

National Museum of the Pacific War

Nimitz Education and Research Center

Fredericksburg, Texas

Interview with

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Interview with Mr. Glen Looney

Speaker Code: E=Interviewer Ed Metzler, G=Subject Mr. Glen Looney

E: This is Ed Metzler, today is the 4th of May, 2008, and I am at the Nimitz Museum in Fredericksburg, Texas and I am interviewing Mr. Glen Looney, This interview is in support of the Center of 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 by thanking you for spending some of your valuable time for sharing your experiences. I know you would rather be with your friends downstairs than here. Let me turn it over to you, introduce yourself and tell us a little bit about yourself.

G: Well, my name is Glen Looney; do you know where Lake Texoma is??

E: Yes, I know right where it is, right on the border, on the Red River.

G: Right, I was born right on the bank of the Red River in 1924, September 23.

E: You're just barely are a Texas!

G: Well, I wasn't a Texan until I got out of the Navy. Then I went to Texas. I lived on the Oklahoma side.

E: Did you have any brothers and sisters?

G: I have one brother, older than me, one year, and then I have another brother, 4 years younger than me, my mother passed away when I was 11 years old, then later on my Dad remarried, they had one child, a girl, a half-sister.

E: What did your Dad do for a living?

G: He farmed all of his life. He went to Oklahoma, Oklahoma became a state in 1907, I think in 1909 they crossed the Red River in a wagon and settled right there and my grandpa and my Dad lived there, we went to Chickasaw? Oklahoma, that's Indian country, we lived there for 6 years, and other than that my Dad and grandpa lived on the farm all of those, they went there in 1909 to Oklahoma, they both passed away there in Oklahoma at the same spot. That's where I was born there.

E: That was tough going back in there, doing the farm there

G: It was and we lived on a farm there all of our lives and we could raise a lot of our living, and we did, if we didn't we went hungry back then. The people in town, they probably suffered a lot worse than we did. We might not have any money, but we had something to eat 'cause we would put it up, we raised a big garden, and

E: Had something to eat during the winter.

G: Before I started school, I can remember my dad built a brush arbor out in the yard and nobody had electricity back then, we'd get under that arbor and we'd pick a Number 3 tub full of black-eyed peas and me and my oldest brother and my mother would sit out there under that arbor and shell and fill that tub full of peas and she'd can them. And we'd do that not just one day, but we'd probably put up 50 quarts of black-eyed peas and also we'd can corn.

E: Where did you go to high school?

G: Well, you know where Kingston is, Oklahoma, and Madill; do you know where Whitesboro is?

E: No, haven't gotten one yet, I'm not an Oklahoma expert?

G: You know where Denison is.

E: Yes, I do.

G: Well, as the crow flies, about 10 miles northwest into Oklahoma, is where I was we had a grade school there, grades 1 through 8, and that's where I got most of my education.

E: Where'd you go to High School?

G: Well, we rode a bus about 12 to 15 miles to Kingston, Oklahoma I just went one year, it didn't take me as long to get all of my knowledge as it did some of....

E: You were in an accelerated teaching class.

Where were you when the war started, you were still in high school, were you working on the farm or what?

G: I was working on the farm, it was the winter time, and we were thrashing peanuts back then, that's when I heard of it. Weren't very many people that even had radios back then, out in the country because you had a lot of batteries and they didn't last long.

E: You must have been about 17 years old when the war started?

E: You were born in 1924 and 17 is '41.

G: O.K.

E: Well did you go immediately into the military, or did you continue to work or what?

G: I worked on the farm then, my oldest brother he kept going to high school, and he graduated from Kingston High School, there, as soon as he got out him and 3 of his friends went to the Navy. They all joined up as soon as they got out of high school. Well,

he went, they all went to the Navy, they told them they could all stay together when they volunteered, but when they got there just went right....

E: It all changes once they get in.

G: Anyhow, when the carrier Hornet, and Doolittle flew off the carrier Hornet, (April '42) came back, from that raid, well my brother, who is older than me, got on the Hornet, he was there, he was in the gunnery department, he was on a 5 inch anti-aircraft gun. Well, the Hornet got sunk down in Santa Cruz, I believe that's where that was, way down there by Guadalcanal in that area, but he survived then they put him in a....

E: Well, I want to talk about you, he sounds like an interesting story, is he still alive? I need to get ahold of him some day, anyhow, when did you go in?

