia. It was in dry dock there and they sent some of us over there to put it in commission. We lived in a kind of a receiving station there until they got it commissioned.

**Mr. Metzler:** Which aircraft carrier was that?

**Mr. Tadlock:** It was the USS *Boxer*.

**Mr. Metzler:** Was that a smaller carrier?

**Mr. Tadlock:** No, it was a large carrier. The one I got off of was smaller, the *Core*. He stayed on the *Core*. We were together on three ships.

**Mr. Metzler:** I'll be darn. After that second ship got shot out from underneath you, you must wondering how bad your luck was going to get.

**Mr. Tadlock:** (laughs) I did.

**Mr. Metzler:** Tell me what happened to you when you were on the *Lexington*. She departed from Pearl Harbor, where did she go?

**Mr. Tadlock:** The first time we went, we were out for sixty days. While we were out, there were about eighteen of us, bombers got after us.

**Mr. Metzler:** Oh, really.

**Mr. Tadlock:** Came over nine in a squadron.

**Mr. Metzler:** Were these the Japanese Bettys or something like that?

**Mr. Tadlock:** Yes, something like that. I don't know if they were two-engine or not. I'm not sure, but there were nine in a squadron. The gunners and fighters shot them all down.

**Mr. Metzler:** Now this was when you were on the high seas?

**Mr. Tadlock:** Yes, we were out there. The next morning those Japanese said they'd sunk the *Lexington*. We kind of got a kick out of that.

**Mr. Metzler:** Who said that, Tokyo Rose?

**Mr. Tadlock:** Yes, I guess that's who it was. Just scuttlebutt, I guess you'd call it. But they didn't get a hit. I did hear a concussion, I think one went off close.

**Mr. Metzler:** But no direct hits.

**Mr. Tadlock:** No direct hits. We'd been out sixty days and we had to go back in and take on stores.

**Mr. Metzler:** Went back to Pearl?

**Mr. Tadlock:** Back to Pearl to take on some stores. Then we went out and that's when we went to Coral Sea.

**Mr. Metzler:** Now you're headed back to the Coral Sea in a pretty good size fleet.

**Mr. Tadlock:** Yes, it was a pretty good size fleet out there. I think that started about the fourth of May 1942 and ended the eighth of May. Got sunk the eighth of May.

**Mr. Metzler:** Tell me what happened during that battle.

**Mr. Tadlock:** Let's stop just a minute.

**Mr. Metzler:** Sure.

**Mr. Metzler:** All right, we've started up again. Go ahead.

**Mr. Tadlock:** The Battle of Coral Sea, like I said, started about the fourth and lasted until the eighth.

**Mr. Metzler:** Of May.

**Mr. Tadlock:** Yes.

**Mr. Metzler:** You're down there firing the boilers and testing the water and doing things like that?

**Mr. Tadlock:** Yes. What happened on the eighth of May, they sounded General Quarters about 8 o'clock in the morning. We said, "Well, the Japs finally located us." We said it would just be a matter of time. Then every so often they'd say so many Jap planes, so many miles away, so many Jap planes. Just kept that going.

**Mr. Metzler:** So they told you guys what was going on even though you're down several decks below.

**Mr. Tadlock:** Yes.

**Mr. Metzler:** Well, that's good.

**Mr. Tadlock:** So many Jap planes, so many miles away. Then after a while they said so many Jap planes diving on the ship. Then boom, bam. That's when it happened. We got a torpedo on one side of the ship that killed everybody in the fire room.

**Mr. Metzler:** Was that close to where you were?

**Mr. Tadlock:** I was on the other side. If it had got on this side, it would have gotten us. After it did that, the ship started listing. Then they shifted the ballast around and got it on an even keel. Then we did twenty-four knots. They had already hit us topside. Two bombs hit the flight deck and everything like that.

**Mr. Metzler:** So she had a torpedo in her and she had gotten hit on top.

**Mr. Tadlock:** Yes, and our planes couldn't land back. They had to get on other carriers out there.

**Mr. Metzler:** So, you got the ballast shifted to where she stabilized.

**Mr. Tadlock:** Yes, on an even keel.

**Mr. Metzler:** Then what happened?

**Mr. Tadlock:** We were doing about twenty-four or five knots.

**Mr. Metzler:** That's good.

**Mr. Tadlock:** We couldn't get control of the fires, the external fires the bombs started and everything. We were going along there and we were down in the fire room, me and my crew were. After we got going, pretty soon it got quiet. Seemed like the ship stopped. It was just as quiet. We lost all communication down there.

