

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR

***Nimitz Education and Research Center
Fredericksburg, Texas***

***Interview with Allen Ensor
U.S. Navy, USS Nashville***

1706

Interview With Allen Ensor

This is Ed Metzler. Today is the twelfth of September, 2006. I am in Federicksburg and I am interviewing Mr. Alan Ensor. This interview is in support of the Nimitz Education and Research Center, Archives for the National Museum of the Pacific War, Texas Historical Commission, for the preservation of historical information related to this site.

Mr. Metzler: Let me start out, Allen, by first thanking you for spending the time to share your experiences with us today, and to add your story to the Archives. Let me get you to start by, start at square one, when and where were you were born and a little bit about your family.

Mr. Ensor:: Okay. I was born in Taylor, Maryland, back in 1922. When I was about four years old, myself and my four siblings went to live with our grandmother. They had, my mother and dad, had divorced and my dad died two short years later.

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

Mr. Ensor:: He was a carpenter. A very good carpenter, in fact.

Mr. Metzler: And your mother, what did she do?

Mr. Ensor:: She was a domestic worker, an in-house type, and she was working in Baltimore while we were living with Grandmaw.

Mr. Metzler: So where did you go to school?

Mr. Ensor:: I went to school at Hope School, it was only a hop and a jump from where I lived, for five years. My aunt was the teacher and when they closed the school, went to Jarrettsville High School. The bus came and picked us up. That's a little town just about three miles from where we lived. I graduated in June of 1944. I had planned on being a farmer. I had enrolled in agriculture classes for all four of my high school years. But, my brother had joined the Navy ahead of me about a year, and he came back and tell me all about the goodies of the sea life and all these gals that he would meet and so forth.

Mr. Metzler: So the sailor stories, huh?

Mr. Ensor:: Yeah, right. (Chuckles) After hearing all those stories and my last year of high school, the Navy's for me. So down I went.

Mr. Metzler: Let me go back a little bit. You were in high school then, when Pearl Harbor was sattuacked.

Mr. Ensor:: No no no no. I graduated in 1940.

Mr. Metzler: Oh, I thought you said 'forty-four.

Mr. Ensor:: Well, I may have.

Mr. Metzler: Well, that's okay. You and I are together now. So you graduated from high school in 'forty.

Mr. Ensor:: Yes.

Mr. Metzler: And then the war started.

Mr. Ensor:: No, no. I was in the Navy for fifteen months before the war started.

Mr. Metzler: Okay. Now, so you're stories from your brother were pre-World War II Navy stories.

Mr. Ensor:: Yes.

Mr. Metzler: Ah, the old Navy. Okay. Well, let me let you tell the story. Go ahead.

Mr. Ensor:: Well, he was on a little, a new class of destroyer, the 1500 class, and so once I made up my mind I was gonna go after I graduated from high school, I went down and talked to the recruiters at the, in Baltimore, and I had to pass my physical except I had t have two teeth pulled. I'd never seen a dentist in my life up to that point, but nevertheless. And then I was sworn in after I got back from that. And would you believe, my first ten days, they sent me home. Didn't send me on to recruit training, because what they were doing, recruit training was for twelve weeks and they had cut it to six. So they needed some time for an even flow of recruits coming in.

Mr. Metzler: So you started with a furlough. (Both chuckle)

Mr. Ensor:: And I had a good time in boot camp. I had an old chief bosun's mate, and my commander, platoon commander . . .

Mr. Metzler: Where did you do boot camp?

Mr. Ensor:: Norfolk, Virginia. In fact, we rode a ferry from Baltimore down to Norfolk, Virginia to go to boot camp. We were picked up from the ferry and by bus, and we saw a bunch of masts sticking up. They were ships. I said "Oh boy, look at all those battleships." And the petty officer in charge says "They're not battleships, they're old War World I destroyers."

Mr. Metzler: Four stackers.

- Mr. Ensor::** Four stackers, right.
- Mr. Metzler:** They looked like battleships to you, for all you knew, anyhow.
- Mr. Ensor::** But then we got, it was about three days before we were picked up in a platoon, and then I like to mention the fact that we, my platoon, our platoon, won the red rooster. This was a little flag they gave you for being the best platoon in the company. We earned that, and we got an extra day's leave for it, when we went home on boot leave.
- Mr. Metzler:** Being best at what?
- Mr. Ensor::** Overall.
- Mr. Metzler:** Everything.
- Mr. Ensor::** Everything, yes. Marching and so forth, and no problems.
- Mr. Metzler:** Great. Good discipline.
- Mr. Ensor::** Just good discipline.
- Mr. Metzler:** Good boys.
- Mr. Ensor::** Right. (Both laugh) Okay, after my nine days of boot leave back home, I helped with the farm again, farm work. I went back when my nine days was up, and we were put on a train in Baltimore heading for California. It was Long Beach, Long Beach, California. And we got orders for the light cruiser *Nashville*. There was about, oh, five or six of my guys that went through recruit training also got orders to that ship.
- Mr. Metzler:** Where was she stationed at that time?
- Mr. Ensor::** In Long Beach. San Pedro, really, San Pedro. And then after a very short time, less than a month, the ship got orders for Hawaii for extensive training, which we went through for about five months. This consisted of gunnery, of course, was the main item, and my battlestation was the powder room. It wasn't the nicest place to be.
- Mr. Metzler:** Hot, and down low.
- Mr. Ensor::** Down low, and a very peculiar odor, black powder.
- Mr. Metzler:** So tell me the first time you saw the cruiser *Nashville*, what were your thoughts?
- Mr. Ensor::** Well, what a beautiful ship it was. I mean, a beautiful ship. And how big it was. But it

took me a while before I could find my way around it and learn to stay out of officers' country. (Both laugh)

Mr. Metzler: You only make that mistake once.