G: Well, he told me, when his ship got sunk, he wrote and told me he said I know they were worried about me, he said you don't go till you're drafted. Well I lived out in the country about 15 miles from town and I was glad when they drafted me, didn't tell my Dad cause I knew how he felt and I wouldn't join volunteer but I was glad when they did.

E: When did they draft you?

G: In '43.

E: Did you select the Navy or, they drafted you.

G: No, they just told me go to Norman, Oklahoma for a physical. Well, back then they needed people everywhere, and they said which branch of the service do you want to go in? I said I want to join the Navy and they just signed me up right there. Took my physical and....

E: And a Navy man you were!!

G: I was a Navy man right there.

E: So where did you do your basic?

G: San Diego.

E: Had you ever been out of Texas or Oklahoma before you went there?

G: No.

E: You were just a local boy weren't you! Here you on a train headed to the West coast.

What did that feel like?

G: Well, like I said , I'd never been 200 miles away from where I was born, so we got to San Diego, well, the biggest water craft I had ever seen was a homemade paddle boat on the river, you know we were taking our boot camp, for six weeks boot camp, and they carried us up the beach one day on a truck and on the beach North San Diego they had different types of guns they had taken us out for gunnery practice and they had a drone plane, radio control that would fly right over the beach and we were supposed to shoot it down. Well, that's about all that happened we were close to it ...

E: You had it surrounded but you never hit it.

G:And we did knock it down It had a parachute on it, when it konked out to throw that drone in the water and had small boat out there to pick it up. But that one day is all the gunnery practice we ever got, now we got some, we had one day of rifle practice, I had lived on a farm and I had shot a gun all my life, but I don't think, it ticked me off, no better shot than I was, I'm talking about target, it was so far out there, I couldn't hold it steady, but they wouldn't kick me off, we stayed in, they needed me, they needed everybody, they needed the people at home too....

E: Somebody had to run the farm and provide the food to support all this...but they needed men too. So when did you find out you were going to assigned to a ship and which ship?

G: Well as soon as we got out of boot camp, they taken us on a train and we went up close to Sacramento, California and there was , I don't know what it was, but that's where they'd take people from there to different ships to wherever they was going. They taken us to San Francisco and I guess about two or three days after we got out of boot camp when we got to San Francisco... Are you acquainted with Mare Island?

E: I've heard of it, I've not seen it.

G: That's in the Bay,

E: In the Bay, yes, I know where Treasure Island is...

G: Well, you can see one from the other, they, I don't know how many there was, so they taken us there and out on a Pier, and said Get Off, and they said there's your ship, and I looked at that ship, and like I said, I'd never seen nothing any bigger than a paddle boat on a river ever and there was that huge, it was huge to me, it was a small aircraft carrier.

E: If it would have been the Enterprise, who knows what, you'd have fainted!!!

G: It was a converted oil tanker

E: oil can with wings, that's said about it.

G: Right, that's what the book said, I don't remember who designed that, but that's what it said...

E: You were pretty impressed the first time you saw it.??

G: You know most people like me then, they were ready to get out there and get with it, we were so dumb we didn't know any better. But it didn't take us long to get an education, you know. We had so many on that ship that.....

E: You went right on that ship at that time, right?

G: Right, we just carried our sea bag over our shoulder and climbed the gangplank, they were doing a lot of repairs and probably in a couple of weeks we shipped out, and we went under the Golden Gate Bridge before daylight, it was foggy and I don't think we could see the Golden Gate, it was at night and it was foggy but we got out of there, the water was rough when we got out of that bay some of them got seasick,....

E: Did you get sick?

G: Well, I felt like I was getting sick, so I got out on topside and got some air and never did get seasick.

E: So what was your post, what was your assignment as a crewmember?

G: Well, they wanted to know what my hobbies were, well, I'd lived out in the country all my life and all I'd ever done is hunt and fish I said, " Hunt and Fish" they thought I'd hunted , so I could shoot a gun so they put me in the Gunnery Department.

E: And they didn't need any fishermen.

G: No, they didn't want no fishermen. But that's how I got in the Gunnery Department. some of them had some education, they could type, and they made them storekeepers, something like that, office or something, so that's how I got put in the Gunnery Department. I slept in a hammock, you know , from San Francisco to Hawaii, then they

found a bunk for me and the First Division, the Gunnery Department was right up on the bow, the most forward , right up on the front, so that's where I stayed till when I got off.

E: So what kind of gun are we dealing with here, the 40 mm??

G: We had 20 mm and that's what I was the gunner on, then we had some 40 mm then we had two 5-inch back on the fantail but they were just lined up clear around the ship on catwalk, clear around.