**Mr. Metzler:** Did you lose electricity?

**Mr. Tadlock:** Blowers went off. Only thing we had, there might have been a little auxiliary

light. We didn't know what was going on. Couldn't hear nothing. No communications. Seemed like the ship was just sitting there. Air you get comes from topside from the blowers. We weren't getting any air. We stayed there awhile and I said, "We better get out of here. We don't know what's going on, whether the ship's sinking or not." We couldn't tell if it was going.

I went up there. I was about the biggest man and I'd get a couple of dogs loose, you know. I'd come back down and go back in and get a couple more loose and come back down. By that time, I couldn't raise my arms it was getting so hot down there. And I was defeated. I couldn't –

**Mr. Metzler:** It was getting that hot.

**Mr. Tadlock:** Yes, no air and no light.

**Mr. Metzler:** And you and your buddies are down there, your crew.

**Mr. Tadlock:** About four of us.

**Mr. Metzler:** Four of you.

**Mr. Tadlock:** I was just defeated. It was so hot, I couldn't raise my arms, so I just –. We were down there and I said, "Well, this is the end of the road, boys." When you know you're gone, it seems like a whole screen flashes in front of you, past lives and everything. That suspense and stress, I guess everybody's got a breaking point, and this one old boy, he just cracked up. Tried to climb the bulkheads. The steel walls. We tried to calm him down. He said, "Go away, you're the devil." Like I say, I guess everybody's got a breaking point. He was going to die. He knew that.

After a little bit, we were all about to get beyond ourselves, I guess, we heard some tapping up there.

**Mr. Metzler:** Heard some tapping up there.

**Mr. Tadlock:** Yes. Heard them knocking those dogs loose and open the door. It was like angels from heaven.

**Mr. Metzler:** Who was it?

**Mr. Tadlock:** Just checking all the water-tight doors in case somebody was trapped in there.

**Mr. Metzler:** They had heard your tapping?

**Mr. Tadlock:** I don't know. They went on because I guess the ship was fixing to sink anyway.

**Mr. Metzler:** So they let you out.

**Mr. Tadlock:** Yes, because it had been awhile. They check all the fire rooms in the place. They check all the water-tight compartments. But we knew that was all of it.

**Mr. Metzler:** That did seem like an angel that opened that door for you.

**Mr. Tadlock:** Yes, because we knew we were gone. There was no way out. We didn't know if the ship was sinking. We couldn't do nothing. It was getting hot because your air comes from blowers topside. That's the air conditioner. Pretty soon it gets pretty hot.

**Mr. Metzler:** Did your whole life flash before you?

**Mr. Tadlock:** You better believe it did. I don't know if it does everybody that way or not, but just boom, just like a flash. You think about dying. You think about your folks. You know you're going to die.

**Mr. Metzler:** The crew member who lost his control, was he okay then? He was able to escape with the rest of you?

**Mr. Tadlock:** Oh, yes. They took him to get him aboard some— In fact, when they sent me back to Tacoma, I saw him and he was fine. He was fine. He said, "No below decks for me." But what's the difference? Above decks it's bombs and below decks torpedoes, so what difference does it make?

**Mr. Metzler:** When they opened the water-tight hatches and you guys got out, then where did you go?

**Mr. Tadlock:** Went on topside.

**Mr. Metzler:** What did it look like up there?

**Mr. Tadlock:** You got some holes in the deck and the planes couldn't light. They still had internal explosions. They were afraid the whole thing was going to blow and kill us all, I guess. They've got so many water-tight compartments that it takes them a long time to sink.

**Mr. Metzler:** That's true.

**Mr. Tadlock:** So they said, "Abandon ship." Everybody was on topside swinging down ropes, jumping over. A destroyer pulled alongside of us.

**Mr. Metzler:** How did you go over?

**Mr. Tadlock:** Like I said, they were jumping and a destroyer pulled alongside. I swung down there on that and didn't even get wet.

**Mr. Metzler:** You didn't even get wet!

**Mr. Tadlock:** (laughs) They accused me of walking of water because two ships sunk and I didn't get my feet wet.

**Mr. Metzler:** (laughs) Well now, this is not much of a story. You didn't even get in the drink!

**Mr. Tadlock:** (laughs) I know it.

**Mr. Metzler:** Isn't that something.

**Mr. Tadlock:** I rode that destroyer about three days. I went to the Tonga Islands. Then we got on the *Barnett* transport and went back to the States. It took us about ten days.