Mr. Ensor:: Right, right. But we, during our training, we would go out on a Monday morning. Most of the ships would go out Monday morning. We would train, train, train, and come back in Friday afternoon. We had liberty, and if you didn't have the duty section. One time I, not one time, but I was, my underway station was being on watch in the crow's nest.

Mr. Metzler: Way up there.

Mr. Ensor:: Way up there. And one time they were firing a salvo of six-inch ammunition. They forgot to tell me what was gonna happen. 'Course I didn't quite jump out, just part of the way.

Mr. Metzler: Yu were ready to bail out though, huh?

Mr. Ensor: Yeah. So from there I like to mention the fact that we were out doing our thing, training, and a destroyer notified us they had a message for us. So we took them alongside—I say alongside. We transferred mail and personnel and what have you from ship to ship. And when we got our message aboardship it was taken to the communications officer for decoding and then it was sent to the commanding officer. Okay. The commander officer digested it and got on the phone or the 1MC system, and told us what was going on. He said, "We just got orders to proceed to the Boston Navy Yard." We were five thousand miles from the Panama Canal.

Mr. Metzler: You were on the wrong side.

Mr. Ensor: Unfortunately, one thing for me happened when I was steering after we, well, it was a battleship and a few destroyers all received the same orders so we all went together as a unit. It was learning to be a helmsman, and I had qualified. Then that kinda got me to thinking, my mind wandering, and I let the ship—I had orders to steer to the battleship *New Mexico*. I got it back where I should be, and then before my watch was over I let it stray again, and I was relieved by the quartermaster at the directions of the officer of the day. That put me back to learning how to steer again, which I did, in a couple more watches, I requalified.

Mr. Metzler: Were you just not paying attention, or just . . .

Mr. Ensor:: Well, just dreaming, I think. Just dreaming about going home, maybe. When we got to Boston or so. But it was an experience going through the Canal, and the river part, and on up the coast to Boston. We stayed there a little while, and we . . .

- Mr. Metzler:** So when is this, nineteen . . .
- Mr. Ensor:** This is 1940. No, 'forty-one.
- Mr. Metzler:** So early 'forty-one.
- Mr. Ensor:** Early 'forty-one. We spent about ten or twelve months, I think, on the Atlantic.
- Mr. Metzler:** So you were headed up to Boston.
- Mr. Ensor:** Yeah, right.
- Mr. Metzler:** You went straight to Boston first.
- Mr. Ensor:** We got new radar and our galley was rebuilt to handle cafeteria-type serving, was what they were after, and that's what we got.
- Mr. Metzler:** What was it before?
- Mr. Ensor:** We sat down at the table and it was delivered to us, passed down.
- Mr. Metzler:** Even the average guys.
- Mr. Ensor:** Absolutely.
- Mr. Metzler:** Not just the officers.
- Mr. Ensor:** Right.
- Mr. Metzler:** Man. that was the old Navy, wasn't it.
- Mr. Ensor:** (Laughs) Okay. We made a trip to Iceland.
- Mr. Metzler:** How long were you in Boston?
- Mr. Ensor:** Just probably a couple of, might have been two or three weeks.
- Mr. Metzler:** So then you took off to Iceland.
- Mr. Ensor:** Yes. We had some Marines we taking up there to land. They had no Marines up there and we landed the first Marines up here from our ship.
- Mr. Metzler:** I didn't know we had any Marines in Iceland.

- Mr. Ensor:** Oh yes we did. Yes, we did. And like I say, it was mighty rough, that North Atlantic is mighty rough. And so we get back, we pick up a convoy. Now this is still before the war started.
- Mr. Metzler:** Pre-Pearl Harbor.
- Mr. Ensor:** Yeah. We took them to Iceland. Not actually Iceland, we went as far as Iceland with 'em, and the British Navy came back and took 'em the rest of the way to England.
- Mr. Metzler:** See any U-boats?
- Mr. Ensor:** No. We had several submarine emergencies, however. Actually, World War II actually started about September of 1941, or 'forty, 1940.
- Mr. Metzler:** Actually, 1939.
- Mr. Ensor:** You're right, 'thirty-nine.
- Mr. Metzler:** Then there was this long period when nothing happened.
- Mr. Ensor:** And we went into neutrality patrol, and . . .
- Mr. Metzler:** When you had these submarine emergencies, now, tell me what that was like.
- Mr. Ensor:** Submarine emergency, all hands man their battle stations. We didn't have much we could do with a submarine, unless we sighted it. We could hear 'em, we could hear 'em. Or our destroyers could.
- Mr. Metzler:** Were there any attacks on the convoy by the submarines?
- Mr. Ensor:** No, no.
- Mr. Metzler:** Okay, so they didn't lose any ships.
- Mr. Ensor:** No.
- Mr. Metzler:** So the weather's nice and warm and balmy up there in the North Atlantic, right?
- Mr. Ensor:** Yeah. (Both chuckle) But we hit the balmy place later on. We anchored in Grassy Bay, Bermuda all the time, and we went out, actually out to sea. We were steaming by ourself with a destroyer escort and one time we were over to Charleston, for some reason or other, and then later back, we were on our way to Bermuda and we picked up this one destroyer a couple hours out, and I looked at it and saw it only had one stack. I thought,