E: So did you have loaders, and trainers and aimers and all those other things and which

role was yours?

G: Well, I was the gunner, and the man that went in the Navy the same day that did, he was from Norman, Oklahoma and he was my first loader, then we had another loader besides him, when, behind us we had a ready room there, all those magazines were hanging on the wall and they'd pass them to these men and put them on and.....

E: Did you do any practicing before you got to Hawaii?

G: Not before we went to Hawaii, but after we left Hawaii we did we stopped there...

E: Was this in '43?

G: Yes, '43. Wildtop...? You know who he was, I gave him a picture last night, of me on my gun we're target practicing. We really practiced, the first place we went to was way down toward Australia, northeast Australia, the New Hebrides Islands we joined up With a convoy there was 4 of these ships, in the Sangamon Class, they tried to stay together all during the war, theBay? (Editors note-actually the Sangamon was the fourth, see attached) the Santee, the Suwannee, Chenango, we tried to stay together

but we left there on our first mission that I was on we went to Tarawa and Makin ...

E: Now this was when we invaded Tarawa right, not after she'd been secured, this was the real thing.

G: Right, we went with a troop ship, our job was to protect and take care of the troops on the beach.

E: To defend them against air attack and that kind of stuff.

G: Our torpedo bombers would haul ammunition and drop it in a parachute to the people on the island, the water and K-rations or C rations whatever, that island all it was was an airstrip surrounded by a bunch of coconut palms. It was just a flat....

E: Were you within sight of the island most of time you were there?

G: We, a lot of time we would, then we'd move out, it depended on the wind, we had to face into the wind when we'd launch and land aircraft, we'd move in a while, we could see smoke over there, could see the places where the machineguns were shooting and all, but we couldn't see anybody, we were too far away.

E: You didn't actually get into shore support? That's mostly the battleships and the ones with the big guns.

G: When we would first get there, the destroyers got up close to the island, then the cruisers would get out a little further, the battleships a little further and they'd all shell that island, the smoke ..., you've probably seen the pictures , as far as we didn't on the island.

E: Did you ever get attacked by a Japanese aircraft; did you ever have anything to shoot at??

G: Right, we got Tarawa, I don't know why, we went back to Hawaii, and stayed a few days, and went back in the Marshall Island, Kwajalein and Enewetok, we went there. We went on about a dozen, 10 or 12 invasions.

E: Where was the next one then, after you came back from Pearl Harbor then?

G: We went Kwajalein and Enewetok,

E: What did you do at Kwajalein?

G: Same thing, landed the troops, stayed there and supported them and our planes, all the time we had spotter planes above us to protect us, then we had the torpedo planes armed with depth charges, they'd fly submarine patrols then the fighter planes and the dive bombers would go over on the beach and strafe and bomb and whatever they needed. After the Marshall Islands, I don't remember which one came first we made three different invasions down at New Guinea in that area...

E: And again, you were performing the same duties, the protection of the troops??

G: Yes, everywhere we went, that's what we done.

E: You didn't sit at that gun station, at your battle station, what did they have you doing when you weren't being a gunner?

G: First we'd spend 8 hours a day out of 24 up on that gun, in the morning we'd go up there at 8 o'clock and get relieved at 12, at 8 o'clock at night we'd go up there and stay till 12 then tomorrow night we'd go on watch at 12 and get off at 4, that night we'd get on at 12 and get off at 4 a.m. and just rotated like that.

E: And you never really had more than 4 hours on but didn't have that much off either.

G: And when we were off in the daytime we worked, we chipped paint, cleaned the ship and painted, if we went in to a bay we'd go in to load supplies and bombs and things, some of us would go over on one of the landing barges, and load the landing barge, and it would haul to the ship and somebody would stay there and do whatever needed to be

E: So after New Guinea, what happened next?

G: We went up to Manus Island, well, we went to Peleiu, we covered that invasion, and it was more of the same....

E: On any of these, were you ever attacked by the Japanese?

G: Not just actually our ship, I know one night they sounded the General Alarm and we all went to our battle stations, this Japanese plane, it was real low, and he come in and they told every one of us, don't fire a shot, they didn't want to give our position away, he was so low we could see the pilot when he came across the bow of our ship, they told us, the gun captain had contact with the bridge they said there's a destroyer out here, he had a radar controlled gun, and he's going to fire at him, we looked over there and we seen about 5 or 6 tracers going out and that plane just turned into a ball of fire.

E: The radar guided gunnery worked.

