

Interview with Al Stevens

Interviewed by Dr. Lindley

This is Dr. Lindley and this is an oral history on Mr. Al Stevens, collected on 27 March 2006, Fredericksburg, Texas at the Museum.

Mr. Stevens we appreciate you coming and we're delighted you have agreed to tell us your story.

Why don't you start?

Mr. Stevens: The impetus for telling this story has come to me thorough the years, because the outstanding picture of the signing on the quarter deck of the *Missouri* is the picture that has come down through the years. But, I've not seen anywhere in print, radio or TV, some of the side line activities that occurred after what appeared to be the end. Many things happened after Macarthur signed the documents and went back to his hotel in downtown Tokyo for three weeks, he and his group. During those three weeks, they were the only armed forces of the United States, in Japan, until three weeks later. Our Amphibious Group 8 landed troops at Wakanoura, which is, probably, five hundred miles southwest of Tokyo. Additional armed forces came ashore in Japan and found out how the reception was really going to be. Through the years I've been looking for the evidence of this kind of information and I had not seen any. So, I thought I would offer what I know about happenings after Mac Arthur's signature.

Dr. Lindley: How about giving us a little background on yourself first. Tell us where you were born and your education and getting into the Navy.

Mr. Stevens: I was born in Detroit, Michigan and educated in the public schools and I, in 1939; I enrolled at Michigan State University in the college of engineering. I processed through the four years and ended up graduating as a metallurgical engineer. I did not enroll in the Advance ROTC that existed there, so when war came, I was deferred to finish my schooling. I finished in '43.

I worked for a short period of time on job deferment until I decided, in early '44, that I would enlist in the Navy. I did that in Detroit and took the first call to Fort

Schuyler, in the Bronx, in New York City, where I had my two months of indoctrination.

Dr. Lindley: And after that, what did the Navy do with you? Were you a lieutenant, or what was your rank?

Mr. Stevens: I was an Ensign. I was twenty-one years old. I was an Ensign. At INDOC School there was a mixture of young men. Some as old as thirty-five who were JG's as they enrolled. Most of us were young Ensigns. Before I finished INDOC School, I got my orders to go to Harvard to the Navy Electronics School at the Harvard University Law Emporium. I went there and enrolled and the duration was four months for me. They gave us exams before hand to decide where to throw us into the five or six months schedule that was there and I ended up with four months. I went from there to the Harbor Building in South Boston, which was directly connected to MIT's, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Electronics Instructional System. It was a secluded, secret area on the top; I don't know, three, four, floors of the Harbor Building where all classified information was brought out to us.

Harvard information was general electronics knowledge, not peculiar to Navy activities. At the Harbor Building, all of the knowledge was directly procured and classified.

There was four months of the necessary technical qualifications that I went through and completed.

When I completed that I got another assignment from Washington, which directed me to come to Washington for further education instruction in radar counter-measures, which was, effectively, then, one level of secrecy higher than pure radar engineering.

I went to Washington and took the instruction. Part of the instruction was conducted in North Carolina on Ocracoke Island at an amphibious, quote, unquote, base, which held sway at the south half of the island. The south half of the island was unoccupied by civilians at that time. There was a Navy built Combat Information Center out on the sand flats, which was part of the operation, the technical operation. The other part was crash boats based in the lagoon there at the south end of the island. The operation was to train us in use of the highly technical equipment and the tactical possibilities for it. So, half of the class, and the class was very small. Actually, there were twelve in our class, two Marines and ten from MIT.

We split up, half in the CIC and half out on crash boats and we practiced day and night. We learned how to manipulate the various electronic components that were available.

Dr. Lindley: From the technical side of this, do you recall the frequency of the radar that was then being used?

Mr. Stevens: Yes. The general search radar was two hundred kilocycles.

Dr. Lindley: Megacycles?

Mr. Stevens: No. Two hundred kilocycles.

Dr. Lindley: Very low frequency.

Mr. Stevens: Low frequency for the general search. The detailed intelligence search was, the newest one, was the Sugar George, which was three thousand megacycles. That was only one coming into use then, so it was a first exposure for the Navy to that equipment. It had a console like a bedroom dresser stack, about six feet high. It had six drawers in it and the doors, electronically, were interconnected with cables behind. As you worked with it, pulled a drawer out, and used your technical instruments to penetrate the operation and find the problems.

At MIT the equipment we worked on was much, much cruder than that. I had an experience at MIT. We were assigned a problem to work our on a particular kind of unit, which was scattered in a laboratory on one story in the Harbor Building. We went to turn it on to do our operation and it was not functional. So we had to stop and get out the book, the instruction book, and learn about the set, how it operated, what controlled it, before we could trouble shoot it. Then we had to trouble shoot it to make it work before we could do our experiment. That was not unusual and that's why the laboratory that whole floor with the various equipments on it was open

twenty-four hours a day. The students had twelve hours, I'm sorry, two days, forty-eight hours, to work their lab problems out and people were there twenty-four hours a day. Somebody was up there working, every hour of the twenty-four. There was only one requirement, that there be two people in there when activities were going on. That was an unusual experience. The demand was put on us to produce an answer. Nobody came in to do it for us.