well, I just dashed up the signal bridge to find out what destroyer was. He said, "That is the *USS Ryan*."

I said, "Well, that's what I thought. There's a 404 hull number that was visible and so it's my brother's ship."

"Oh."

So when we made it in and anchored in Grassy Bay, why, he came over with guard mail and we got a chance to talk a little bit.

This neutrality patrol and all, for probably four or five months anyway.

Mr. Metzler: So were you still a helmsman at this point?

Mr. Ensor:: For my underway, no, I wasn't. In fact I had been assigned to a boat crew. I was helmsman through that North Atlantic trip, I was just rocking back from one foot to the other while you were steering.

Mr. Metzler: When you say you were assigned to a boat crew?

Mr. Ensor: Yeah. A boat crew. I was actually, an officers' boat crew, and when we were at sea we worked on it, kept it clean.

Mr. Metzler: This was a boat that you put over the side for your commanding officer to ride in?

Mr. Ensor: He had his own gig, and we had the officers' motor boat. But from there I went to, ah, we received orders again along this time frame to report back to the Pacific Fleet.

Mr. Metzler: Oh really. Had we had Pearl Harbor yet?

Mr. Ensor: Yes, we did. I'm glad you asked that question. We were anchored in Bermuda when on December the seventh, in fact I was in the wash room washing clothes, I heard some guys from my division talking about Pearl Harbor. I said, "What's going on?"

He said, "They've been bombed by Japs."

I said, "No, they couldn't do that." Well, yeah, they could do it. Did do it.

Mr. Metzler: (Chuckles) Somebody forgot to tell the Japanese.

Mr. Ensor:: So we was underway. We had to round up our liberty party that was ashore in Bermuda. About the only thing you do is ride bicycles and tour the island, and so the

skipper got orders to go back to the Pacific Fleet. There again, we went back to Boston for just another short period, and then when we were heading south, that's when he told us that we were going back to the Pacific. Back through the old Canal again, and we went up to, stopped in San Diego just overnight and then got underway for San Francisco. As we were under the Golden Gate B ridge, we saw some Army planes being hoisted aboard the *Hornet*. Of course we didn't think anything about that until later.

Once we got to sea we joined the *Hornet*.

Mr. Metzler: Oh you did. So you were part of the *Hornet* task force.

Mr. Ensor: Yes. Task Force Sixteen.

Mr. Metzler: How many ships?

Mr. Ensor: Sixteen ships, and two submarines. I should be able to name 'em all, but I can't.

Mr. Metzler: What an historic thing to be involved in.

Mr. Ensor: Yeah.

Mr. Metzler: So, several other light cruisers, I guess some . . .

Mr. Ensor: No, no, there was three heavy cruisers. We were the only light. There was eight destroyers and two tankers. That was it.

Mr. Metzler: So you left from San Francisco.

Mr. Ensor: Um-hum. And there was, we were I think Task Force Sixteen Point Two. We, I think, the next day or the second day out we joined forces with the *Enterprise* and her escorts, which was Sixteen Point One. The two of us became Task Force Sixteen. And then we had, that's when the skipper let us know what was going on. We didn't know to that point, we just guessed.

Mr. Metzler: So what did he say? Not exact words, but . . .

Mr. Ensor: Well, it's just that what we headed, we were going to take the Army Air Force and General Doolittle, or, Lieutenant Colonel Doolittle, to within four hundred miles of Japan and launch 'em, and they were going to bomb Japan, which was I think the first time Japan had ever had anything bombed or fired at or whatever.

Mr. Metzler: Since 1500 or so.

Mr. Ensor: Yeah. Of course there was a lot of screaming and hollering and whooping going on, approving this, glad we were there.

Mr. Metzler: How did you feel about being there?

Mr. Ensor: Oh, I couldn't, I was really great, I didn't feel a thing. I mean, it's gonna be a little dangerous for us, but how about these guys that's flying off? They've got, when they go off, they've got another nine hundred miles to go.

Mr. Metzler: Yeah, and they're not coming back to the ships.

Mr. Ensor: That's right. They're not coming back.

Mr. Metzler: Many of 'em didn't come back, period. So I guess, the ship, the aircraft on the *Hornet*, they couldn't even get those things down below, could they?