G: It worked. That was good, I'd never seen anything like that, we were all excited, and praised, and mad cause we wanted to shoot at him, we didn't need to when we had something like that. We went to Caroline Island, I don't know how many different invasions we went on up till then, we wanted Saipan and Tinian, and Guam, have you heard about the natives jumping off the cliffs, our pilots would come back and tell us about that. They'd brain washed them women, there was native Japanese women on the island, they'd brain wash them and told them how mean we were, they tried to convince them, but some of them, but some of them went ahead and committed suicide and fell off

into

E: Yes, I've seen those movies.

G: A lot of people don't understand the Japanese person, and what went on and why, I guess next, we went to the Philippine Islands. These escort carriers.....

E: Did you ever get to go for R and R in between all these campaigns, Go back to Pearl or down to New Zealand?

G: After we'd capture an island, we'd use, if they had a good lagoon and anchorage, We'd go back there for two or three day and load up the supplies, and they'd let us go on the beach every other day, for about 4 hours, they'd give us two chits for two cans Of beer. We'd sit out there under the palm trees, and drink beer, and just sat out there. I don't remember which island it us, Bob Hope and his troop came to entertain us, Or you familiar with Francis Langford, that was part of his troop, after we'd taken this Island and them old palm trees, they were nearly stripped of everything, you know, they Had a platform up there, wasn't much bigger then this room here, they sang and joked And we sat out there under them trees in the rain and just had as good a time as they did.

E: Oh, was it raining?

G: Yeah, oh, it rained a lot out in the South Pacific. One of these men on Guadalcanal, He said we have two season a year here, the rainy season and the monsoon.

E Bob said, so wet and wet.....

G: It rained a lot, usually it didn't last long, maybe 30 minutes or an hour, and the sun Would come out and steamy,... If we were in theit would have been rough.

E: Did you ever have any problems with the tropical diseases when you were out there

I guess Being on board ship you didn't get exposed to.....

G: We don't, we didn't get exposed like the soldiers were and the marines, yeah, they Had a lot of problems when we were at Guam and Tinian, I don't remember which, I was On guard duty at night on the guns, we were pretty close to the island them Japanese at Night would try to get in the foxholes and kill our soldiers. Destroyers out here would be Paralleling and they'd shoot star shells over there, phosphorous shells,

E: So they could see.

G: They'd come down in a parachute, we'd be out there, looking over there and Thinking what, man it would be weird to us, and we'd think about how weird it was for them men in the foxholes over there.

E: Wondering if a bayonet killed any Japanese or not.

G: We were in the Navy.they earned all the credit they can get. Those people did.

E: So what happened in the Philippine Sea?

G: Manus Island , that was one of the places we had taken, that was just before we went to Guam, I'm not sure, we went to the Philippines, after these, after we'd captured Guam and Saipan and Tinian, and Manus was close to Peleiu, we got to the Philippines, there were, I believe there were 16 of those escort carriers and after we got the troops there, there were too many of us to operate real close, so they divided us into three Groups, about 50 miles apart, when we did the Japanese fleet, the battleships came through the islands of the Philippines....

E: Was this the Taffy groups, one, two and three

G: We were one.

E: You were Taffy One. I didn't mean to interrupt you; you were saying the Japanese were coming through thru....

G: They come through there, the Philippine Islands is about a thousand islands, big and small, they come through about sunup one morning, Taffy Three and there was 6 carriers, and they began to get shot at with the battleships, well the biggest ship gun they had on was a 5-inch, and the Japanese they had 16-inch.. And they had them little old destroyers and destroyer escorts.....

E: And escort carriers, Gambier Bay, St. Lo, a bunch of them, a couple of them went down.

G: Right, they was out gunned and outclassed...

E: What happened to Taffy One?

G: Well, our planes went to help them and helped them; our ships never did see the Japanese fleet.

E: That's good!!

G: Taffy One and Taffy Two planes went to help them. And they did turn the Japanese Back, we lost probably three destroyers and destroyer escorts and we lost the Gambier Bay ...

E: And the St. Lo later.

G: Yeah,

E: That was the first time I remember hearing about the kamikaze

G: That was the first time, but our ship Taffy One, one day, all at once, I don't know how they found it thru the radar, it was at noon, and they came out of the sun and they all had a ship picked out, I got up to my gun they were already shooting at it, the crew that was on gun watch, was already shooting at it, I got up there, that plane missed us off The bow about 20 feet, I could see the pilot with his goggles on when it went in the water. I got my gun and started firing and the Suwanee was under attack. So we started firing at The one that was going to hit the Suwanee and the Santee was under attack, and we starting shooting, helping them, I don't remember whether the same day or the next day Santee took a torpedo and a kamikaze just nearly at the same time, I've got a VCR tape that one of my friends gave me where we are shooting at the plane going down to the Suwanee with the bullets hitting the water, of course we didn't get him, he went thru the flight deck ,

E: Did the carrier go down?