Dr. Lindley: After you completed the training in North Carolina, where were you sent next?

Mr. Stevens: Well, I have one story to tell on North Carolina.

Dr. Lindley: Sure.

Mr. Stevens: I and a friend, who I still have today, Dick Morrison, came from Findley, Ohio. He and I became buddies and we were in the CIC. The boats were out running around, not quite midnight, but close. We were tracking. We were doing real good. We found this guy out there and followed him and sent one of the technicians, who worked there, on to the top of the CIC where there was a twenty-four inch searchlight. We were in telephone contact with him up there and told him where to turn the searchlight. When he had it all lined up good, we told him, "On." He did. The crash boat commander told us, later on, what happened. He said he pretty near ran aground because it blinded him. Before he could turn away and recover his sight, he had lost his position relative to the shore. After we did that, the local commander prohibited that kind of activity. (laughs).

Dr. Lindley: No longer could you spotlight them.

Mr. Stevens: That's correct. Dick and I did not like to have to use the procedure to make the calculations that was available to us there at the workstation. So, separately, outside, during our free time, we created a new tool to use to rapidly determine speed and bearing. Rather than measuring and counting and calculating with the pencil, we

figured with a folding tool, we made one. The commander of the station saw it and he said, "We got to change things around here. These guys are moving on their own." (laughs).

When we got out in the fleet, we found that there was a tool of that kind, not precisely like we built, but ours produced, in the same time, the same result as theirs did. Theirs was a commercial, if you would, that had been built for the Navy.

Dick Morrison and I still get together on a timely basis. He travels in his Aerostream travel trailer and he comes around periodically and we talk about things. That is an aside here, but that was reality.

Dr. Lindley: So after that, after your session there, after you completed that training, what was the next duty station?

Mr. Stevens: Return to Washington for, I don't know, only two or three days, maybe. They had orders ready for us then to go wherever. About eight of them went to stations, or to ships, individually there, and apparently, the ships were outfitted with countermeasures. They were not big ships, they were small ships. Four of us were given proceed orders to go to Pearl Harbor and wait for further instructions. We had four or five days delay. We could go home on leave and then go to San Francisco and that's what we did. From the NRL, Naval Research Laboratory in Washington DC activity, three of us were from the east and we met in Chicago and caught the same train west. The fourth guy was from California, so he had already gone west. That's what we did, take our leave and then go----.

Dr. Lindley: On your train west, do you remember the route and whether you stopped and, I forgot the name of the little town that had such a reputation for getting coffee and donuts and so forth, for the soldiers.

Mr. Stevens: Yes, we stopped there. The one place, Ogden, Utah was the other place where we got off the train, I don't know, an hour, or two hours, was the delay and the depot was right downtown on that main, north-south highway through town and I remember standing out in the middle of the highway, looking north, and it looked like the mountain was only about a mile away, right straight down that highway, to the mountain. It was so clear. I know it is further away than that. That's what we did. We

stopped at those two places and I saw on television, a couple of months ago, the story about Nebraska and it brought me back. That's one of the two places that I got treated by the Red Cross in all my time.

Dr. Lindley: North Platte, Nebraska.

Mr. Stevens: North Platte.

Dr. Lindley: So you went to the west coast and on to Pearl Harbor and got your orders from there?

Mr. Stevens: Yes.

Dr. Lindley: And where did you go and tell us about that?

Mr. Stevens: We went to Pearl Harbor to the electronics school, which they had our group at Ewa, which was a little town on the northern edge of the base. We saw there some of our compatriots from the Harbor Building. They were there waiting for ship assignments. They had nothing for us to do there except wait. One-by-one, we got an assignment to a ship, each an Amphibious Group Command type used by admirals to direct seacoast landing invasions (AGC). Glen Irish (?) who was from California, went to the *Blue Ridge*, which I later joined. Dick Morrison went to the *Mount Olympus* and Weppie Keller went to,---I forget where he went. He went to another AGC.

When Morrison got his orders, the last one of the three, he said, "They tell me you're going to amphibs." I waited and got a set of orders to Admiral Norvell's (?) staff, commander, Amphibious Group 8.

Dr. Lindley: Do you recall the approximate date this happened? When were you assigned there?

Mr. Stevens: That must have been in May of '45. April was when we left Washington, so it was late in May of '45 somewhere.

Dr. Lindley: So it was after the victory in Europe day, VE Day?