Mr. Ensor: That's right. They could not.

Mr. Metzler: They're all riding up there for God and everybody to see right up on the deck.

Mr. Ensor: Absolutely.

Mr. Metzler: So did you get a look at that?

Mr. Ensor: We wasn't sighted by anyone. I think one merchant ship, until we got to within, or, six or seven hundred miles of Japan. Yes, we were sighted then by one of the picket ships, a ship that our Navy didn't even know existed, but there was a whole line of 'em. You couldn't run to Japan without running over one, or more than one. And they sighted us, they sent off the message, and that's when, I didn't mention the fact that Admiral Halsey was the admiral in charge of the operation. He and General—I keep saying General Doolittle, he was later—but he and Lieutenat Colonel Doolittle got together and said "Well, we've got to go." So they know that there . . .

Mr. Metzler: Lost the element of suprise.

Mr. Ensor: Right. We've lost that, they've got to go now.

Mr. Metzler: Now Halsey, what was his flagship?

Mr. Ensor: The *Enterprise*.

Mr. Metzler: Okay.

- Mr. Ensor:** In the meantime, we had got, the *Nashville* had orders to sink this picket boat, which we did after firing so many shells at 'em. We could only see it every now and then, it was so rough. And I do mean rough, the ship was even, the little picket boat was out of sight most of the time. But nevertheless, we did sink it and we picked up one survivor. In the meantime, General Doolittle got his bunch together and they went off. And I might say, that General Doolittle, he only had about four hundred feet of deck to go on, and when he took off, he ended up with lots of deck left. He didn't need more.
- Mr. Metzler:** Oh, I know. I've seen the film of that. He took off about halfway down. I mean, of course, they had about a thirty mile an hour gale going into that.
- Mr. Ensor:** Oh yes.
- Mr. Metzler:** At thirty knots.
- Mr. Ensor:** That saved us all. And so, it took about an hour, and they were all airborne heading for their different assignments. Three different places in Japan they were gonna hit.
- Mr. Metzler:** So what was your battle station?
- Mr. Ensor:** Oh, my battle station, of yeah, we did fire a lot of shells at that picket boat. I was the shell man. I was about a hundred and thirty-eight pounder myself, I was loading a hundred and eight pound shells in this gun.
- Mr. Metzler:** So is this the six-inch?
- Mr. Ensor:** Yeah, six-inch. Actually, I didn't have to pick 'em up , I just kinda rolled 'em in, just roll 'em in.
- Mr. Metzler:** They had a mechanical device that kinda raised it up, right?
- Mr. Ensor:** Right, yeah. Coming up about from the shell deck in a hoist.
- Mr. Metzler:** So that must make a pretty good whomp when that thing does off.
- Mr. Ensor:** Yeah, there's three of 'em. We were firing, in the turret there's three guns, and we were firing automatic—not automatic—but rapid fire. So when that breech came back why you automatically threw another shell in it and the powderman behind me put his powder charge in it and the gun captain rammed her in and when it rammed it fired. But we finally blew it to pieces.

So once we got rid of his, Colonel Doolittle, and his bombers, why we reversed our course and beat it out of there as fast as we could, and the next day all ships were refueled.

Incidentally, the destroyers and the tankers didn't follow us in to the launch site. They stayed out, and they was gonna guard those tankers because we needed them to get home on. In a big way. But we refuled and got back to Pearl. I think it was four or five days later. But we had been to sea for about twenty-five days, which wasn't a long period, but a little stressful now and then.

Mr. Metzler: Yeah, a high profile project.

Mr. Ensor: Yeah, right. And we were just proud that we could be of it, and we got the job done. The boys that flew the planes were the ones that really did the job. I did, I'll mention the fact just now, that I did get acquainted with the second pilot that flew off the *Hornet*. He had a relative in Joplin, Missouri and I read in the paper where he was invited down to Crowder College in Neosho, Missouri, that's only about twelve miles from home, to speak to some of the students. I put on my suit and tie and everything and, this guy rates a coat and tie. But, when I got down there a couple ladies met me at the door, said "Are you Colonel Doolittle, Colonel Hoover?" I said "No." I told 'em who I was. Hoover, Travis Hoover, he was a lieutenant when he flew off. He ended up as a full colonel. After I was introduced to him, he introduced me to some of the others. I told him I was one of twenty thousand of his escorts. (Chuckles)

Mr. Metzler: That's right, supporting team. So how long after the war was that?

Mr. Ensor: Oh, golly. It was probably in the 'eighties. Yeah, in the 'eighties.

Mr. Metzler: So anyhow, you're back at Pearl. Was the Doolittle raid the talk of the town at that point, or what?

Mr. Ensor: Not really. It was on the ship. Normally we would moor to two bouys, but this time we went into a dock. Well, here we are taking on more Marines, anti-aircraft guns, and heading for Midway.

Mr. Metzler: Well now, let me ask you before we go to Midway, does Pearl Harbor look pretty beat up?

