

National Museum of the Pacific War

Nimitz Education and Research Center

Fredericksburg, Texas

Interview with

L. W. Gregg

United States Navy, USS *Talbot*, Pacific War, World War II

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Mr. Metzler: This is Ed Metzler. Today is July 16, 2006. I am interviewing Mr. Bud Gregg. This interview is in support of the Center for Pacific War Studies archives for the National Museum of the Pacific War, Texas Historical Commission for the preservation of historical information related to this site.

Let me start out, Bud, by thanking you for spending the time with us today. I know you've got other things that you'd probably rather be doing, but we appreciate your spending the time with us.

Mr. Gregg: It's a pleasure. I happen to be a destroyer sailor and the destroyer group that I belong are called the Green Dragons. They were World War I destroyers that were converted to APDs during World War II. We have stayed together all through these years since World War II. We have an annual convention every year. This year it's in Chattanooga, Tennessee. I think it was three years ago we had our convention in San Antonio at which time we presented a plaque here to the museum. I viewed that plaque today for the first time. It's a real nice plaque.

Mr. Metzler: That's good.

Mr. Gregg: It has all thirty-two dragons and it lists all the landings that we participated in during World War II which are quite numerous.

Mr. Metzler: I tell you what, Bud, let me go back to the beginning. We're going to talk plenty today about the Green Dragons, but I'd like to start out by having you tell us when and where you were born and a little bit about your family.

Mr. Gregg: I was born in, believe it or not, Jones, Louisiana. My father was a lumberman who had the mill in northern Indiana. He went down to Louisiana to clear out two thousand acres of timber to ship back to the mill. I guess that was in the days when everything was shipped in wooden boxes.

Mr. Metzler: When were you born? What is your date of birth?

Mr. Gregg: I was going to say, while there, I was born. He met my mother and my older sister and I were both born at that time while he was on that particular endeavor. That would have been June 26, 1921, I was born. That makes me eighty-five. He moved the family backed to Ft. Wayne, Indiana, where the mill was when I was only three months old. I was born in Louisiana but I grew up in northern Indiana. My father spent about forty years, I shouldn't say forty years, he spent a good many years in my later life in the railroad. My father had a very severe accident and caused him to be crippled but he had a lot to do with the movement of troop trains through the north up there. In fact, he would ride them.

Mr. Metzler: During the war you mean?

Mr. Gregg: Yes, during the war. My mother taught school early and later she was just a housewife. My older sister went to Miami Oxford University in Ohio. I went to Western Michigan for a couple of years and then I volunteered and went into the service. After the war was declared on the seventh, I left on the twenty-eighth of December.

Mr. Metzler: You went to high school there in Ft. Wayne?

Mr. Gregg: Yes, I also went to Western Michigan which is in Kalamazoo. I came back and finished my schooling using the GI Bill in Indiana.

Mr. Metzler: What were you studying while in Western Michigan?

Mr. Gregg: I wanted to be a doctor. Of course, by the time I had four years in the service and got out, I was in love and I got married. In fact, my wife just passed away this past April.

Mr. Metzler: I'm sorry.

Mr. Gregg: We were married over sixty years. It's my fault I'm not a doctor because she was willing to work and put me through the rest of medical school. But, no, no, I wouldn't have that. I was too independent, I guess. So, I took the easy way out. I took business administration and got a degree in business. I've been back to several universities for this course or that course since during my thirty-something years in the brewing business. I was with the Falstaff Brewing Corporation. I don't know if you remember Falstaff or not.

Mr. Metzler: I do. There was a Falstaff brewery in Galveston, Texas.

Mr. Gregg: I've been there many times on Church Street.

Mr. Metzler: Yes, that was the Falstaff beer I drank in college. It was probably brewed right down there in Galveston.

Mr. Gregg: I spent years and years with Falstaff. That's pretty much the history, I guess.

Mr. Metzler: Do remember December 7th?

Mr. Gregg: Very well.

Mr. Metzler: Tell me about that.

Mr. Gregg: I was completely shocked like everybody else when we had the surprise attack in Pearly Harbor. I was, what, twenty years old at the time? I weighed about a hundred pounds more than I do now and I was ready to fight. So I went down and enlisted with a buddy of mine. I've got to be honest with you and tell you that when we enlisted we'd just read in the paper where Henry Ford was going to open up the Detroit area for amphibious training for the Navy. We were dating some girls from Detroit at the time. (laughs) We thought, well, let's go up there for amphibious training.

Mr. Metzler: Perfect fit.

Mr. Gregg: Yes, we could still date these girls. To make a long story short, they sent me to San Diego and I never saw him until the war was over. I decided I'd never try to pull anything on the Navy anymore.

Mr. Metzler: No, that's another one of those plans that didn't work out.

Mr. Gregg: I went to San Diego. I was there just a short period of time. When I say a short period of time, I think it was less than a week and they put me onboard the USS *Talbot*. That was a four-stacker at the time before it was converted.

Mr. Metzler: You had four weeks of training and you're on deck.

Mr. Gregg: That's right.

Mr. Metzler: Man.

Mr. Gregg: I think it was a little less than four weeks. About three-and-a-half weeks really in Great Lakes. They put me onboard. They decided they needed to convoy three submarines. We took three submarines to the Aleutian Islands to Dutch Harbor. We stayed around in the Aleutian Islands. The Japs were landing in Kiska and Attu. I was in Dutch Harbor the day it was bombed. I

remember our cooks even came out of the galley and chopped the howsers in two for us to get away from the docks. The old man wanted to get away from the docks because we were re-fueling at the time. We were sitting ducks.

Mr. Metzler: The *Talbot* had not been redone and modified yet.

Mr. Gregg: I'm coming to that.

Mr. Metzler: You sailed from San Diego straight to—

Mr. Gregg: I think we stopped at San Francisco and then went on.

Mr. Metzler: And then right on up to the Aluetians.

Mr. Gregg: Yes, Dutch Harbor.

Mr. Metzler: What was your station on this ship? Where were you assigned?

Mr. Gregg: I was apprentice seaman at that time. I was very fortunate. I had a chance to either strike for a boatswain's mate or strike for a gunner's mate. I thought the gunner's mate was more a dream to me than bossing a bunch of people scraping decks and so forth. So, I chose that route. I became a gunner's mate striker. I got third class and then second class.

Mr. Metzler: Describe to me the old *Talbot*. You and I were talking about this earlier. She hasn't been modified yet. Tell me what you know about what her history was and what she was like. Was she in bad shape, good shape?

Mr. Gregg: No, she was in fairly good shape because I think they had a lot of tests on her before I ever got on her. They had modified a little bit of the galley and put the bunks in a little different way than they were before, as I understand it, as I was told. They were putting a full complement on. We were having chiefs come aboard and a fellow by the name of Morgan came aboard as our captain. I didn't know anything about ships, so I'm not very good at describing what it should have looked like and shouldn't look like.

Mr. Metzler: How did it feel the first time you walked onboard?

Mr. Gregg: I was a guy who always liked the water, so when I walked onboard I was happy. Number one, I was happy that they put me on a ship where there was a little over a hundred people as opposed to a ship that has four thousand or five thousand. We became like brothers.

Mr. Metzler: A community.

Mr. Gregg: Yes, we sort of depended on each other. We had a lot of fun. Were you in the Navy?

Mr. Metzler: No.

Mr. Gregg: We had what we called left arm rates and right arm rates. One, of course, is the guys below decks, the engineers and so forth. The others are the signalmen and gunners' mates and boatswains' mates who have duties on topside or the top of the deck. There was not much to do during the war as far as entertainment was concerned but our old man was a good guy—very strict, but very good about if we got someplace where you could anchor and let the ship have their own contests. We used to have swimming contests around the ship.