Mr. Stevens: Yes. I went out on an escort carrier, the *Long Island*, the number one escort carrier, the first one ever built. I went to Pearl Harbor and then I went on another escort carrier, carrying planes, at a later date.

We stayed in Pearl Harbor waiting and so I ended up on another escort carrier going west. It was two and half, or three weeks, to Samar. I disembarked at the Navy base in Samar. Then had to start to search and I found out there what ship the Admiral was on. He was not on the *Wasatch*, which was his assigned ship because, the *Wasatch* was down at Manus, in the Admiralty Islands, south of the equator, being reconditioned of sorts. So he was on a Coast Guard cruiser, a large Coast Guard ship. That's where I reported to him several days later. I found out, on the escort carrier, there were two or three other guys, a lieutenant, Navy lieutenant and a Marine captain who had been on Guadalcanal, who were also looking for Group 8. We became a party. (laughs). We went many places around there looking and we had to perform an escape one day. (laughs). There was a processing center for Navy travelers, set aside, and we heard stories about it later. We checked in and we knew that the admiral and his ship were not there when we checked in so, we got up early in the morning and checked out. You had to do that. You couldn't just walk in and out. They had controls over people there and we checked out before people were really up. We checked out at about six-thirty in the morning; gone and then we were on the road looking for a LSM, or somebody, to carry us to the next island we were looking for. We did find the Coast Guard ship, which name escapes me now. It's in my book.

We came aboard the ship at about two-thirty in the afternoon on a Sunday afternoon. When we came up the ladder, the OD sent word to the admiral that we were there. The admiral brought us up right into his office immediately and introduced the proper people to us, and us to them, and told us what we would be doing. That was my initiation to the Admiral. He had us around a table with the chief-of-staff and the chief of the communications division that I was responsible to. He talked to us individually and also his operations chief that the other two officers were going to and he spoke personally to each one of us, assigning our responsibilities. The other

gentlemen were senior to me so he talked to them first and then they're gone. He then came to me and he said something very peculiar. He said, "We know why you're here and we know that because of what you know, nobody else here can help you. So you are going to be your own boss. You are going to do what you think needs to be done when you think it needs to be done." He left it at that. "You will not be standing watch. You will not be involved in any other activity, except that which you choose." That was highly unusual.

Dr. Lindley: Not many times, in the Navy, do you get such an order.

Mr. Stevens: That's right. And that continued till the end of the war.

Dr. Lindley: On the Coast Guard vessel that this Admiral's headquarters were located until the *Wasatch* repair, update was completed to current AGC standards, did they have the radar equipment that you had been trained to operate and-----?

Mr. Stevens: No. That was being installed on the *Wasatch*, down at Manus.

Dr. Lindley: Tell us how you got back on the Manus-----that story?

Mr. Stevens: Well, I and some other officers of the staff, were not functional on the current ship, so they had made arrangements to send us, by air, down to Manus. We left, I think, the next day, down to Manus and get connected down there with what was going to come, in the next couple of weeks, or some number like that, so that we would know the ship's operational situation before it got back and picked up the admiral even. They sent us down there by air the next day. They stayed where they were. The ship stayed there, went on and until the *Wasatch* came back. That was, as I said, about two weeks.

Dr. Lindley: From there, where did the *Wasatch* go?

Mr. Stevens: The *Wasatch*-----.

Dr. Lindley: What, it was the, an amphibious, what type of vessel was the *Wasatch*?

Mr. Stevens: It was the Amphibious Group command ship and that is a floating hotel. It is not a fighting ship. It had one gun. A five-inch gun on the foredeck ,but the ship's construction was quarter-inch sheet steel. It was not a fighting ship. If we had to use that five-inch gun, it would have been too damn late for anything, although there was a gun crew aboard. There was a thousand men on that ship to run the ship and a hundred and ten, maybe, staff people. That's the way it went. It was four hundred and sixty feet long, or some number like that and there's still some of them active. There were about a dozen of those active then. It was lots of people on a ship, but not as many as a carrier, or a battleship, which I later had the opportunity to invest.

When we came back, we took the staff on board and moved on to other activities. While we were at sea, I took the opportunity to check my gear out. We were out of sight of land traveling. I had two radar technicians assigned to me to attend the equipment as it was. They were receiving equipment in an above deck cabin. About a hundred feet away, was a transmitting equipment cabin, still above deck, and both of them wired up to the top of the tower to the antennas. I decided, on this sunshiny day that we would check the equipment out. I put the technicians in the receiving room and I went to the transmitter room and went through the moves and it was a piece of that I'd been instructed on back at MIT. I understood, not the same model, but the same type, so I knew how to proceed and I proceeded to tune it up. It took about, oh, fifteen minutes or so, might be longer than that, to warm it up. Then I proceeded to adjust it's function to maximum output of power. Everything went well. It peaked right up there. I let it sit for about, oh, five to ten minutes because I wanted to be sure there was no glitches anywhere. I wanted to let it settle down and run. Once it did that, I flipped the switches off, I got out and recovered the two technicians, let them out and I went down below back aft of the ship, down, two decks down, and started up through the ship. I was met by a communications messenger who said, "Where you been?" (laughs). They were looking for me all over the ship. "The radar's blanked out. They don't know what they're doing in the CIC and they are looking for you."