Mr. Ensor: Oh, oh, absolutely. I tell you, when we came in port, here's all these battleships on their side. I think a couple of 'em had been gone. Oh yeah, that was just, that was devastating, really, to see the battleships there. And other ships that were, had been banged up. A lot of 'em had been—I say banged up, tore up. A couple of battleships had already been gone under their own power to the States to be repaired and modernized, so yeah.

Mr. Metzler: So you're taking on Marines and anti-aircraft guns for your next project. Now tell me about that.

- Mr. Ensor:** Okay. We got the word when we got out to sea that we were on a secret mission, all by ourselves, the Nashville was gonna drop these Marines and anti-aircraft guns at Midway and we were gonna proceed with our mission. Well, our mission happened to be, we were going to the east coast of Siberia to sink the Japanese fishing fleet. Maybe this'll shorten the war. But, when the skipper was, of course, he had the con, he was backing out, and we ran aground. Well, he sent a diver down and the diver told him when he came back, said a couple of the screws are pretty well bent out. So with the help of a tug and a rise in the tide, we freed ourself off from being aground. Then we went back to Pearl Harbor.
- Mr. Metzler:** Where did this happen?
- Mr. Ensor:** At Midway.
- Mr. Metzler:** Oh, so it was at Midway you went aground. When you delivered your cargo.
- Mr. Ensor:** Yeah. We had to abort our mission.
- Mr. Metzler:** Then you bent your fender and couldn't go over to get the fishing boats.
- Mr. Ensor:** That's right.
- Mr. Metzler:** So you went back to Pearl?
- Mr. Ensor:** Back to Pearl, yeah.
- Mr. Metzler:** Limping, I guess.
- Mr. Ensor:** Limping, and we had our planes flying out in front of us for anti-submarine protection. In fact, they were flying from daylight to dark.
- Mr. Metzler:** 'Cause you guys wre a bit of a sitting duck out there, weren't you, just kinda limping along with no escort.
- Mr. Ensor:** That's right. Oh, General Yamashita, the Japanese top dog, he was gonna make a wide sweep of the Pacific and sink all of us. He had done pretty good up to that point. He had done pretty good. So we went into drydock and had new screws put on, and waiting for new orders. And that happened to be Aleutian Islands.
- Mr. Metzler:** Well, been everywhere else, you might as well go to the Aleutians, I guess.
- Mr. Ensor:** So we went up to the Aleutians where it was foggy, it was rough . . .

Mr. Metzler: Cold.

Mr. Ensor: Cold. And just thankful you was aboard that ship and not out with the Army or the Air Force. We stayed up there five months patrolling whenever we could be at sea.

Mr. Metzler: Were you stationed at Dutch Harbor, or where?

Mr. Ensor: We were at Kodiak. We operated in and out of there. Actually, we pulled in and stayed all night in Pearl Harbor once, shortly after we got there.

Mr. Metzler: You mean Dutch Harbor?

Mr. Ensor: Dutch Harbor, Dutch Harbor. Tied up to this old ship that they were using for barracks, the civilian workers were, and we got underway the next day and that evening the Japs came in and bombed that thing. So, more close calls.

Let's see. From there it was just routine stuff we were doing there until we got orders. We did close in one day to bombard Kiska. The weather would let us do that. We did one bombardment. And later on other ships that came up to relieve us, they managed a couple of shots at it. Then back to Pearl we went.

Mr. Metzler: Did you go to Guadalcanal?

Mr. Ensor: We got to Guadalcanal before it was secured, but we didn't have much to do down there. I think it was around the first part of January we were there.

Mr. Metzler: So that would be January 'forty-three.

Mr. Ensor: Yeah, January 'forty-three.

Mr. Metzler: 'Cause Midway, you were there on Midway in early 'forty-two, 'cause Midway was June of forty-two.

Mr. Ensor: Yeah, June, right.

Mr. Metzler: Then you went up to the Aleutians and then you were back to Pearl Harbor in the latter part of 'forty-two, huh?

Mr. Ensor: Let's see, we were in the Aleutians when Midway come about. We were in Aleutians when that happened. See, they had sent off this other task force from their main part, a carrier or two and a couple battleships.

Mr. Metzler: A diversionary fleet.