Mr. Metzler: Preferably not in the Aleutians though. (laughs)

Mr. Gregg: No, in the Aleutians all we did was bundle up to keep warm. They used to tell us if we fell overboard, we could live twenty minutes.

Mr. Metzler: If you're lucky.

Mr. Gregg: Yes. We were glad to get away from there. The Aleutians meant nothing. We were all glad to get away from there even though we had to stand four-hour watches out on that cold deck.

Mr. Metzler: How long were you actually in Dutch Harbor?

Mr. Gregg: I'd rather say the Aleutians than Dutch Harbor. We were in and out of there.

Mr. Metzler: Okay, the Aleutians.

Mr. Gregg: We went over to Kiska. We didn't go to Attu because the Japs had landed there. We went to Kiska and had the landing on Kiska. Helped in the landing on Kiska. Came back to Dutch Harbor and then they sent us back to Seattle where the conversion took place in Todds Shipyards in Seattle.

Mr. Metzler: You said you were up there when the Japanese did some of their bombing?

Mr. Gregg: Oh, yes.

Mr. Metzler: Tell me about some of that.

Mr. Gregg: They came in and they bombed. It was sort of a joke afterwards. It wasn't at the time, I guess, for those people. If you're familiar with Dutch Harbor, it's in sort of a deal like this with hills around it. Half-mounds or whatever you want to call it.

Mr. Metzler: Kind of surrounded on three sides.

Mr. Gregg: The Army was entrenched in there. When these Japanese planes came over, they were seaborne and came from a carrier, and did their bombing, I grabbed a .20mm. I don't know who did what but we sailed out of the harbor. Of course, we were firing and those planes came down like this and we were firing at the plane that's going right into those hills where those Army people were entrenched. (laughs)

Mr. Metzler: Oh, no. Get some friendly fire here.

Mr. Gregg: We heard afterwards that we should learn how to fire when we're in a port. As I say, that was our first (?). I'll tell you one thing that happened after that I never will forget. All that was unchartered up there. Dutch Harbor was but the Aleutian Islands weren't. None of that was chartered. I don't think the United States or anybody ever had any reason to go in there.

Mr. Metzler: Who cares?

Mr. Gregg: Yes. As I told you earlier, we were re-fueling and when we got out of there we couldn't steam very long because we didn't have any fuel.

Mr. Metzler: You hadn't taken any fuel onboard when you had to get out.

Mr. Gregg: Just had started. Tied up. They pulled into this and we had a little meeting there of everybody. Everybody was rationed and I think we got four glasses of water a day. You know you have to steam in order to make water. We took our fishing lines off of the rafts and used those to fish. Everybody had to fish a couple hours a day. It was easy fishing. We had old bacon rinds we put on there and throw them over and bring up, I forget what kind of a fish it was, but it was dark on one side and sort of light on the other. Nature gave it a light side to turn up towards the top, I guess, when it was being attacked or something. We had several big gallon cans of figs was all we had. We had figs and fish. (laughs)

Mr. Metzler: "F" food, huh? (laughs)

Mr. Gregg: After we ran out of food, we had no provisions to speak of, as well as fuel.

We ate figs and fish for I forget how many days until they decided to steam out of there and go back to Dutch Harbor. When we sailed out of there we didn't know but what the Japs' fleet was sitting right outside there because we figured they may have made a landing there or something. So we were real shook until we got out there and found out the Japs hadn't come in.

Mr. Metzler: Were you accompanied by other ships out there?

Mr. Gregg: No.

Mr. Metzler: So you were soloing this.

Mr. Gregg: Convoying three submarines that we took up there.

Mr. Metzler: That's right.

Mr. Gregg: So we got in there and then they ordered us back to Seattle where the conversion took place.

Mr. Metzler: Were you assigned to any fleet of any sort?

Mr. Gregg: Yes, we were but I can't, you mean—

Mr. Metzler: I know everything was organized in the Navy.

Mr. Gregg: I've got all this at home. I'm sorry I don't have it here.

Mr. Metzler: That's fine. That's alright.

Mr. Gregg: To tell you what the fleets were and all that.

Mr. Metzler: It doesn't matter. It was back to Seattle then?

Mr. Gregg: Yes, we went to Seattle to a dry dock where they converted us to an APD. We were APD 7.

Mr. Metzler: APD is going to stand for?

Mr. Gregg: I think it stands for Attack Destroyer Transport, I think. I'm not sure.

Mr. Metzler: How long was she in Seattle for re-fitting?

Mr. Gregg: Thirty days, I think it was.

Mr. Metzler: That quickly?

Mr. Gregg: Yes.

Mr. Metzler: That's fast.

Mr. Gregg: That was fast. There may have been an extra week in there, I don't know. But everybody got a week's leave so it wasn't much more than thirty days. They tore those two stacks out of there and that forward fireroom out of there in a hurry. They threw in a bunch of bunks and that was about it. It reduced our knots from about thirty-seven down to thirty-two but that's still pretty fast.

Mr. Metzler: That's moving along. Did they change out the engines and everything in her? Put more modern stuff in?

Mr. Gregg: No, I don't think so. Of course, I wasn't in the engineering force but I don't recall any major things happening in the engineering force at all. It was a good old tin can.

Mr. Metzler: She had seen duty in World War I?

Mr. Gregg: Yes. I don't like to say things like this, but I think during that time they made things a little better. Even houses than they do today.

Mr. Metzler: Oh, yes.

Mr. Gregg: It was a tough old baby.

Mr. Metzler: She was actually a good ship to be on.

Mr. Gregg: Yes, she was. The reason I asked about the helm, I used to stand helm watches on this ship. The old man sort of liked me a little bit. When he got ready to pull into port and had to dock, a destroyer doesn't anchor around like the bigger ships, we can pull right up to the dock.. He'd ask for me to take the helm.

Mr. Metzler: That was a tribute to you skill.

Mr. Gregg: Yes, but I didn't like it. I was afraid I was going to run him into-- (laughs)

Mr. Metzler: You were afraid you'd run him down, huh? (laughs)

Mr. Gregg: You alternated between the depth charge rack and the helm, back and forth. It alternated because you didn't stay on the helm too long.

Mr. Metzler: What did you do in Seattle while you were waiting for the ship to be re-fitted? Did the crew actually help reconstruct the ship?

Mr. Gregg: No, they put us off into barracks. It was all done by, I guess, the professional ship workers. I know I went to a little gunnery school while I was there. Everybody had something to do but we were given a lot of time off. A lot of liberty.

Mr. Metzler: Were you able to go back home during that time?

Mr. Gregg: Yes, everybody got a week. That's what I was going to tell you. Got a week off.

Mr. Metzler: That's good.

Mr. Gregg: Starboard side went one week and when they got back, they always divided up between port and starboard.

Mr. Metzler: You went back to Ft. Wayne?

Mr. Gregg: Yes, that was quite a trip. I didn't have money to fly for a week. At that time the Great Northern Railroad, I guess, I found out I could get to Ft. Wayne in three days. I got on a train and went to Ft. Wayne. I was home twenty-four hours. (laughs)

Mr. Metzler: Three days in, one day at home, and three days back.

Mr. Gregg: Three days back. That was my first chance to get back home after I was in the service.

Mr. Metzler: Even for twenty-four hours it was probably worth it.

Mr. Gregg: It was really something. After that I had enough money to fly when I got home.

Mr. Metzler: Were you in love at the time?

Mr. Gregg: Was I what?

Mr. Metzler: Were you in love at the time? Did you have a girl or was this before you met

your future wife.

Mr. Gregg: It was before I met her.

Mr. Metzler: So you had time to actually say hello to mom and dad.

Mr. Gregg: Yes, I spent the twenty-four hours with my family.