**Mr. Metzler:** You weren't hurt at all then?

**Mr. Tadlock:** No.

**Mr. Metzler:** What a miracle. Did you feel lucky?

**Mr. Tadlock:** I felt fortunate. (laughs)

**Mr. Metzler:** I guess so.

**Mr. Tadlock:** If you're not where the bomb hits or the torpedo hits— And I didn't have to jump in that water. Of course, boats from other ships were picking up the ones that were in the water. I hope they got all of them.

**Mr. Metzler:** I'm making some notes here so we'll have some records.

You got back to Tacoma in one piece after losing two ships and feeling pretty



lucky.

**Mr. Tadlock:** I felt very lucky.

**Mr. Metzler:** Then what happened?

**Mr. Tadlock:** Several of us were in the receiving station there—no, it wasn't either. In Tacoma we lived on the beach. About four of us rented an apartment. They weren't quite ready to launch the ship yet.

**Mr. Metzler:** Which ship was this now?

**Mr. Tadlock:** *Core*, USS *Core*.

**Mr. Metzler:** Spell it.

**Mr. Tadlock:** *C-o-r-e*. It was a CVE, a small carrier. We were waiting for it to go into commission. We'd go aboard it every day you know, while they were finishing building it. Getting acquainted with the systems in the engineering department.

**Mr. Metzler:** What was your assignment going to be on her?

**Mr. Tadlock:** I was assigned in the fire room.

**Mr. Metzler:** Fire room again, okay. So, she was finally launched then and you were a part of her original crew?

**Mr. Tadlock:** Yes. She was launched with another ship. They put two of them in commission. That one was the *Core* and that's when they sent us to the Canal. They sent us over there hunting down German U-boats and escorting those convoys.

**Mr. Metzler:** So, you went down the West Coast and through the Canal and over into the Atlantic.

**Mr. Tadlock:** To the East Coast, yes.

**Mr. Metzler:** Your assignment was to escort the convoys across the North Atlantic.

**Mr. Tadlock:** Yes, and hunt down those German U-boats.

**Mr. Metzler:** This is in 1942 still?

**Mr. Tadlock:** By the time we got the ship commissioned, it was '43.

**Mr. Metzler:** Now we're in '43. Tell me about your first trip across the Atlantic in your new role. What was that like?

**Mr. Tadlock:** We were hunting down those German U-boats and one time they thought they spotted them.

**Mr. Metzler:** You're patrolling; you're protecting the transports and the cargo ships and the liberty ships headed across the Atlantic and you're hunting U-boats. Did you ever catch one?

**Mr. Tadlock:** Yes, sunk one. Well, I don't know how many we sunk because I wasn't in that part.

**Mr. Metzler:** You were down running the engines.

**Mr. Tadlock:** At that particular time, I was master-at-arms on this ship, police you call them. I probably told you awhile ago that they got about thirty-five survivors off of it. Got them out of the water.

**Mr. Metzler:** From the *Lexington*?

**Mr. Tadlock:** No, we were on the *Core*. They sunk that German U-boat.

**Mr. Metzler:** So you got thirty-five of the German survivors.

**Mr. Tadlock:** Yes.

**Mr. Metzler:** You were telling me about the officers. So, you brought those Germans onboard.

**Mr. Tadlock:** They were on the sub that we sunk.

**Mr. Metzler:** They were really nice guys?

**Mr. Tadlock:** Best old boys you'd want to meet. They were fighting because you have to. Because we have to. But those German officers, boy they were snooty. It hurt their ego because they got captured, you know. That's the reason. They were a different caliber altogether.

**Mr. Metzler:** The regular sailors were just regular old guys but the officers were different.

**Mr. Tadlock:** They had a job to do and they had to do it.

**Mr. Metzler:** Tell me about the officers. Tell me some more about the German officers.

**Mr. Tadlock:** I didn't have much to do with them because they were in the officers' country. They wouldn't have to be treated like everybody else.

**Mr. Metzler:** They kept their officers separate from the enlisted men, even the prisoners?

**Mr. Tadlock:** Yes. Those old boys were very polite. You'd bring them in to eat and they'd all line up. They wouldn't sit down until they all got lined up together.

**Mr. Metzler:** Isn't that something.

**Mr. Tadlock:** There was one old boy, he had a beautiful, different handwriting. He wrote me a little poem in a little book I had. I lost the thing before I got to read it. I would have kept it. But they were good boys.