- Mr. Ensor:** Yeah. If they'd have found us with that battleship (both chuckle) . . .
- Mr. Metzler:** You might not be here today.
- Mr. Ensor:** Right. So, we got leave somewhere along there, back to San Francisco. Actually, no, no, it wasn't then. But we got, became operating with task—not task force, but the task force that was defending, or jumping up the New Guinea coast with MacArthur, so we was involved whenever something hit, we were there, hitting with him.
- Mr. Metzler:** Was this the Seventh Fleet?
- Mr. Ensor:** Yeah, Seventh Fleet, that's what I was trying to say.
- Mr. Metzler:** You were part of MacArthur's personal navy.
- Mr. Ensor:** Absolutely. And I got to do something personal with him.
- Mr. Metzler:** Well I want to hear all about that.
- Mr. Ensor:** I became a bosun's mate. That was my rating in the Navy. And I had started out as coxswain and made second class and kept at it, and I made first class and so I was out on deck one day, just got the word that I would probably be promoted, and this old chief bosun's mate come by and said "Ensor, go get your dress canvas on, you're gonna pipe General MacArthur aboard." Oh, yeah? So I got my bosun pipe out and kinda practiced up on my call a little bit.
- Mr. Metzler:** (Laughs) A last minute practice.
- Mr. Ensor:** Yeah. Down in the, our after gear locker. So then I got in my whites and by that time they had eight side boys standing by, so I went through the drill with them a little bit. The General came aside, alongside. We were anchored at the time way out, for some reason or other. Came alongside in a PT boat, and it was kinda rough, and that old PT boat was going up and down, but we had dropped the gangway, so when he stepped off on the bottom platform why, he made it fine. And then as he came up I piped him alongside, and then went to pipe him aboard when he went to my side boys. Then he was greeted by the commanding officer and then we were all done with that part of it.
- Mr. Metzler:** Did you get to see him up close and personal?
- Mr. Ensor:** Oh yeah, yeah, I was right alongside of him. I just stood. I did not show up in a picture of him coming aboard. I could see my white hat.
- Mr. Metzler:** You're just cut out of the pictures.

Mr. Ensor: (Laughs) Yeah.

Mr. Metzler: Is that right.

Mr. Ensor: You can see my white hat.

Mr. Metzler: You can say your hat got in the picture, anyhow. So how'd you feel about being that close to somebody so historic? Or was he historic then?

Mr. Ensor: Oh yeah. I just felt like that I, I mean, that I was picked out of seventy or eighty bosun mates, that kinda made me feel pretty good.

Mr. Metzler: You bet.

Mr. Ensor: Maybe I was the one that he saw was goofing off, who knows. (Laughs)

We made many landings getting up in New Guinea coast, when they were all finished with us, the *Nashville*, well . . .

Mr. Metzler: So what did you do. Supporting landings with fire?

Mr. Ensor: Yeah, support and, what am I trying to say, defense. And yeah. And then after they were secured enough, we went, looked like the Philippines was the next on line, why, that's what the *Nashville* was waiting on. Now this was MacArthur's flagship, by the way. The *Nashville* was.

Mr. Metzler: So he was on board when you were on board, for quite awhile.

Mr. Ensor: Yeah. But in the meantime, I got transferred.

Mr. Metzler: Okay, so your transfer comes up first.

Mr. Ensor: But I was several times, we made some landings while he was there. Out of a clear blue sky, there was about twenty petty officers, senior petty officers, that was called down to the Personnel Department office and they gave us the news, "You guys are being transferred. Pack your sea bags, you'll be leaving tomorrow." So, we packed our sea bags and we didn't, we watched the fleet pull out for the Philippines, for the invasion of the Philippines. And we came home on a transport. This is where, then we got orders to—no, I went on a thirty day's leave when I got back. I had met a young lady through a friend of one of the kids in the division, and we got corresponding.

Mr. Metzler: So how'd you meet her?

Mr. Ensor: We were invited by her aunt to come and have dinner with 'em. And another friend of mine, a guy I buddied around with aboard ship, he also had the invitation. So I met the gal at this friend's aunt, if I'm making sense here.

Mr. Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Ensor: Her niece was coming out from school, she just got out of school. She was a junior, and we got very close, and we stayed close, and we ended up getting married, to make a long story short.

Now, my orders, I thought would be a new cruiser, happened to be orders to the amphibious force at Coronado, California. And our job was training boat crews for the invasion of Japan. And of course, we know that didn't happen, but there was many boat crews went out.

Mr. Metzler: And you didn't know it at the time, either, did you.

Mr. Ensor: No, we did not know it at the time. I still had a year to go on my enlistment. I'd signed a six-year regular Navy enlistment and still had another year to go, and I thought I would be sent back to sea, but I wasn't, so in all reality when I left the *Nashville* the war was over for me. But of course you never know when things like that happen.

Mr. Metzler: Well, combat was over for you. But you were still playing a key role in the war effort. So tell me what it was like training boat crews.

Mr. Ensor: The amphib base was right across the road from the Pacific Ocean, and we were teaching guys how to land a boat through the surf, and also back off from the surf once they had discharged their soldiers or Marines, whatever they were. And then that goes on and on until they get proficient at it, and we'd pick up more, another bunch, and teach them the same thing. And there's other, several other things, but that was the main object, teach 'em how to run a boat and rules of the road, played a part of it.

That wasn't mentioned, but I had a landing craft, so we . . .

Mr. Metzler: So was that a good experience? I mean, tell me, was it hard work?

Mr. Ensor: No, not for me, it wasn't. Not for me, it wasn't. It was, I really enjoyed it. But never knowing when I might be part of one, so, it could very well have been. I could have had my own boat crew or own division of small boats loaded with armed people.

And then, I forgot where I was when we got word that the bomb had been dropped. Anyway, I couldn't, you didn't hardly believe it, but there it was, right on the radio.