I very calmly said, "Here I am. Let's go to CIC." I got met by several other people, en route, in the hundred feet or so that I had to go. I went into the outer CIC office and spoke to the OD, the officer in charge, and told me what he had and he said, "I've done this and this and this." He was of my MIT class, but not my class, but he

was from that training. So he understood what the basic problem was and his hardware, but he didn't know why. He said, "I've done this and I've done this and it's still all screwed up" I said, "Well, show me." We went in the next room and when I went in, all the screens were nice and calm and the blip was marching across and everything in order. He says, "Well I'll be damned. It wasn't that way five minutes ago." So I said, "Well, you don't need me anymore, do ya?" (laughs) and I turned around and walked out because I did not want to tell anyone what the situation was. I didn't feel that it would do any good, because I could not quantify what the situation was. I thought I knew what had happened. That was the experience. It went untold. The CIC man accepted it as a glitch and it didn't become part of the minutes of the day.

Dr. Lindley: After that, where did the ship go for its next----, during the period from May until August?

Mr. Stevens: The ship went for several anchorages around the Philippines. Went into the harbor in the Philippines, Manila Harbor, and then went to Lingayen Gulf, as the Admiral did what he wanted to do. We went into Lingayen Gulf and parked, if you would, and I, when the ship was anchored, as soon as the anchor dropped, I knew I had a problem because I, and one other officer on the staff, were the officer messengers when the ship was anchored. They were always with a station ship, which did the electronic surveillance for the area and I wasn't necessary at that time. I was available as long as the ship was anchored. So I was always selected to take some operations orders from the admiral to another admiral, or flotilla leader, or whatever, and so I went to battleships, to cruisers, to LSTs, to LSMs, headquarters ships with sacks of mail.

Dr. Lindley: At this point in historical times, we were preparing for the unlimited landing on the main island.

Mr. Stevens: Right. And the preparation for that was six-fold. November first was the day and there were going to be six D-days at six different places, two hundred plus miles separate along the coast of Japan, by six different admirals. The expectation was a million and half casualties. But, we could not go until November first because there were not enough GIs, combat troops, in the western Pacific to accomplish it. So, November first was the target. All sorts of PA's and KA's began to arrive.

Dr. Lindley: What was the operational name for this? I forgotten what it was?

Mr. Stevens: Operation Olympic.

Dr. Lindley: Olympic. That's right.

Mr. Stevens: So we had a place targeted. Wakanoura, which is about four hundred, five hundred miles southwest of Tokyo. I don't know exactly how far it is. That was our place, and it was the exact place. It was a seaplane base outside of a little fishing town. The town of Wakanoura was a hundred thousand population but, it was not right on the coast where our landing was going to be. It was a few miles way. Our target was this seaplane base and the ship stayed in Lingayen and when we got-----while (?) stayed they decided I should take operations orders to the battleship admiral in Okinawa because that's where the battle ships were coming from Pearl Harbor. I was detached with six, seven sacks of mail, from the ship, put on shore and told to go find them. I went to the airport, the big one, and off-loaded the mail sacks to the operations office at----- (Tape One, Side One Ends)

Tape One, Side Two:

Dr. Lindley: OK. This is a continuation of the interview with Al Stevens on 27 March 2006. Go ahead.

Mr. Stevens: When I was sent on the mission with the mail sacks, I got to the----the evening I got onto the air base, I couldn't fly that night to Okinawa, which was the estimated arrival place for the battleships.

I took the taxi into the BOQ area and was walking across from the registration office to the bunkhouse and a voice called my name and it was a flier from my

neighborhood. He flew P By's and he and I played baseball together at grade school. He was a year or so behind me in high school, but there he was flying PBY's. We had an evening of conversation and consultation.

Next morning we are out on the runway as per directions from the operations officer, and there are trucks parked on the end of the runway filled full of people waiting to catch a flight someplace. There was a USO troupe there going someplace and other people going someplace and there was a group of us going to Okinawa.

All of a sudden, the airport became quiet. There was no activity revving up anyplace, and we sat there for over an hour. There was no intelligence to us at all. Finally, in overhead came the large green bi-plane and nobody could figure that one out. It came in. You could see it landed on the runway. Puzzling.