**Mr. Metzler:** Could they speak English?

**Mr. Tadlock:** A lot of them could speak good English.

**Mr. Metzler:** Really. Could you speak German?

**Mr. Tadlock:** No. *Mr. Tadlock speaks a phrase in Spanish that roughly translates: I studied Spanish and spoke a little to those men.* (laughs)

**Mr. Metzler:** That was about it. *Poquito*. Did you actually get to talk quite a bit to some of these German submariners?

**Mr. Tadlock:** Oh, yes, we'd talk to them.

**Mr. Metzler:** Would they tell you about their life in Germany before the war? What did they talk about?

**Mr. Tadlock:** One of the things they said was, "This is the best food we could get in the best hotel in Germany." That's what they said.

**Mr. Metzler:** Really. Maybe they were just saying that to get second helpings. (laughs) How long were you on the *Core* then? How many transport convoys did you protect?

**Mr. Tadlock:** I don't know. I think we took a load of planes once to Liverpool, England.

Then Scotland once.

**Mr. Metzler:** What was your port in the U.S., Newport News?

**Mr. Tadlock:** No, Portsmouth.

**Mr. Metzler:** Up there in New England. You were on the *Core* then until the war was over or what?

**Mr. Tadlock:** No, in 1945 that's when they put the *Boxer* in commission.

**Mr. Metzler:** That was before the war was over?

**Mr. Tadlock:** Yes.

**Mr. Metzler:** Okay, so she was launched from Newport?

**Mr. Tadlock:** Newport, Virginia.

**Mr. Metzler:** You were on the crew on her then?

**Mr. Tadlock:** Yes.

**Mr. Metzler:** What was your assignment there?

**Mr. Tadlock:** It was mostly engine room.

**Mr. Metzler:** You're in the engine room still. What kind of a ship was she, really modern and clean? Tell me how it felt.

**Mr. Tadlock:** It was a modern ship and a large ship. It looked like it would be a good duty. When they put it in commission, we went through the Canal and went to San Francisco and had some guns we had to put on or something. To go through the locks, you had to be pulled through it, you know. There was something they had to put on there. When we were down there, the war was over in Japan.

**Mr. Metzler:** The war was over as you were going through the locks?

**Mr. Tadlock:** After we got in to San Francisco.

**Mr. Metzler:** You started out in the Pacific; went to the Atlantic and then went back to the Pacific on four different ships.

**Mr. Tadlock:** Yes, I was on four ships. Three of them had duty; two of them got sunk.

**Mr. Metzler:** Isn't that something. Which one was your favorite ship?

**Mr. Tadlock:** I liked the carriers pretty well. I liked the *Lexington* and I liked the *Boxer*. There was a lady who gave the skipper a boxer bull. (laughs) We went on a shake-down cruise and they started firing those guns and that dog went wild.

**Mr. Metzler:** I bet.

**Mr. Tadlock:** The skipper said, "When we get back to port, take this dog off of this ship."

**Mr. Metzler:** Turned out it wasn't a Navy dog. Probably couldn't swim either.

I have a question for you. Did you ever get seasick during any of your duty at sea?

**Mr. Tadlock:** Never did get seasick.

**Mr. Metzler:** That always amazes me. Some sailors it never bothers them and others they never get over it.

**Mr. Tadlock:** We had an old boy down in the fire room, we thought he was going to die. He wouldn't eat and we told him, "You gotta get up there and eat." Boy, he was sick, man. Some of them had chronic seasickness. We had one old boy when I was on the *Nevada* before the war, every time he'd go out he'd get sick a little bit but that was it.

**Mr. Metzler:** Get it over with.

**Mr. Tadlock:** But for some of them, boy I tell you, it was like they were going to die.

**Mr. Metzler:** What was the food like on those ships? The Germans thought the food was awfully good—what did you think about it?

**Mr. Tadlock:** It was fine. It was good.

**Mr. Metzler:** It seemed pretty good for an old farm boy, huh?

**Mr. Tadlock:** You better believe it.

**Mr. Metzler:** And it was free.

**Mr. Tadlock:** Yes, free. (laughs) After the *Boxer*, I was chief petty officer and I really liked it then because the chiefs had their own quarters like the officers, you know. If you wanted your eggs sunny-side-up, you'd get them sunny-side-up.

**Mr. Metzler:** You said how you wanted them and that's the way they came.

**Mr. Tadlock:** Yes. I was chief machinist's mate a little over a year before I got out of the Navy and I got discharged.