- Mr. Metzler:** That's when you knew the war was probably gonna be over.
- Mr. Ensor:** Yeah. Yeah. And took another bomb, but then that was over. They were ready to call it quits then.
- Mr. Metzler:** So where were you when the war was officially over, do you remember that?
- Mr. Ensor:** Yeah. I was in, I was at the amphib base. And I had, like I say, I had another year to go and I was transferred into the Welfare and Recreation just to give me a job.
- Mr. Metzler:** Something to just fill out that last year.
- Mr. Ensor:** Fill out the last year. Which wasn't much of a job, but nevertheless, like I said, I expected to go back to sea for that last year but, well, they were decommissioning so many ships, why . . .
- Mr. Metzler:** They had more sailors than they knew what to do with at that point.
- Mr. Ensor:** That's for sure.
- Mr. Metzler:** So what, when you think back, what was probably the most humorous or funniest experience that you had during World War II. Everybody always seems to have at least one funny story. I was just wondering, if you have one. One you can tell, of course.
- Mr. Ensor:** Yeah, right. (Both laugh) Well, yeah, I've got one. We did make it down to Australia for a couple of ten-day rest periods.
- Mr. Metzler:** You didn't tell me about Australia.
- Mr. Ensor:** That's right. Forgot about Australia. Well, that Australian beer sure was good.
- Mr. Metzler:** Still is, I'm told. (Both laugh)
- Mr. Ensor:** We, a bunch of us petty officers, went over and stayed together and . . .
- Mr. Metzler:** So what'd they do, fly you down there?
- Mr. Ensor:** No. The ship went down.
- Mr. Metzler:** So the ship went down.
- Mr. Ensor:** The ship went down, yeah.

Mr. Metzler: Went down what, to be refitted, or . . .

Mr. Ensor: R&R.

Mr. Metzler: Really, the whole ship. Wow.

Mr. Ensor: Leave, actually, liberty started at one o'clock in the afternoon and expired on board at eleven the next day.

Mr. Metzler: Well that's a pretty short liberty.

Mr. Ensor: So that only gave you two hours to get back and cleaned up and clean uniform on and go again. And liberty was five nights out of six. In other words we were on six section duty. So you only had duty one time, or maybe twice while you were there, if you was unlucky it was twice. But the last day we were there, a bunch of us petty officers had a gunny sack full of beer sitting on the boat dock where we were gonna be picked up, taken back to the ship, and we didn't want to throw the beer away, we didn't want to give it away. So we decided we were gonna drink, drink, drink.

Well, then we decided we was gonna go aboard ship when they singled up the mooring lines, we were getting that close to getting underway. So when they saw a crane moving in to remove the prow, when that's we went hopping to get aboard that ship. Well, naturally, we were AWOL and we were put on report, we went to captain's mast.

Mr. Metzler: My gosh.

Mr. Ensor: And the captain in a couple days gave us an outstanding chewing, chewed us up one side and down the other. But, he gave us, ah, what was that. Anyway, we didn't . . .

Mr. Metzler: He let you off?

Mr. Ensor: He let us off.

Mr. Metzler: There we go. (Both laugh)

Mr. Ensor: There's a name for that, but right now I can't say what it is.

Mr. Metzler: So how were the Aussies?

Mr. Ensor: Ah I tell you what, they were great.

Mr. Metzler: They were nice folks?

- Mr. Ensor:** Yeah, they were. And, well, some of 'em were. Run into two or three of 'em, well this one fellow I mentioned awhile back, we were ashore there together and we had drank a couple beers and went out and sat in the park.
- Mr. Metzler:** Now where is this?
- Mr. Ensor:** This is in Australia.
- Mr. Metzler:** Where in Australia?
- Mr. Ensor:** Sydney.
- Mr. Metzler:** Sydney.
- Mr. Ensor:** Yeah, right. And we were sitting there along side the path and we looked up, here come some Aussie soldiers down the walk, and as they were walking they were taking off their belts. Had these big buckles on 'em. We were in for a big clubbing, and the only thing that saved us, would you believe, there came a couple of Shore Patrolmen from the other side, they saw what was going on.
- Mr. Metzler:** Why were they gonna beat you up?
- Mr. Ensor:** Well hell, they didn't like us.
- Mr. Metzler:** Why?
- Mr. Ensor:** Well, the girls liked the Yankees so well.
- Mr. Metzler:** Oh, they liked the Yanks more than they did the Aussies.
- Mr. Ensor:** Absolutely.
- Mr. Metzler:** I'm with you now. (Both laugh)
- Mr. Ensor:** So they left and of course we went on about our business too. And we talked to the Shore Patrolmen for awhile. Yeah, they were pretty big old boys.
- Mr. Metzler:** So how long total were you down in Australia.
- Mr. Ensor:** We were there for two different times for ten days. And it was strictly R&R. And of course, we picked up, oh, we had a passageway of eggs for one thing.
- Mr. Metzler:** That must have been nice, fresh eggs.

Mr. Ensor: Oh yeah, yeah. And of course we picked up some more Australian mutton, which we didn't like, but we provisioned the ship while we were there. d

Mr. Metzler: So what was it like being on the *Nashville*.