Mr. Metzler: That's good.

Mr. Gregg: My sisters and my mother and father. It was interesting. From there we set sail to the South Pacific. They had already made the landing on Guadalcanal but there were several other divisions to be landed at various points. We were assigned to other APDs that had been converted.

Mr. Metzler: How many were there that were with you guys?

Mr. Gregg: I can remember about four or five. We were number seven so there weren't too many. A lot of them came in later after a later conversion. I refer to our captain, who I had a great deal of respect for, as the old man, as we used to say. He was a lieutenant commander but they promoted him to commander which is a three gold stripe deal. Then he had a squadron. We carried the doctor. We carried the paymaster on our ship for the other five destroyers. That was pretty much the crew that we operated with early in the day with those five destroyers.

Mr. Metzler: Were there other support ships in the squadron?

Mr. Gregg: No, not with us. We operated as sort of a separate entity. We assigned to this task force; we were assigned to that task force. Sometimes we had duty which was what we called picket duty.

Mr. Metzler: Early warning on incoming aircraft and ships.

Mr. Gregg: And also submarines. I got a bang out of some things in the museum about Charlie. They had one in there about Charlie kept everybody awake with bombs. We used to call him Washing Machine Charlie. He'd come over every night and drop a few bombs to keep us awake.

Mr. Metzler: I've heard more stories in talking to the vets about Washing Machine Charlie. I think there must have been a hundred of those guys all keeping everyone awake.

Mr. Gregg: We'd say, "Well, it's dark. Washing Machine Charlie is going to show up." He'd be flying real high. You couldn't shoot at him. He'd let those bombs come down and we'd have no idea where they'd go. We could take our anchors, what we called "slip" our anchors. In other words, you'd drop your anchor when it hits the bottom where you were going to anchor, you put the buoy on the chain up here on the water. Then you would take like a sledge and if you want to get underway in a hurry, hit that.

Mr. Metzler: You don't have to pull the anchor up.

Mr. Gregg: You don't have to pull the anchor and you can come back and retrieve it.

Mr. Metzler: You know where it is and you can get it later on.

Mr. Gregg: The buoys are there and you can retrieve your anchor later on. We did that many times during the war.

Mr. Metzler: Let me go back now. We've gone from Seattle down to Guadalcanal. Was there any stop in between? New Caledonia?

Mr. Gregg: Oh, yes. We went to New Caledonia which was a staging point.

Mr. Metzler: That's what I was thinking. What do you remember about that? Just another one of those tropical islands?

Mr. Gregg: Yes.

Mr. Metzler: You weren't there long or what?

Mr. Gregg: We were in and out of there. In and out of Tulagi, too. You've probably heard that name, Tulagi Harbor. We used to call it Iron Bottom Bay because so many ships were sunk in there. There was hardly anything to do. I recall one time, this is later on and I forget where we were, maybe somebody may have brought it to your attention, the *Calhoun* was an ammunition ship that blew up. Have you ever heard about that?

Mr. Metzler: I'm not sure. Tell me more about that.

Mr. Gregg: We were anchored about six hundred yards from it. This was in a zone away from the front. I had gone over there the day before it happened.

Mr. Metzler: Where was this?

Mr. Gregg: That's what I'm trying to say. I don't know whether it was Tulagi Harbor or just where it was.

Mr. Metzler: Okay, somewhere over there then.

Mr. Gregg: We replenished some of the ammunition that we needed. It's hard to envision or describe something that is "now you see it; now you don't." This is a huge ship that was loaded with ammunition. It just blew up. No trace.

Mr. Metzler: Atomized.

Mr. Gregg: Not even hardly anything on the water. I don't know what happened to it all. It put, I think, about a dozen or so holes in our ship.

Mr. Metzler: How far away were you?

Mr. Gregg: We were six hundred yards away from it, believe it or not. I know I was on the afterdeck house at the time it blew up and I jumped from there down on the deck so I had the afterdeck house between me and the explosion. A lot of our guys jumped overboard. It was obvious we'd got hit a few times and they thought maybe we were going to sink. I don't know but some of them jumped overboard. We got them all back.

Mr. Metzler: What was the concussion like when that thing went off? That must have been—

Mr. Gregg: It was a tremendous "Whoosh," like that. It was there and then it was gone. Then we went to a repair yard someplace in the South Pacific where they patched those up in a hurry, those holes that they put in our ship. That was an experience I remember away from the forward zone.

Mr. Metzler: Was that before or after you had been in and around Guadalcanal?

Mr. Gregg: That was after.

Mr. Metzler: Tell me what happened at Guadalcanal. What was the role of your ship and you on that ship?

Mr. Gregg: There are several things I remember. I remember we only had eleven-foot draft on our ship so therefore we could go in pretty far for a landing. They'd set up perimeters in a hurry so the other ships could get in. They weren't always too successful in setting up their perimeter. In any event, we got the other people in. You know, we could be sacrificed as opposed to our ship

being sacrificed. In other words, the old man always told us, "You look for us. When you see us, you come back to the ship." Our ship would sail back over the horizon to get out of the range of any guns. We were left alone there on the beach sometimes.

Mr. Metzler: Doing what?

Mr. Gregg: We landed these people and we had nothing to do after that because we're not going to grab a gun and go with the soldiers. We used to pull up under some of the bushes that hung out once in a while and hang there. We were told in little books ahead of time not to cavort with any of the women that may be underground. We'd stay in our boat. Pull it up on the shore and stay in our boat.

Mr. Metzler: Basically, the *Talbot* was landing Marines, Army?

Mr. Gregg: Could have been all. Could have been Marines. On the plaque it tells you Marines, the Army, demolition teams we worked with, Fiji Islanders, soldiers who were under the mandate of England, we had those. They were great fighters. Australians, we had them all at one time or the other.

Mr. Metzler: Did you get a chance to talk to these guys?

Mr. Gregg: Yes.

Mr. Metzler: Tell me some of those stories.

Mr. Gregg: We had a little bit going once in a while. I'll tell you this story. We made so many landings during the war that everybody was souvenir happy. Wanted to take something home. The guys who had fought on this island had a few Japanese souvenirs, maybe swords or pistols or something.

Mr. Metzler: Flags and stuff, yes.

Mr. Gregg: We knew what was going to happen. When we'd take them and land them at the next landing, the old top sergeants and the lieutenants would say, "Get rid of everything. You can't carry all that stuff." They'd have to shed all that stuff on the beach. We'd go pick it up and sell it to the next group. (laughs)

Mr. Metzler: A little Yankee ingenuity.

Mr. Gregg: We got stopped because one colonel caught us one time. He said, "I'll put you all on burial detail if I ever catch you." Of course, there were a lot of

Japs and sometimes Americans on the beaches shot.

Mr. Metzler: Describe from beginning to end one of these landings. I gathered you had the Higgins boats that were the way you got to shore.

Mr. Gregg: Five destroyers. That would be five times two is ten. There would be ten landing here. First of all, there was an officer on one of the boats, usually on one of ours. We had signals and he could signal with flags. We'd all turn to the left or we'd all turn to the right. We never went straight into a beach because they're going to try to lob mortars and everything else at you. We never gave them a straight shot until we finally got close enough and he gives you the signal and then you zoom. You head straight for the beach and land your people. That's basically what we did. All our landings were principally the same. One sticks out in my mind right now is the landing at Corregidor in the Philippines. If you want me to jump to the Philippines.

Mr. Metzler: No, I don't. I want you to finish Guadalcanal and then we'll go to Corregidor.

Mr. Gregg: Alright.

Mr. Metzler: How many in a boat?

Mr. Gregg: Probably, I would imagine fifty soldiers.

Mr. Metzler: That many?