**Mr. Metzler:** This was after the war then?

**Mr. Tadlock:** Yes, '46. The lieutenant commander, he was the chief engineer of the ship, he said, "If you decide to come back in the Navy, I want you on this ship." I said, "If I come back in the Navy, I want on this ship." But I messed around. I had ninety days to go back with the same rank.

**Mr. Metzler:** You let that ninety days pass?

**Mr. Tadlock:** Yes and I didn't go back. I messed around and said, "I gotta go to work." I got an application for the police department. They didn't have any openings, so I went to work for TP&L, Texas Power and Light Company. I worked there a few weeks and the police called and said they had an opening. I told the superintendent, "I was hired here temporarily and I know if I keep my nose clean, I'll have a job at the police department." He said, "We hire everybody temporarily. You can stay if you want to." Then I didn't know what to do for sure, but I took the police department because I knew that would be a steady job. The superintendent said they hired everybody temporarily, which they probably did, I don't know.

**Mr. Metzler:** Looking back on the period during World War II, what was the experience that you remember that when you were the most afraid or the most concerned about what was going to happen to you? What was the low point of that whole period for you?

**Mr. Talbot:** When we were trapped down there in that fire room. I knew it was over.

**Mr. Metzler:** What was the funniest experience that you remember? Do you have any humorous experiences from that whole period that you sit back and laugh at now after it's all over?

**Mr. Tadlock:** Well, yes.

**Mr. Metzler:** Tell me about some of those.

**Mr. Tadlock:** When we were on the *Core*, they sounded General Quarters one night.

**Mr. Metzler:** On the USS *Core*.

**Mr. Tadlock:** Yes. They sounded General Quarters because they saw a sub or something. Got up there and this boy over me, he was a little smaller than I was, he got my pants on.

**Mr. Metzler:** Start over again. I've lost track here.

**Mr. Tadlock:** We were underway and they sounded General Quarters. They had sighted a submarine. So, we jumped up and put on our clothes and this guy under me, he was smaller than I was, he grabbed my pants and put them on. I tried to put his on. I pulled them up and I couldn't button them. I said, "Next time you do that, I'm going to pull your head off." (laughs)

**Mr. Metzler:** He had more than enough room in his pants but your pants were a bit tight.

**Mr. Tadlock:** He did. He wasn't about to stop and pull them off. Went to his battle station.

**Mr. Metzler:** Did you guys swap pants or did you go up there in his pants?

**Mr. Tadlock:** I went up there. I got everything but the top button. I couldn't button it.

**Mr. Metzler:** Tell me some other funny things that happened to you.

**Mr. Tadlock:** That might not be safe. (laughs)

**Mr. Metzler:** Maybe that's it.

**Mr. Tadlock:** I'd have to think a little bit.

**Mr. Metzler:** Did you have communications back home? Did you write letters home? Did you get packages from back home during this time?

**Mr. Tadlock:** Yes, we had communication. Mostly letters, sometimes calls.

**Mr. Metzler:** Did you stay in touch with your parents?

**Mr. Tadlock:** Yes, pretty well in touch.

We were talking about I had that attack of appendicitis. After the *Lexington* got sunk, on the way home I had an attack of appendicitis before I got to

Dallas. There happened to be a doctor on there. He had the porters bring a pan of ice water to put on my stomach. After we got to Dallas, they even had an ambulance waiting for me. I didn't know that. They took me to St. Paul Hospital.

**Mr. Metzler:** This is when you were coming in on the train?

**Mr. Tadlock:** Going home on leave.

**Mr. Metzler:** This is leave in between the *Lexington* and the *Core*?

**Mr. Tadlock:** Yes, after I got two ships shot out from under me, they let me go for a few days.

**Mr. Metzler:** They let you go home.

So, they put ice on you.

**Mr. Tadlock:** Yes. They shipped me to the hospital and I told them, "I think I can go home. Make it." They said, "Well, you might and again you may not. It may burst." I said, "Okay, go ahead." I went in there and they operated on me. Took it out. When I woke up, the nurses were standing there giggling. I said, "What are you all giggling about?" I had just woke up. They said, "We're not going to tell you." So I don't know what I said. (laughs)

**Mr. Metzler:** There was something you said, but they wouldn't tell you.

**Mr. Tadlock:** They giggled as I was coming out from the influence.

**Mr. Metzler:** You don't know what you said.

**Mr. Tadlock:** I don't know.

**Mr. Metzler:** You maybe don't want to know what you said.

**Mr. Tadlock:** Might not! The war was new then. Lots of people would come in. Of course, it would be a coincidence if I knew any of their relatives, you know. The USO girls would come up there bringing the cookies and all that. Treated you like a king.