Shortly thereafter, activity on the runway began. We were escorted to our plane, which was a B-24. There was about ten to fifteen of us going to go as passengers. We got aboard and the flight crew was all in the pilot's compartment, but we were put in the fireboxes because there was space there for us. We are there in our tropical shirtsleeves. As we take off and come to ten thousand feet in a bright, blue sky, pretty soon, we began to shiver. We couldn't figure it out until we looked down in the bomb bay and they had not closed the bomb bay doors. They were open about twelve inches. Cool air was circulating to all of us. So we had a very cool ride, five and half hours to Okinawa. I'm very glad to see land again.

We came down to an air base in the middle of the island and I, with my mail sacks, secured a truck to truck me down to the Naval base at the southern tip. During that ride, I only saw a couple of trees that were as much as ten feet high. Everything else was leveled.

So we got to the end, to the Naval Base, which turned out to be a couple of Quonset huts of communications onshore. We checked in and it was, by that time, late afternoon, after five o'clock. So the officer-in-charge there said, "No more boats. The ship is out there but, no more boats tonight. You can sleep over here on a table in the Comm shack." So that is what happened.

The next morning, we got a VP out there and the *Tennessee*, which was the Admiral's headquarters, wasn't there but, the *California* was there. I knew a guy on the *California* who came out on the escort carrier with me. So I went on the *California* as a temporary expedient because the *Tennessee* was due back in that afternoon. So, my acquaintance took care of me that day.

When time came, *Tennessee* came in and I took a boat over to the *Tennessee* and unloaded my mail sacks in the office and reported in and that was the trip.

Now my concern was getting back to the *Wasatch*, which was in Lingayen, only for a certain, stated time period. But, again, it was late in the day. So I stayed aboard the

ship, had dinner and the flag secretary says, "Can't go ashore tonight because you can't get to where you need to go, so stay over night and you go ashore tomorrow." He said, "I've got just the place for you. There's a captain who is on TDY someplace and you can use his bunk." So I did.

When I woke up I was aware the ship was underway. OOPS!! (laughs)

Could feel it without even putting my feet on the deck, I could feel it. It was underway. I had to remain aboard and why was it on it's way? A typhoon was coming right for Okinawa. All of the ships were putting to sea and running and that's what happened with the *Tennessee*. It put to sea and ran for four days before we came back and the waters had calmed down.

When we came back it was an unusual liberty. There was a liberty ship long parked on the beach, way up in the, what remained of trees, about a hundred, hundred and fifty yards on dry land, just laying there. It had chosen to remain in the harbor through the storm. So, again, time, it was late in the day, so I had to stay overnight on the ship. I was sitting down in the J.O. wardroom reading when a man came up and stood beside me next to the light. Stood and stood. Finally, he reached over and touched me and it turned out to be commander from my own organization who was on detached duty. I did not know him because he was in the operation section and I had had no previous business with him. He introduced himself, formally, and he said, "I have a job for you." I said, "I'm sorry, sir, but I have orders from the Admiral and Captain Legwen to return to the *Wasatch* immediately. There's only a couple of days left of the *Wasatch* at Lingayen and I must go first thing in the morning if I'm going to catch it." He said, "I'm sorry. I'm going to order you to stay and take some orders, which I have created, for Captain Williams, on the destroyer escort, which is coming in from Pearl Harbor. He is bringing the UDT, Underwater Demolition Team, from Pearl Harbor for the Wakanoura landing. So, I want you to stay here and take these instructions over to him when he arrives." I was taken and the local floating hotel, an APL, which had one row of cabins on the deck on a barge, and hotter than hell during the day. So with it, outside and followed the shade around during the day for five days until the destroyer escorts, two of them, showed up. It was, again, on a Sunday.

I catch a VP over, come aboard about the time they're having dinner on Sunday afternoon. There is so many people on there that the meals were doubled. There was not room in the wardroom, or any other place, for the group to all eat together. So I took my stuff down to the ship's office and came up and said hello to the Captain as he was eating and when he and his crew got up, I sat down with the oncoming crew and he said, "I'll go down to the office and see what you brought me." So, I sat through dinner and I was eating dessert when the captain came up and sat down beside me and waited for me to finish swallowing and then he said, "I've seen what you brought and I do not understand it. Tell me about it."

I said, "I'm sorry, sir. I know what you have and I don't understand it either and I, really, can not tell you anything about it as I wasn't involved in it's makeup." He said, "What do you think I ought to do?" I said, "If I were you, sir, I'd forget about me coming and go to what ever orders you had originally because, the original orders you got came from the Admiral and these didn't come from him. These came from a commander who has a unsavory reputation around the western Pacific." Which was true. He said, "That's exactly what I'll do." (laughs) So, I went to Japan on his destroyer escort because, I knew where he was going to end up and would meet the *Wasatch* there. That's how I went to Japan. It was a five-day trip.

Dr. Lindley: When did you hear about the dropping of the Atomic bomb?