Mr. Gregg: Oh, yes. They're hunkered down and when they get in the boat they all put their ammunition packets and their rifles up in front. As they go out the front, they grab a rifle and a package of ammunition and out they go. They are hunkered down inside the boat. They're not always easy to get out of the boat. I don't want to say they were yellow or anything. We had a couple of our boys get commendations for leading them out. I don't blame them because some of the bullets were ripping the side of the boat.

Mr. Metzler: Ringing by.

Mr. Gregg: I've seen them hit the sand, the bullets rifling the sand.

Mr. Metzler: Describe one of the boats, one of the landing boats. Roughly how long were these and what were they made out of? Metal, wood?

Mr. Gregg: A Higgins boat was made in New Orleans, Louisiana, by a guy named

Higgins, who invented them. I would say they're eighteen-foot to twenty-foot long. I'm speculating now but that's pretty close. Eighteen to twenty-foot long. You have your engine in the middle which sets right in the middle. On the left of the front is where the coxswain, the guy who steers the boat. He's got like a helm right there. In front of him and on the other side you've got between them this little thing where people run out of the boat. The front goes down like this and you run out. You've got a little cockpit here and a little cockpit there with two .50 caliber guns.

Mr. Metzler: She is armed at least.

Mr. Gregg: You've got a guy on each one. These are Navy people.

Mr. Metzler: What was your role?

Mr. Gregg: I was on one of these guns. Eventually, I had charge of these guns on these boats. We'd go in and sometimes we'd go in firing if we thought there was something to fire at. We saw movement. We'd get the guys out as fast as we could and their job was to set up a perimeter for the other boats with a larger complement of people to be landed, hopefully safely.

Mr. Metzler: You're landing on Japanese-held territory. Is that correct?

Mr. Gregg: Yes, in fact, a couple of my buddies were killed that way. We had a Naval officer and an Air Force officer and I don't know who else and we'd go in. This is at Green Island, in the Solomon Islands. They wanted to know where to land. They figured there were only about six hundred Japs on this island. They had us pull in very close with a lead line to find out how deep it was. When he did, there were some Japs who leaned over the top of this cliff and fired right down into the boat. Killed the coxswain. Killed an ensign. Shot the guy in the back. I forget who all got hurt. The guy who got practically decapitated was one of my best buddies. In fact, I have his picture in my pocket. I've carried it ever since.

Mr. Metzler: It's lucky you weren't all killed.

Mr. Gregg: Really. What happened was the fellow that was shot in the back who was the coxswain, he went to the floor. But he reached up and threw the throttle on full speed and was able to wheel that wheel enough to shoot the boat towards sea out of range. That wasn't a landing experience that was just a—I don't know what you called those things in those days where they wanted to know—most places were unchartered. You never land where the enemy thinks you might land. You land someplace where you don't think he's going to

land and it's usually unchartered places that nobody knows.

Mr. Metzler: Absolutely.

Mr. Gregg: That's the reason we got into the demolition business. Demolition teams started blowing up the reefs because a couple of times they got into these places and they started to land the heavy stuff like bulldozers and maybe light tanks or something like that and on the reef the boat would slip backwards and the damn thing would go into the water and you lose it. After that we started blowing up any reefs that were in the way so landings would be smooth. That was an interesting experience. The demolition people that we had used chunks of TNT like this with the wire between each one. You go along—you've seen them in movies where you have to be able to flip back on. We'd have a Higgins boat pulling a rubber raft is what it was. They'd flip off the Higgins boat onto the raft and from the raft into the water. You lay all these lines of demolition. Then you go back and pick all these guys up. They have to be able to swing themselves back upon the raft and from the raft to get into the boat. Then they'd blow it all up, of course. That was one of the jobs we had, too.

Mr. Metzler: How many landings did you make on Guadalcanal and that area?

Mr. Gregg: I think we made three. You know the Marines went in first and they were supplemented after that by the Army.

Mr. Metzler: Correct.

Mr. Gregg: We made some with the Army. It was a long time before you could say that place was secure.

Mr. Metzler: Oh, it took months and months and months.

Mr. Gregg: Rabaul, if you are familiar with Rabaul, was bypassed.

Mr. Metzler: Right. That was their supply and they had airfields there.

Mr. Gregg: They were on you all the time down there. At that time I think the upper echelon thought we were trying to keep them from going into Australia because for a long time they thought they were going to invade Australia. I forget the exact way, but we made landings at Atipi. Some people call it Atipi; I call it Atipi (*accent on different syllable*).

Mr. Metzler: A-t-i-p-i?

Mr. Gregg: Yes, in New Guinea. And in New Hollandia. Those two places we landed in New Guinea. I forget the sequence of which came first. One thing that was very helpful that I enjoyed seeing is on the wall the whole map is lighted and shows where Pearl Harbor is and then from Pearl Harbor.

Mr. Metzler: In the museum.

Mr. Gregg: Yes.

Mr. Metzler: You mentioned that you transported some pretty interesting groups of fellows in. Tell me about some of those that you took ashore.

Mr. Gregg: One of the most interesting groups we had—Fiji Islands was, I think, mandated by England at that time. We picked up a couple of squadrons of Fiji soldiers that were in short khaki shorts and khaki shirts. Couldn't speak hardly any English but, boy, they were brutal. Big guys.

Mr. Metzler: Muscular, huh?

Mr. Gregg: Yes. They didn't stay there all night. We only had them for a portion of the day. We had to transport them into one of the islands. I remember they played cards. They'd sit down on those hot decks. We couldn't stand it, we Americans. We weren't about to sit on them. But they'd sit down and no long pants. They folded their legs and they'd slap those cards down and we couldn't figure out what they were playing.

Mr. Metzler: Couldn't figure out what they were playing but they could stand the heat.

Mr. Gregg: That was one of the groups we had.

Mr. Metzler: Did you have Australians?

Mr. Gregg: Yes, had Australians. I had a great deal of respect for Australians. They were good jungle fighters. To me they were just good soldiers. Not to put down Americans, but I think if I had to fight alongside somebody—

Mr. Metzler: You'd pick the Australians.

Mr. Gregg: Yes. They were very good. There were a lot of Marines, a lot of Army.

Mr. Metzler: You made it through the Guadalcanal campaign.

Mr. Gregg: The Solomon Island campaign.

Mr. Metzler: The Solomon Islands.

Mr. Gregg: That included Bougainville and up to Green Island that we were talking about.

Mr. Metzler: You made landings in Bougainville as well?

Mr. Gregg: Yes.

Mr. Metzler: Wow, you've got a real list here.

Mr. Gregg: You ought to go out and look at it out there on the plaque.

Mr. Metzler: Yes, I'm going to go out and look at that plaque and have a look at it. Were most of these landings relatively uneventful or were you getting hit?

Mr. Gregg: Mortar fire mostly. Prior to every landing, MacArthur said he would furnish us air power. The Army was supposed to come in and bombard the beach and so forth. Sometimes they didn't do a very good job. We always had the mortar fire. We'd lose a boat now and then with a whole crew. It never bothered us but they were lobbing mortar shells at us.

Mr. Metzler: Would you ever find anything to shoot at with those 20mm?

Mr. Gregg: .50 caliber. Yes, we did. I'm not sure whether they were natives or not but they were walking around on the beach.

Mr. Metzler: Where they shouldn't be.

Mr. Gregg: They shouldn't be there. We came in booming at them anyway.

Mr. Metzler: What was the hottest landing that you did then of all of those? Probably that one where you guys got shot at from above.

Mr. Gregg: That wasn't a landing. That was just a reconnaissance. I think the worst landing that we made was on Corregidor.

Mr. Metzler: Let's go to Corregidor now.