Mr. Ensor: Well, in peace time we always were on watch. Each section had a day's duty, you know. Standing watch like might be underway would be a lookout or boson mate watch. Later on we were actually assigned to our gun positions, battle stations. We had loading drills and . . .

Mr. Metzler: What was it like, not what did you do, but what was it like? I mean, was it a good place to be, were you close to the other guys, was everybody not so close, did you have a good captain, commanding officer, how did it feel?

Mr. Ensor: As far as everybody had their own buddy they went ashore with. Of course, you had a hundred men in your, I had a hundred men in my division. And we got to know a lot of 'em, we worked together. We had three changes of command while I was aboard that, and all of 'em we thought were tops. The executive officer, that's supposed to be the guy that tears you apart and lets the commanding officer the good boss, you see. So that worked out part of the time.

Of course, there's a lot of card games going on over the ship. It wasn't allowed, but you could find a crap game if you wanted one real bad. I didn't, I just never did gamble, but I did like to play acey deucey and pinochle.

Mr. Metzler: What was the hardest time for you, when things seemed the worst, or when it was the most dangerous, or whatever for you. What was the low point?

Mr. Ensor: I would think when we were on watch, went into Tokyo, or Japan, and that was . . .

Mr. Metzler: On the Doolittle transport?

Mr. Ensor: Yeah. And then when we got orders to go to the east coast of Siberia, that wasn't so, that was kinda . . .

Mr. Metzler: You weren't looking forward to that, either, were you? But, you didn't have to go.

Mr. Ensor: Right, right. So, just you broke in on a routine, you had your work cut out for you, it was laid out what we're gonna do today, and we did it. Of course, watch standing was part of it, every fourth day, whether it was war time or whatever. And there's always something to learn, always something to learn, even for an enlisted man. And preparing for exams, taking exams for advancement. And practical factors, you had to do, show what you had to do, you could do by hand. So I loved the Navy.

- Mr. Metzler:** I bet you were glad when you got out.
- Mr. Ensor:** Well, yeah. I got out and we had a baby. Then we had two more. I took a voluntary recall back to active duty when I, in fact I enlisted in the Reserves, when I was out two years, and figured we'd be called back to active duty for recruiters there in Joplin. So I spent thirteen years as a recruiter in Joplin. We raised three boys.
- Mr. Metzler:** So whatever happened to th *Tennessee*? I guess she got scrapped or mothballed or something.
- Mr. Ensor:** The which?
- Mr. Metzler:** I'm sorry, the *Nashville*. I said the *Tennessee*. I was right state, wrong city.
- Mr. Ensor:** *Nashville* was sold to one of the South American countries.
- Mr. Metzler:** Really.
- Mr. Ensor:** Yes. And they used it for thirty years. Thirty years they had that ship.
- Mr. Metzler:** I wonder which country she went to.
- Mr. Ensor:** I'm gonna say Chile, but I'm just not sure.
- Mr. Metzler:** I know they did that, because I can remember during the Falklands war when the UK fought with Argentina, one of the ship that the Brits fought down there was the *USS* . . .
- Mr. Ensor:** Was it the *Boise*?
- Mr. Metzler:** It was a heavy cruise, the *Raleigh* or the *Boise*, or somebody light that.
- Mr. Ensor:** I think it was a light cruiser, another light cruiser besides the *Nashville* went down.
- Mr. Metzler:** Yeah.
- Mr. Ensor:** I saw about it on the , uh . . .
- Mr. Metzler:** Out in the museum?
- Mr. Ensor:** In the museum, yeah. And the *Nashville's* out there, too. She earned ten batle stars.
- Mr. Metzler:** Yep, sounds like a good ship.

Mr. Ensor: Yeah.

Mr. Metzler: Well, what else can we talk about?

Mr. Ensor: Well, that pretty well covers me, I think.

Mr. Metzler: I tell you what, you've had some interesting experiences. Particularly that Doolittle raid, that's really something.

Mr. Ensor: Yeah, I don't mind telling that. I was part of it. In fact, I was real proud I could have been.

Mr. Metzler: That's right.

Mr. Ensor: But this pilot that I was telling you about, that I got acquainted with, Travis Hoover, we had several good sessions together.

Mr. Metzler: Did the *Nashville* ever have any reunions?

Mr. Ensor: Oh yeah, yes. They just had one last week but I didn't go. I think I'd been to the last one.

Mr. Metzler: I figured you probably did, just looking at your hat that has *USS Nashville* on it.

Mr. Ensor: In fact, they had two of 'em at Branson, Missouri. You've heard of Branson?

Mr. Metzler: I have.

Mr. Ensor: Have you been there?

Mr. Metzler: I have not, but that's not too far from your home.

Mr. Ensor: Right, about a hundred and thirty miles or so.

Mr. Metzler: Well okay, I'm gonna stop the tape now, but let me just thank you for spending the time to share your experiences, and thank you again for what you did for our country in World War II, and it's been a pleasure talking to you.

Mr. Ensor: I consider it a privilege to do it.

Mr. Metzler: Good. Thank you.

Mr. Ensor: Thank you, Ed.

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