Mr. Stevens: In Okinawa. The word came around and even the description of the celebration in Manila Bay, when it had celebrated twice. The first time was unauthorized; was the pre-acceptance. The peace proposals had not been accepted yet, but the word got back that they had been, so they shot up Manila Bay about twenty-four hours early. And shot it up again when it came.

So, the green bi-plane was the peace negotiators flight coming in that kept us waiting on the runway at Clarke Field.

When we got to Japan, we got there at night, which was the working time for the UDT, Underwater Demolitions Team. We were there at two, or three, o'clock in the morning, in the blackness, offshore. We put the boys in the rubber boats and they went about their business and performed exactly as on an amphibious invasion. We stayed, myself and the captain, on the bridge of the destroyer escort watching and listening. About dawn, the boats all came back aboard. We had been moving all of the time, we had not been anchored. We had been moving all of the time, but we turned and retreated into the sea a ways and finally anchored.

When we anchored, we saw other big ships, the battle ships came and, eventually, cruisers came. Shortly thereafter, the *Wasatch* came and pulled in close, the PA's and KA's began, in line, to come in and unload.

An amphibious landing took place exactly as planned before peace treaty. The whole operation was controlled by the *Wasatch* team and the shore parties so that it was a true amphibious landing, as would have been, on November first. We were probably a week, to two weeks earlier than we had planned, and we were the first. The other landings did not occur then because there were no people to put ashore out in the western Pacific. We waited in that bay at the little fishing town of Wakanoura for three weeks, just waiting. We went ashore and waited for the PA's and KA's to come

over the horizon for the next landing, which was at Nagoya about two hundred miles upland northeast. In the meantime, I went ashore everyday and walked around the territory. Talked to the people.

Dr. Lindley: What was that like?

Mr. Stevens: Peaceful. People ignored us in general. I got up at the top of one ridge where there was a school, and there was a schoolmaster who spoke English. He walked around with me several times and we talked about general situations. I never saw any resistance of any kind, by anybody. Never heard of it there.

Dr. Lindley: What was the schoolmaster's general feelings that he related to you at that time?

Mr. Stevens: He totally accepted the situation. He was, essentially, glad that hostilities had quit because he could see what was going to happen to his homeland. He had seen the bombing, not in the little village, but at Wakayama. The steel plant, which was there, had been bombed out.

As we found out when we got to Nagoya, later on, Nagoya was leveled, essentially, except for the piers. The piers were left intact. When time came, the PA's and KA's came right up to the piers and the boys walked off the ships on the gangplank.

We had, in our outfit, a group of about fifteen beach masters who did the dirty work ashore in the landing and reported back to the Admiral activities on landings. So they spent their time, while we were at anchor in Wakanoura, ashore.

They lived ashore and they traveled around ashore. They had vehicles. They scoured the shore and they went to the local saki factory and they loaded their trucks with saki and they went for Nagoya, two days ahead of us. They went down to the pier, went to the warehouses on the pier and unloaded their saki. (laughs). They set up shop in the warehouses, a stones throw from the ship. So when the V's unloaded the GI's off the ship, on the dock and into the warehouses, saki was available. They had been at sea for four or five weeks and they imbibed. The beach masters charged the GI's for each drink. So when the beach meisters finally came aboard ship, three or four days later, most of them had a green roll about three, or four, inches in diameter in their pocket.

That was it when I came from the destroyer escort, I went to the Cruiser *Mobile* with Commander Clute who was the man who written the special orders. He had come to the destroyer escort after me, in the morning, early. He had sent a message from the *Mobile* to the *DE Toomey*, a blinker message, and the signalman had brought it up to the bridge and he, of course, first went to the captain and said, "I got this message from..." The captain knew I was standing there listening and he said, "What do you think?" and I said, "Would you do me a favor? Don't give it to me." (laughs). He said, "Fine." He then stuck it in his pocket.

I stayed there but, Commander Clute came after me in a VP from the *Mobile*. He had something in mind for me to do but, we went back to the *Mobile* for a time because he had somebody, or something, he had to further transmit.

When I got on the deck of the *Mobile*, I saw the *Wasatch* come over the horizon and come in and drop the anchor and I asked the OD, Officer of the Deck, I said, "You got a possibility of taking me back to my ship?" He said, "Sure. Right here." He took me right back. So I came aboard the *Wasatch*, after being away for four weeks. The first thing I did was go up to the flag bridge and report in. The chief of staff and the operations captain and Captain Legwen were standing there together talking when I came up into the room. I stood off to the side and just waited. Finally they looked over and saw me and they motioned me to come over and the first thing they said was, "Where the hell have you been?" (laughs). So I told them and had a copy of one of Commander Clute's memorandums in my pocket. I took it out and I said, "This, sort of, describes what I was taken into." They said, "Well didn't you tell them you were supposed to come back to the ship?" I said, "Yes sir, I did. But he ordered me to do that." They said, "Alright. Why don't you go ahead and change your clothes."

was in the operations office, right there, on duty. He told me later on, on how, when Commander Clute came up to report in about an hour later, that the three captains chewed him out for a half hour, to the point where he had nothing to say. He never spoke to me again while he was on the ship. That's how that ended up.