Mr. Gregg: I made one, two, three landings on the Philippines. The first one was Leyte. Then Luzon, I think it was. The landing on Corregidor was supposed to be an airborne landing. The first two planes baled out and the guys caught their chutes on the edges of the mountain. It's a mountain is what it is. When the

United States had it they had railroad tracks through this thing. They'd roll out big guns to shoot. Now that all belonged to the Japanese. They decided when these first two planes caught their parachutes on the side and weren't landing where they were supposed to anyway, they ordered us to go back to Subic Bay which is just up the coast a little ways to pick them up and make a foot landing. If you're familiar with Corregidor, it sort of has what I call like a sandbar, a long tail that swings into the bay like this and we were to land on that. In the meantime, the bigger ships had moved in. I don't know if they were cruisers or battleships now but anyway, they were blowing the hell out of this place up there where the Japs would open it up and fire at you and then retreat back inside.

Mr. Metzler: From the caves and the stuff up there.

Mr. Gregg: They were trying to keep all that from opening up. They didn't keep it all from opening up because when we landed, the Army was hunkered down in that boat. We got a guy that got a commendation out of that because one of our gunners jumped up out of this one over here and grabbed one of their rifles and one of their ammunition deals and ran out with it. He was the momentum that caused the rest of them to follow. I don't blame them for not wanting to get out because you could look out and see how bullets would hit sand and spit. He made it and back out. He got a nice commendation out of that from—I don't know if it was Halsey or whoever it was. His name was Eddie Garcia. Good boy.

Mr. Metzler: Were all of the other Green Dragons there as well?

Mr. Gregg: No.

Mr. Metzler: Was the *Talbot* soloing this one?

Mr. Gregg: No, it wasn't solo, no. I really don't know how many of the Green Dragons were there but I don't think there were over five or six of us that went in.

Mr. Metzler: There were other ships.

Mr. Gregg: Yes.

Mr. Metzler: This was a fairly big landing then.

Mr. Gregg: It was a fairly big landing because we pretty much, as I understand it, had pretty much sewed up the Philippines all except Corregidor. It was just like when the Americans were there.

Mr. Metzler: The last to go because it's such a good fortress.

Mr. Gregg: Yes, they were the last to go. That was not an easy landing.

Mr. Metzler: How does it feel? Here you are a twenty-one year old fellow going in towards—

Mr. Gregg: I guess the only feeling we had was if somebody wasn't scared they'd be lying, I guess. You're scared all the time but you're not scared to the extent that you don't know what you're supposed to do. It's a great deal like the Army, I guess. A sailor on a ship is as much dependent upon the other guy doing his job as well as you because if not, you're going to lose a whole ship. That's the way we operated. Pretty much on a buddy system like that.

Mr. Metzler: You did it just so you wouldn't let your buddies down?

Mr. Gregg: Yes and no. It wasn't only not to let your buddies down, it was done, frankly, the way I looked at it, I wanted to get the damn thing done so I can get the hell out. That's what I wanted to do.

Mr. Metzler: Was there heavy fire when you were going into Corredigor?

Mr. Gregg: Yes, a lot of small arms fire. As I told you, it was hitting the sand all the time. The thing that quieted it down was these big ships kept opening up with their big guns and hitting the rock.

Mr. Metzler: The caves and the stuff like that.

Mr. Gregg: Yes, where the fire was coming from. They were doing that because they were afraid, I presume, that they were going to open up in those caves with the big guns and fire at the big ships, too.

Mr. Metzler: When you would do a landing like that, how long would it take for you to land and then put your guys ashore and then get the heck out?

Mr. Gregg: I think the longest we were was about three days.

Mr. Metzler: That's a long time.

Gap in tape. Some dialog not recorded.

Mr. Gregg: We were always instructed you wait until you see our ship on the horizon and then hightail it back.

Mr. Metzler: Where would you and the Higgins boat stay while you were waiting for your ship?

Mr. Gregg: We'd hide. Pull it up on the shore under some palm trees and underbrush. Then we'd sleep in the boat.

End of side one. Side two begins.

Mr. Metzler: What's the difference, yes.

Mr. Gregg: None of our boys were, but we've heard the stories from the guys that we took ashore that a guy went down to get some water and he didn't come back. They went down and found his helmet and something else floating around. We always had pamphlets what to do at war: stay from the women and this type of thing.

Mr. Metzler: All the rules.

Mr. Gregg: Yes, all the rules. Because a bar of soap would get you anything you wanted in the Philippines at that time. We'd stay close to our boat. We'd pick up souvenirs when it was a little quiet. (laughs) We'd run out and pick up what we could.

Mr. Metzler: There was no way to be in contact with your ship like with a radio or anything.

Mr. Gregg: No, we were out by ourselves.

Mr. Metzler: You were on your own.

Mr. Gregg: The Army could care less about us. They were going on.

Mr. Metzler: They were doing their job. How many in your crew?

Mr. Gregg: One, two, three, four. Four of us. We always had an engineer aboard.

Mr. Metzler: For things like the engine.

Mr. Gregg: Yes, if something happened to the engine. We had two guys on the guns and the coxswain.

Mr. Metzler: How many landings did you make in the Corregidor area? Do you remember?

Mr. Gregg: Just one.

Mr. Metzler: Just the one, although that was memorable it sounds like.

Mr. Gregg: Yes, just one.

Mr. Metzler: Did you take any casualties on that landing?

Mr. Gregg: Did we take any? No.

Mr. Metzler: And not any of your guys that you were putting out?

Mr. Gregg: No.

Mr. Metzler: That's good.

Mr. Gregg: I'll tell you a little thing a lot of us remember is Leyte which was our first landing in the Philippines. We'd made the landing and I think we were there four days before MacArthur came ashore. We watched him walk ashore several times for the purposes of the cameras.

Mr. Metzler: The re-creation of the walk ashore. You were there?

Mr. Gregg: "I have returned."

Mr. Metzler: You were there and saw that.

Mr. Gregg: Oh, yes.

Mr. Metzler: Tell me about that.

Mr. Gregg: Oh, nothing to tell.

Mr. Metzler: Yes, come on.

Mr. Gregg: Except we were there. We had already made the landing. Here he comes off of one of the big ships in with all his—

Mr. Metzler: Corncob pipes and aviator sunglasses.

Mr. Gregg: Yes, very much and his hat. We stayed our distance, of course. We sailors never had a great deal of respect or admiration I think for him because several times we were looking for him to supply air power.

Mr. Metzler: You didn't always get it.

Mr. Gregg: It didn't come on time.

Mr. Metzler: How many times did he come in and re-do it?

Mr. Gregg: I think it was three or four times. Went up to his knees, he'd wade in, you know. Cranking the cameras. We all felt he was a supreme egotist.

Mr. Metzler: He has that reputation.

Mr. Gregg: I guess he had, from a general's standpoint, good acumen for figuring out battles and so forth.

Mr. Metzler: I guess he got the job done and in the end that's what counts.

Mr. Gregg: Only thing he couldn't do is he couldn't subdue Truman.

Mr. Metzler: No, that's right. Truman ended up getting him in Korea. You had the landings in Leyte. You had the landing at Corregidor.

Mr. Gregg: Luzon.

Mr. Metzler: Luzon, what about the Luzon campaign? Tell me about that.

Mr. Gregg: It's hard to remember. Just one against the other.

Mr. Metzler: You had so many, my gosh.

Mr. Gregg: I think we had about thirteen altogether. We had a little conflict there at Luzon. I don't know what it was. We had to be careful. The ship would back away from us. In other words, the ship was more important with a hundred people on it than four guys in a boat.

Mr. Metzler: Right, right, right. You don't want to put the ship at risk.

Mr. Gregg: We knocked down several airplanes during the war. We used to keep everything painted on the side of the thing—every landing and every airplane we knocked down.