**Mr. Metzler:** Well, good. You deserved it at that point, I think.

**Mr. Tadlock:** It was something else.



**Mr. Metzler:** Did your parents know you were on the *Lexington*?

**Mr. Tadlock:** Yes, they did.

**Mr. Metzler:** They probably found out about the sinking of the *Lexington* before they heard from you.

**Mr. Tadlock:** Probably did, yes, I think so.

**Mr. Metzler:** What do you think was going through their minds?

**Mr. Tadlock:** They were just wondering “if.”

**Mr. Metzler:** How long was it before they knew you were okay?

*End on side 1. Side 2 begins*

**Mr. Metzler:** Okay, so there you were in the Navy for four years, two ships shot out from underneath you.

**Mr. Tadlock:** Six years.

**Mr. Metzler:** Six years, that’s right. 1940 to ‘46. When you came back after World War II, did you feel like a different person compared to when you went into World War II? How did it change you? Or did it?

**Mr. Tadlock:** I don’t think it changed me really, not that I remember or can think of.

**Mr. Metzler:** So you didn’t look at life differently after that near-death experience?

**Mr. Tadlock:** No, not really. I didn’t feel like no hero but I felt like a survivor.

**Mr. Metzler:** I bet you were a little bit more thankful maybe than you were when you went in.

**Mr. Tadlock:** Better believe it. You bet, yes.

**Mr. Metzler:** What else can we talk about here while we’re reviewing your experiences? You’ve got quite a story here. What have you forgotten to tell me?

**Mr. Tadlock:** You may not even want to hear that. (laughs)

**Mr. Metzler:** You’ll have to let me know. If you’ve got stories you don’t want to tell,

that's okay, too. But there must be some other things.

**Mr. Tadlock:** I was just kidding. I'll have to think a little while on that.

**Mr. Metzler:** That's fine. Don't worry about it. Usually what we do is when we get towards the end of the interview is just kind of a chance to think back over anything you've done and maybe cause you to think of some other things to tell.

I'd like to go back for a moment. You said that one of those German crewmen from the sunk U-boat wrote you a poem. Tell me again, you lost it or what?

**Mr. Tadlock:** Yes, I lost it. I don't know what kind of handwriting you call it.

**Mr. Metzler:** A German kind of a script.

**Mr. Tadlock:** Just the best old boys. They just wanted to do something.

**Mr. Metzler:** Did you ever have a chance to be in contact with any of them after the war was over.

**Mr. Tadlock:** Yes, we did. They used to come to Waco. They used to have reunions, the Germans that were captured.

**Mr. Metzler:** Oh, really.

**Mr. Tadlock:** They used to have reunions in Waco.

**Mr. Metzler:** Were they in prison? Was there a prisoner of war camp in Waco for the Germans?

**Mr. Tadlock:** Yes, there was a place there that they kept them. I don't know how long. I understand that they would meet and have a reunion there. Used to.

**Mr. Metzler:** They'd come all the way back from Germany?

**Mr. Tadlock:** That's what I heard. I'm not positive on that.

**Mr. Metzler:** Isn't that something? They must have kind of liked it in Waco.

**Mr. Tadlock:** Probably did.

**Mr. Metzler:** This has been a really interesting discussion and I appreciate you taking the time to share your experiences with us, Hannibal. What did everybody call you when you were in the Navy? Did they call you Hannibal or did you have a nickname?

**Mr. Tadlock:** Some called me "Tad." Some called me "Tadpole."

**Mr. Metzler:** They used your last name then.

**Mr. Tadlock:** Yes, and some called me "Hab," short for Hannibal. I've been called everything.

**Mr. Metzler:** You answered to anything.

**Mr. Tadlock:** I was on the police department thirty-two years.

**Mr. Metzler:** You caught it there, too, I bet.

Mr. Tadlock, again thank you so much for sharing your experiences with us. I just want you to know that we appreciate your time and I speak for everybody else in saying we appreciate your serving and saving our country during World War II. Thank you so much for that.

**Mr. Tadlock:** I'm just thankful that as many of us as did got out. We lost a lot of them.

**Mr. Metzler:** That's right, a lot of them didn't make it. Thank you.

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