I was back aboard. Then, as I said before, we stopped for two or three weeks and I went ashore every opportunity because I wanted to see what was.

Dr. Lindley: Do you have any unique impressions about Japan that you gathered from that period of time, from what you saw?

Mr. Stevens: People were very intense with what they did, anywhere along the street, in the shop, anyplace, they were involved in it. They weren't standing gazing around., awaiting

for something pleasant to happen. That was the kind of impression. I walked back into the hinterland, out of the town and just looked around. Everything was very tidy, if you would, no matter where it was. It was very tidy. There was not any stuff floating along the roadside, or anything of that nature.

Dr. Lindley: Alright, any other stories you'd like to relate to us?

Mr. Stevens: Well, we went to Nagoya and did that landing and then the Admiral got a new set of orders, which was not to come home, but to go to North China and direct the repatriation of the Japanese from China, the Chinese from Japan and the Koreans from both places, back home. That's what we did and we stopped at Inchon, which is where MacArthur later landed, and I had time to go into Seoul.

I spent a day walking around downtown Seoul. I have pictures of me in the Center Square down there. Then we went, actually, out to sea and changed ships, from the *Wasatch* to the *Blue Ridge*. The *Wasatch* went, probably, back to Pearl Harbor and the *Blue Ridge* became our operating ship for the next six months operating around North China.

That was a different game. That was directing a fleet of about fifty LST's that transmitted the North China Sea in various ways, carrying human cargo. They put a thousand people on each LST for that ride to get them home, which was very unusual, because a thousand people on a LST, they almost had to ride standing up. We directed that operation for four months. We moved around as we did it.

We were in Shanghai twice, in Tsingtao, Chen Wong Tao and the port for Tientsin, which is just a small city. Tientsin is inland, I don't know, fifty miles or something, on a river. We spent the '45, '46 winter in North China and during that time I had the opportunity to go to Beijing for a three-day leave.

I had a tremendous time circulating in Beijing and I happened to get a tourist folder last week about Beijing and here was that picture of that Temple of Heaven, the blue, multi-topped pagoda. I always know that when I see that picture.

We spent time, like I said, in Shanghai and there is where I met my buddy Dick Morrison again. He was on the, what? They had another AGC, which name slips my mind at the moment. I spoke it when I spoke previously.

Dr. Lindley: It will be at the beginning of the tape. We'll pick it up.

Mr. Stevens: We had some adventures in Shanghai and Tsingtao and in Beijing. Interesting times ashore. We took a train from the port city of Tientsin to Beijing, which is about a hundred and twenty miles, something like that, all the way inland to Beijing. We did Beijing; enjoyed it and I wrote about it in my book, the various activities we got into. Very educational.

Dr. Lindley: Happen to notice the locomotives that pulled the train?

Mr. Stevens: I noticed the locomotive sheds that they had along the road to prevent the trains from getting attacked. There were sheet metal walls erected along side in the stations, along the sides, so they would pull the locomotive into the wall, a double wall control, so the bandits wouldn't come and shoot up the boilers. That was in every station. Those locomotive stalls, they called them.

Dr. Lindley: Most of the locomotives in China at that time, were made in America.

Mr. Stevens: Oh, yes. Probably. They were old locomotives. There was nothing new about them. They were steam and they were small and there was nothing unusual about them except these stalls. Some of the locomotives had pockmarks, which were patches where the boilers had been penetrated by shells.

We had a tremendous time in Beijing. Three days walking around, and, of course, Shanghai was different. We had experiences and I wrote about those experiences in my book, the shore things we got into. There isn't much use of me relating those here.

Dr. Lindley: Any other stories you'd like to leave with us?

Mr. Stevens:

Well, let me flash back. I can tell you about the ride into Nagoya. When we got to Nagoya, the fact that the PA's and KA's pulled into the piers, simplified all other operations. We were not going to be there but two days and if we were going to see anything ashore, we had to find an excuse for going ashore because there was very little staff function ashore. So my old friend, the Marine captain, who was known as, "Have-a-shot," because he carried a flask in his hip all of the time and, you know, you get off in a corner and he would wipe it out and say, "Have a shot." He and I decided we wanted to get some souvenirs out of Nagoya. There was no souvenirs in Wakanoura. It was a little fishing town with no strong military, or even industrial activity in it, so there were no souvenirs whatsoever down there. We decided we had to go ashore in Nagoya and get some souvenirs