Mr. Metzler: Were you one of the aces that shot down some of these planes?

Mr. Gregg: Yes, I was in charge of a gun crew. We were all aboard at this time and we

shot down in—I keep thinking it was Surigao, but it's not Surigao—it was a strait in the South Pacific. I forget where it was. Anyway, they were torpedo bombers. We got two of them. They got the *Dent* which was one of us, the USS *Dent*. I remember we had to lower boats and pick some of them up.

Mr. Metzler: They sank her?

Mr. Gregg: Yes, they took care of her.

Mr. Metzler: How far away was she when she took it? Close by?

Mr. Gregg: I think the one that was after us went over us and dropped his torpedo into her. She wasn't too far away.

Mr. Metzler: Describe that scene for me.

Mr. Gregg: Well, I'll tell you, when you're there you don't see everything that's going on. I'm sitting there as a gun captain. I got the earphones on. I'm in touch with the bridge. I'm always watching my first loader, second, and third loader. I always had a tall guy for a first loader so if you wanted to instead of shooting up, you wanted to shoot down on sea level, you had a tall enough guy that can ram that projectile in there. I'm watching for us. Then you've got two guys—one keeps the gun this way and the other one controls the gun this way.

Mr. Metzler: One vertical and one horizontal.

Mr. Gregg: One's a trainer and the other one I forget what it was. We all worked in harmony, so to speak. This one plane came in and we let him have it. We got him. In fact, one of the chief gunner mates walked up afterwards on the well deck on our ship and said, "Boy, you guys really hit a target, didn't you?" I said, "I hope so." But then you're looking on. Okay, so he's gone where's the next one coming from.

Mr. Metzler: You don't have time to take a victory lap.

Mr. Gregg: When the *Dent* got torpedoed, of course, that diverted our attention because that was an explosion. I would say it was three or four football fields away from us I would estimate. That would be what?

Mr. Metzler: Several hundred yards. She went down fast or what?

Mr. Gregg: No, she didn't go down too fast. She went down in the rear for some reason first. The bow started up like this. Everybody had to abandon ship and we

had to lower boats and pick them up.

Mr. Metzler: They were able to save most of the guys then?

Mr. Gregg: Yes. You know in September we'll go through all this again. I forget how many of the thirty-two dragons were left after the war.

Mr. Metzler: There were thirty-two of them?

Mr. Gregg: Thirty-two of them. Some of them were used in the Atlantic.

Mr. Metzler: For the same kind of duty? Did they do the same type of modifications?

Mr. Gregg: I don't really know what they did. I only know about the ones we associated with which was the *Waters*, the *Dent*, and all of those. In fact, the one APD, it was a four-stacker then, sunk that miniature sub that you've got there.

Mr. Metzler: Right.

Mr. Gregg: That was one of the four-stackers that sunk that.

Mr. Metzler: No kidding? I didn't remember that detail.

Mr. Gregg: They sunk that off the coast of Hawaii there.

Mr. Metzler: Right there at the entrance to Pearl Harbor.

Mr. Gregg: Of course, they never let the rest of us forget that. You know how sailors are. We went on up to the Marshall Islands. I think the last thing I remember most of all was the Tinian, Saipan, Guam, and then Okinawa.

Mr. Metzler: You were in all of those as well?

Mr. Gregg: Yes.

Mr. Metzler: Good gracious, man. Let me get all this down.

Mr. Gregg: You can copy them all off the plaque out there.

Mr. Metzler: No, no, no.

Mr. Gregg: I remember at Okinawa we made the landing, I think it was April 4th.

Mr. Metzler: I tell you what. Let's take it in order. Let's go through Tinian and Saipan. Tell me about what you remember of that. Was it kind of more of the same? Was it tougher?

Mr. Gregg: It was almost all the same.

Mr. Metzler: Some of those landings were pretty rough as I remember. Coral atolls getting in the way and boats getting hung up and tipped over.

Mr. Gregg: We got in a couple of places where some boats were operated by the civilian population, not ours. We sunk a couple of them. Picked up the survivors of one. One of them had a woman on it that attracted everybody's attention.

Mr. Metzler: Now where was that, Tinian?

Mr. Gregg: In that group.

Mr. Metzler: Saipan or Tinian or somewhere in the Marshalls.

Mr. Gregg: Yes. The one I remember most is Okinawa because we—and this happened at those three island, too, Guam, Tinian, and in there because after the landing, say this is the landing, they would take our group and they'd put us out on picket duty. In other words, we'd have to sail out.

Mr. Metzler: On your ship.

Mr. Gregg: Yes, sail out and be out say, seventy-five miles or so. We'd sail so far this way; turn around and sail back. All we were doing is pick up any airplanes coming from Japan. We were getting awful close to Japan.

Mr. Metzler: Right, in Okinawa.

Mr. Gregg: Our duty then was to alert the homeland.

Mr. Metzler: You were worried about the kamikaze at that point, too.

Mr. Gregg: That's right. Some of our ships got it from a kamikaze. Fortunately, we didn't. We shot down a couple of them. They never got to us. I think if they had, their engine on the airplane would have gone right through us. (laughs)

Mr. Metzler: Basically you were on picket duty probably north of the island.

Mr. Gregg: Between Okinawa and Japan. We were there for quite a while.

Mr. Metzler: The Okinawa campaign lasted a long time.

Mr. Gregg: That was not an easy campaign nor an easy landing.

Mr. Metzler: Did you participate in any of the landings at Okinawa?

Mr. Gregg: Yes.

Mr. Metzler: So you had landing duty and picket duty.

Mr. Gregg: Yes. We did all kinds of duty.

Mr. Metzler: Tell me more about Okinawa then. Tell me about the landings first.

Mr. Gregg: I think we landed there on April 4. Does that sound right for the landing? I don't remember exactly.

Mr. Metzler: I don't know the exact dates but that's right in there.

Mr. Gregg: In fact, I've got a deal here on Okinawa that we created. It's the SOUYA Club. Do you know what that stands for?

Mr. Metzler: No.

Mr. Gregg: Stick Okinawa Up Your Ass. (laughs)

Mr. Metzler: Well, okay! Glad I asked.

Mr. Gregg: That's not very good.

Mr. Metzler: That's alright. We're talking history here. We're not making this up.

Mr. Gregg: Here's a picture of me that was taken on the ship if you can tell which one is me there.

Mr. Metzler: I'm struggling. It's not you in the middle.

Mr. Gregg: No.

Mr. Metzler: I'm going to say that's you on the left.

Mr. Gregg: That's right. Had a beard at the time.

Mr. Metzler: Alright. You had a beard. That looks like a couple or three daredevils there.

Mr. Gregg: We operated as a bunch of pirates, I think. I'll tell you what happened though. We all grew beards. The skipper of the ship was getting concerned about it and so he said, "We're going to simulate a gas attack." So, we took one compartment on the ship. (laughs)

Mr. Metzler: Wait a second and let me change. I'm playing musical tapes here, so just bear with me.

Mr. Gregg: Here's the SOUYA thing.

Mr. Metzler: For the purposes of tape recorder number one, we're now on the second tape. Let me have a look, Bud, at what we've got here.

Mr. Gregg: That's the SOUYA Club.

Mr. Metzler: SOUYA. This looks hand-typed.

Mr. Gregg: Yes, it was on our ship.

Mr. Metzler: *Reads:* To all Sailors, Marines, Soldiers, WAVES, WACS, SPARS, Polywogs, Shellbacks, Dolphins, Serpents, and other members of the deep: Let it be known that one Loren W. Gregg (*That would be you*) has been duly initiated into the SOUYA Club of the USS *Talbot* APD 7 during the months of April, May, and June of 1945. Be ye honored by his presence. Be it known that said member will never buy first drinks.

And you never did, did you?

Mr. Gregg: I don't know about that. It was just a club they made up.

Mr. Metzler: The SOUYA Club. You've kept that all these years.

Mr. Gregg: Yes, it's what, sixty-something years old?

Mr. Metzler: That's a real historic piece there. A real document. By golly, that proves you were there, I'll tell you.

The landings on Okinawa were pretty eventful? Seems like April 1st was when they first went in.

Mr. Gregg: It might have been.

Mr. Metzler: So you were several days after the first wave but that doesn't mean it wasn't still pretty exciting.

Mr. Gregg: We might have been there on April 1st, I don't know but as the thing says there, it was April, May, and June. That's how long we were there.

Mr. Metzler: You're landing Marines at this point?

Mr. Gregg: Yes, and Army both.

Mr. Metzler: And Army both.

Mr. Gregg: I think the thing that I remember most about our duty at Saipan was the picket duty that I spoke of because you felt somewhat helpless against those kamikazes. You might be the best gunner in the world and set him on fire, but as long as he can maneuver that airplane he's going to fly it into you. He had no qualms of death. Fortunately, we were able to avoid all those. What happened was, we could see them come over and what they'd do is maybe four to six of them would peel off and try to get a few ships. They knew what we were going to do is alert the mainland that they were coming, so they'd try to get us in a hurry.

Mr. Metzler: Right, right.

Mr. Gregg: That's what bothered us more than anything else because you could hardly sleep for fear because you want to watch the sky all the time. We were cushioned at the time about the landing. It was planned, I think it was in November on Japan itself. We were told by letter, I forget what admiral signed it, that everybody was going to be your enemy. Women, children, and so forth, they're all your enemy, so shoot everybody. That's the way it was put to us.

Mr. Metzler: Don't take chances.

Mr. Gregg: They said the women were being armed with thinks on their back to swim out and attach themselves to ships to blow a hole in it.

Incidentally, I have to skip forwards and back sometimes.

Mr. Metzler: That's alright.

Mr. Gregg: Going back to Guadalcanal. That's one thing I remember is that we had to stand guard. We had to put a guard in the fantail, mid-ships on both sides,

and the front with a rifle. They had swimmers that were doing this. They had a pack on their back and would swim up beside your ship and would blow themselves up, too.

Mr. Metzler: And detonate.

Mr. Gregg: Detonate and blow a hole in your ship. We were warned and we had sentries around.

Mr. Metzler: Did that actually happen?

Mr. Gregg: Not to our ship it didn't.

Mr. Metzler: But to others?

Mr. Gregg: To others, yes.

Mr. Metzler: I didn't know that.

Mr. Gregg: That's about it, I guess. We went home.

Mr. Metzler: Give me a little more detail on the kamikaze attacks when you were in Okinawa. You said other ships went down but you guys never got hit.

Mr. Gregg: No, we never got hit.

Mr. Metzler: Did you see other ships get hit?

Mr. Gregg: I saw smoke from them, yes. That's about it.

Mr. Metzler: Did you ever have to go over and pick up survivors or anything like that?

Mr. Gregg: No. We had picked up survivors in other areas.

Mr. Metzler: You'd picked up survivors from the *Dent* when you were down in the Philippines.

Mr. Gregg: Yes, but we picked up some survivors, I forget the name of the ship it was that we picked them up from, one of the other destroyers. I remember when we picked them up, they were so badly burned that the skin came off of their hands picking them up.

Mr. Metzler: Oh, my gosh.

Mr. Gregg: I forget where that was. But back to your question. At Okinawa the only thing we saw was the couple that we knocked down that were trying to get at us. They seemed to come at you and then they'd veer off and go to another ship. You never know which one they're going to. They seemed to veer off. Never one got to us but we were very alert.

Let me explain this to you. We looked like the Fourth of July when it came shooting at airplanes. Every ship has a certain complement of guns that has been okayed by the War Department, let's say. But our old man, he wanted everything he could get. I'd go ashore and get a .50 caliber machine gun here. Somebody else would get a .50 caliber machine gun over here. Our ship fitters would mount those on our ship. Make mounts and we could put those along our ship.

Mr. Metzler: Extra guns.

Mr. Gregg: In addition to all the other guns we had. What we'd do once you get away from there, you take them off the mounts and you take them back in the gunnery shack so nobody thinks you've got the right amount. We had at least six or seven extra guns shooting on our ship.

Mr. Metzler: I'll be darn.

Mr. Gregg: We could put up a pretty good fight as far as the air was concerned.

Mr. Metzler: What was the ship like onboard? I know there is combat and then there is times between combat. I mean, were you sleeping in a bunk five rows high? How was the food?

Mr. Gregg: I was on the first row of bunks. It wasn't bad. The only thing that was bad about shipboard was if you were out. The longest I was ever at what we called general quarters, that's sitting on the gun, was fifty-six hours. They had the cooks bring around what they called horse cock, sandwiches, and hot coffee. A lot of times we were in positions where we couldn't do much. Carry out our duty but we couldn't do much as far as replenishing our food supplies was concerned. We had limited refrigeration. We didn't have the best food all the time. I think we did better than the soldiers did that was digging in trench over there. I know that we would have fought for a Coca Cola or died for a head of lettuce.

Mr. Metzler: Or a real piece of meat instead of canned meat.

Mr. Gregg: I tell you, I think (?) if we ever worked with Australians we had sheep or

mutton all the time. We got tired of that.

Mr. Metzler: Can you look a leg of lamb in the face anymore?

Mr. Gregg: I can now because my mother used to fix a pretty good leg of lamb. But I'm not crazy about it. I used to chew it and figure I could feel the feathers or the fur.

Mr. Metzler: The wool. (laughs)

Mr. Gregg: I couldn't eat any eggs. The eggs weren't the kind you crack.

Mr. Metzler: They were powdered eggs.

Mr. Gregg: Had powdered potatoes. Had a lot of powdered everything. I don't know. We got by. We had a lot of fun.

Mr. Metzler: Did you have the same commander the whole time?

Mr. Gregg: No. Just before the starting of Okinawa, he got taken away from us. They put another commander on our ship and took him away. I don't know what happened to him. I understand he got a desk job or was promoted upstairs or something. A number of our fellows went to see him. He was from California and he was a pretty big shot, I guess, in some steel company or something.

Mr. Metzler: After the war you mean?

Mr. Gregg: Yes. He was a nice guy. I don't even remember the name of the medals anymore but he got so damn many medals. In the Navy you get a commendation for every body.

Mr. Metzler: For being in a campaign.

Mr. Gregg: Not only that but sometimes you get a unit citation. He'd get crosses. A silver cross, I forget what all the major medals were anymore, but he'd get those and he'd put them on the bulletin board with a letter thanking the crew because the crew is what got him the medals.

Mr. Metzler: That was a nice touch.

Mr. Gregg: He was a nice guy about that. He got a lot of medals as a result of our ship's activity. For awhile, we used to think he wanted to fight the damn war by

himself. It seemed like every time something came up that you had to use one of the APDs, it was him.

Mr. Metzler: It was you.

Mr. Gregg: He wanted to do it.

Mr. Metzler: It was his ship.

Mr. Gregg: That's about the whole story.

Mr. Metzler: Okinawa was the last big campaign before the end of the war.

Mr. Gregg: We had some problems at Okinawa and I've been sitting here trying to think what it was. We came home from Okinawa and we limped home. I'm trying to think why we limped home.

Mr. Metzler: Did you get hit?

Mr. Gregg: I don't remember getting hit at Okinawa but I remember we had a screw problem. I don't know what happened. I don't really remember what happened.

Mr. Metzler: Where did you limp to?