How to get ashore? We had to get a tactical excuse to get ashore and he found one. I found one. The Admiral's lieutenant had to get the general's household equipment ashore. He had to bring it from a ship. I don't know all the details but, it came in on a VP and ran up on the bank. It didn't come to the pier. It couldn't. It ran up on the bank at a place in between piers and I got the job of watching the general's gear. The Admiral's boy was with the Admiral and he couldn't watch it. So, I went with him and we got it up on shore and the General had a lieutenant that was the meeting agent and he was going to come and meet it, along the shoreline. So, I went ashore with the gear and the boys took it out of the VP and laid it up on the shore. They pulled off with the VP and I was there with the gear. I went down the line of the piers looking for the General's lieutenant. I looked and looked and looked and finally saw him and I also saw, "Have-a-shot," who had located the boatswain, who was ashore with a chief. That was our transportation. Catch the boatswain with the chief. I hustled this lieutenant over and was a hundred, two hundred yards, and had been quite a while since we put the gear ashore. We got within sight of it and I pointed it out to him. The water, the tide was coming in and the water was coming up right under the pile of the general's gear, when I waved good-bye to him. (laughs). He went hunting his crew.

We got in the jeep with the boatswain and the boatswain, unfortunately, had two other shipmates, so we had six in the jeep.

We started for downtown Nagoya. Never been in downtown Nagoya before but there is a broad highway going down. Not much to see because it had all been bombed out. After six or seven miles we noticed there was a military camp up on the rise, off the side of the road. We turned in there to get some wartime souvenirs, swords. We checked in with the military there and they said, "You can't have any swords unless you get checked out down at the headquarters down at the hotel." So, "Have-a-shot" stayed there and I took the jeep and the boatswain and we went down to the hotel and found this major that was responsible for Okaying military withdrawals. We signed up and we turned around with our chit and ran back to the camp. "Have a shot" had already made the right contact and had the stuff piled up. We handed the chit over and the lieutenant, who took the chit and said, "OK, take it." We threw the stuff in the jeep and started back for the ship. By this time, it's

getting dark. We had been gone for a long time, running down, it's about seven, eight miles down to downtown Nagoya.....(Tape one, Side One, Ends)

Tape Two, Side One:

Dr. Lindley: This is a continuation of the story by Mr. AL Stevens. 27 March 2006. Go ahead.

Mr. Stevens: When we got back to the harbor area, we found out that the *Wasatch* VP's had all been recovered and we still had the jeep ashore. I went in on a ship there, a landing ship and a transport and sent a message out to the *Wasatch* telling them that we would take the jeep around to the sea plane base, which was about half, to three-quarters of a mile away, and we would be there to be picked up by the ships boat.

We went around there in the gathering darkness and ran down on the ramp into the water and waited for the lights of the VP to come into us. The tide was going out so fast that it was difficult to lower the ramp to get the VP up on the-----get the jeep up on the ramp and in the VP before the water went down to where the VP was still aground. We had to make three tries and the boatswain went up and got a lumber loader, came down and picked up the VP, with all of us in it, off the ramp and, in effect, lifted it out into the receding water. We went back to the ship then, but it was about a three-quarters of an hour workout to get the loaded VP off of land into the water. Boats left the lumber loader sitting right where he finished. (laughs)

So, we got back aboard ship and it was movie time. Everybody was up top side, foredeck, watching the movie, but they could hear the OD's shouts about this VP bringing these guys back aboard ship that were overdo. We come to the bottom of the landing and we were out and ran up the ladder and go somewhere else on the ship. Go aft and disappear, then go down to the room, where I put away my sword, in the drawer and started back up to the movie. I didn't get but about half way up there when one of the messengers ran up to me and said, "Mr. Stevens. Mr. Stevens. Did you hear? Some guys brought some swords aboard ship." (laughs). I could hardly stop from smiling. It passed off. They got the VP back aboard and that made the attention getter because, to get us, they had to order a special crew to take the VP off to go ashore to get us. The next morning we left for China and we had our swords.

Dr. Lindley: Did you get them home?

Mr. Stevens: Yes. I have my sword and I also have a rifle that was given to us down at the wharf. Rifles were free and easy to get, but I have my sword and a rifle in a closet at home. I have not seen very many of that kind. You see ceremonial swords, occasionally. They are around, but the true officer's sword isn't generally available.

We went from there to China and to the other activity, to the *Blue Ridge* and started the other operation.

Dr. Lindley: Well, thank you so much for taking of your time to come and to tell us your story and, I'm sure the ladies will work on getting this transcribed for us. Sometime in the foreseeable future, you'll get a copy of it. Anything else you'd like to say?

Mr. Stevens: No. There are good stories in China but, they are recorded in my book.

Interview ends.

NOTE: Mr. Stevens has authored the book, "Up Close and Personal" that relates to, and provides further details of, his experiences in World War Two.

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