Mr. Gregg: Pearl Harbor, Hawaiian Islands.

Mr. Metzler: Was that before the Okinawa campaign was complete?

Mr. Gregg: It was after the three months that I was there.

Mr. Metzler: That's pretty much it.

Mr. Gregg: April, May, and June.

Mr. Metzler: Yes, that's pretty much it.

Mr. Gregg: It was right towards the end of it, yes.

Mr. Metzler: Do you remember hearing about the first atomic bomb?

Mr. Gregg: Oh, sure do.

Mr. Metzler: Where were you?

Mr. Gregg: I think we were at Okinawa at the time, weren't we?

Mr. Metzler: I don't know.

Mr. Gregg: I forget the date of it.

Mr. Metzler: They were both dropped in August. Were you still in the Okinawa area in August?

Mr. Gregg: What did that card say that you just read? That SOUYA card.

Mr. Metzler: I don't remember seeing a date on it.

Mr. Gregg: It said so many months. It read the months off.

Mr. Metzler: Did it? I don't remember. Let's have a look at that. I think Okinawa was pretty well over by June.

Mr. Gregg: Yes, I think it was, too. I think this is it right here. I carry a lot of crap.

Mr. Metzler: That's kind of like a woman and her purse, you know. You've got to have some place for this stuff.

Mr. Gregg: Fortunately, a woman has a purse. A man only has pockets. Months of April, May, and June, 1945.

Mr. Metzler: Everybody was preparing for the landing in Japan.

Mr. Gregg: Yes, it was supposed to come off that following November is what we were told.

Mr. Metzler: What was everybody's reaction when they heard that we'd dropped this super bomb?

Mr. Gregg: Joy. Everything was joy. I mean, everybody was elated. Maybe we'll get to go home. Maybe this will end the war, which it did. That was the reaction.

Mr. Metzler: What about when the Japanese actually surrendered right at the end of August, early September?

Mr. Gregg: It was interesting because we'd operated with the *Missouri* a couple of times.

Mr. Metzler: Really?

Mr. Gregg: It took place on the decks of the *Missouri*.

Mr. Metzler: Right, they signed. At this time you guys were back in Pearl?

Mr. Gregg: Yes. From there we came into the West Coast where we were put into what they called Red Lead Row where they decommissioned the ship.

Mr. Metzler: Red Lead Row, right. How did it feel to be home?

Mr. Gregg: I didn't stay very long. I had plenty of points and I got out right away. When we came back, I got out. Right away you got liberty.

Mr. Metzler: This is in San Francisco then?

Mr. Gregg: No, we came back into San Pedro. They sent me home on a thirty-day leave. That was the month of August of '45, I think it was.

Mr. Metzler: At that time they didn't know for sure that the war was going to be over probably.

Mr. Gregg: That's right.

Mr. Metzler: They were going to pull you back.

Mr. Gregg: The war ended while I was home. I went back to my ship and I was discharged on October 3rd. One of the first groups discharged.

Mr. Metzler: Even though the war had ended, you had to report back.

Mr. Gregg: I had to report back to my ship because I still was in the Navy. I reported and I got a trip to Chicago on a B-24, I remember, with a couple of pilots out of--what's that Air Force base in California that's near San Pedro? Anyway, if you'd been overseas over a year, they'd give you transportation providing you had an airplane that was going that way with cargo or something. I got transportation back to Chicago that way.

Mr. Metzler: So you got to fly on a B-24 Liberator?

Mr. Gregg: Yes, and then I got a train out of Chicago back to Ft. Wayne.

Mr. Metzler: Looking back on that period in your life, how did all of that change you? Or

did it?

Mr. Gregg: It matured me. I'll tell you one thing how I feel about it and this will sum it up pretty good for you. When I got out of the service, "Come join the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Come join the American Legion." I went and joined them both. I sat in the American Legion and I heard these guys rant and rave about the state should give us a bonus and Uncle Sam owes us this and that. I finally stood up. I had taken all I could take. I stood up and I said, "You know, do you fellows know what the Capitol looks like, the dome of the Capitol? It looks like a woman's breast and you guys are trying to suck it dry." I never went back after that. To this day I've never been back.

Mr. Metzler: They kind of felt like everybody had their hand out. That they owed them something.

Mr. Gregg: I never felt anybody owed me anything. In other words, we went to war; we did what we had to do; now let's forget about it and go on with our life.

Mr. Metzler: And you did it for your country anyhow.

Mr. Gregg: That's right. I never had much use for, I won't mention any particular religions, but I never had much use for conscientious objectors. That was pretty much the story.

Mr. Metzler: How do you feel about the Japanese?

Mr. Gregg: I was a long time being able to accept Japanese people.

Mr. Metzler: Is that right?

Mr. Gregg: The Japanese and Russians. I'm alright today. It didn't bother me today. I guess you mellow in your old age a little bit. I looked at your pictures in the museum today about the internment of the Japanese. I thought that was a cruel thing to do.

Mr. Metzler: In retrospect it was wrong.

Mr. Gregg: I was thinking, if you're going to be that cruel, you ought to take all the Muslims today in this country and do the same thing.

Mr. Metzler: I think we're better than that.

Mr. Gregg: It's not right, yes.

Mr. Metzler: Anything else that comes to mind?

Mr. Gregg: There will probably be a jillion things that come to mind when I leave here.

Mr. Metzler: That's right. That's why you've got to think of them now while I've got you. I must say, this is quite a list. You took a real tour of the Pacific, didn't you?

Mr. Gregg: Forty-six months.

Mr. Metzler: Forty-six months.

Mr. Gregg: Almost four years.

Mr. Metzler: Did you come back with any souvenirs?

Mr. Gregg: That's another story. I had a whole seabag full of souvenirs which the government took away from me when they discharged me.

Mr. Metzler: I've heard that from a lot of the veterans.

Mr. Gregg: I have a few. I have a Japanese helmet that is their Japanese Marine helmet with the star on it. The Marines had a star. I have one of those. Had a Japanese sailor suit. I think that's about all I have. I had swords, a gun, and a few things like that that were taken away from me. Which was right, I suppose. We had gathered at one time or another. (laughs)

Mr. Metzler: Whatever happened to the old *Talbot*?

Mr. Gregg: I understand it was part of the Bikini test.

Mr. Metzler: Was it?

Mr. Gregg: That's what I understand.

Mr. Metzler: One of the test fleets that they dropped the hydrogen bomb on.

Mr. Gregg: I understand it was part of that.

Mr. Metzler: She's down in the bottom of the ocean now. Probably still radioactive. My goodness. She was a good old ship though.

Mr. Gregg: She was.

Mr. Metzler: She served you well.

Mr. Gregg: Real well. Cut through the water real well. We'd get in and out pretty fast. We got chased one time in that strait. I can't think of the name of the strait. It was down around the Solomon Islands I know. Our radar picked up a cruiser. They knew it was a big ship that was on our tail. We got our engineers to—you were on that ship and the thing was just like that.

Mr. Metzler: You could feel it vibrating.

Mr. Gregg: Yes, we had it going at maximum speed because we knew we didn't want to have a confrontation.

Mr. Metzler: No cruisers, please.

Mr. Gregg: As you say, it served us well. We never had a great deal of trouble. The only time I think we had some real holes in it was that ship that blew up that time.

Mr. Metzler: You're probably getting a little bit hungry by now.

Mr. Gregg: Yes, I'm pretty hungry.

Mr. Metzler: So I'm going to let you go but I appreciate your taking the time to sit with us. I want to give you one of the copies of these tapes to take with you so you can hear yourself.

Mr. Gregg: It's a pleasure.

Mr. Metzler: Thanks again.

Proof
Bonnie Day Rush
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Dublin, Texas
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