G: No, before the day was over, they were launching aircraft they patched that deck, and launched aircraft, they got back....

E: That's impressive.

G:...everybody on a ship had a job to do, and they did it, they coordinated and got the work done. It may be hard to get people together to do something like that today.

E: Well, if you're getting shot at you probably will pull together.

G: When these battleships and things were after the Gambier Bay, they told them you go out there and you sink them ships cause if you don't you may not have a ship to comeback to.

E: That's right that focuses the mind.

G: There's a man in Denison at the museum there, he was over on that island there, he was in the Army there....

E: Which island are we talking about??

G: On Leyte. We finally got a place where we could call it an air base, it still had pot holes in it, they were trying to level it and put down those big old steel mats, a major came out and said "You men get the lead out and get that mat down, we got some planes coming in. The ships are getting shot at" And they said, "when are they going to be here," and he said "In 5 minutes." He said they did, and they landed in the mud and on the beach, they had a terrible time. But the ones that could, loaded up with ordinance again and went back and, that Taffy Three that was getting shot at, a lot of those pilots made dry runs At those ships, opened their bomb bay, making them think they'd drop a torpedo so they would maneuver and distract them from shooting at our ships, I don't remember just how many of those destroyers and destroyer escorts.... I have a book on all of that... that was the First kamikaze that we'd seen, that was the first for them they began to get better, they'd do one time and one ship....

E: That was an acceptable trade-off for them, and one man.....

G: And they did that until the war was over. When Leyte was secured and they didn't need us anymore we went, you know the Suwanee and the Santee, they needed a lot of repairs we hadn't had a major overhaul since I'd been on there. We went to Bremerton, Washington, went into dry-dock. We got there sometime in December, and we left, maybe we got there in November,

E: That was in '44 I think.

G: We was there a little over a month getting repairs, while we were there, my best friend, he was in the gunnery department with me, Howard Burke, his mother lived on Whitby Island...

E: Right there on Puget Sound.

G: She was a cook for the shipyard or somebody there, and they lived on Whitby Island. We'd get liberty, he'd call his sister and tell her we were coming over and it was 6 o'clock before we could get off the ship and we had to be back at 8 the next morning he'd call, and she'd get a bunch of girlfriends to get over to his house, to his mother's we'd all socialize at his house, we did that a several times.

E: Play and eat.

G: His mother would cook for us, they'd get about 4 of us at a time, over there, and his mother would cook for us, and take care of us like we were her own.

E: That was a nice break...

G: While we were there in the dry-dock they gave us a 20 day leave, we got this 20 day leave, and I went home and rode a train from Seattle to up there in Oklahoma, I think it took me 3 days in all, but anyhow, during the war there weren't very many available men left. My youngest brother, I went to town one night, and he went out and loaded up the car, he had 4 girls with him, and I just came out of the movie theatre, that's where he was going to meet me, and he said "Well, here's these girls if you'll take the pick of the litter, so I did. And that's' the one I married.

E: Is that the wife down there?? That was good timing. Looks like you made a really good choice.

G: Well, I did...

E: What a story on how you met your wife.

G: We had a lot of correspondence, when I got out we dated a lot, when the war was

over, they turned all the military men loose, there weren't that many jobs, you went where you found a job, I had a brother, one that was in the Navy, he'd married a girl from out there, and he told me to come out there and he could get me a job, out there, that was In Los Angeles,

E: So you were out of the military at that time??

G: Let me back up.....

E: You were on leave and you had to go back to Washington didn't you.....

G: Well, we went from there to Okinawa.

E: Ok, tell me about that. That's kind of a hot topic. We got to Okinawa and those Japanese had turned out those floating mines loose, we'd see them and they'd let us target practice and blow them up, we'd blow them up, we were up there when Roosevelt died and all the flags were at half mast, that was I believe, D- day was around the first of April, we'd go out and stay a few days and use up our ammunition and bombs and we'd need supplies,.....

E: But you never ran out of fuel...'cause it was an ex-tanker.

G: Right, sometimes the tanker would be refueling us, we'd refuel at sea while over here On the other side of us....

E: Somebody pulling out of you.

G: We'd go in and out of Kerema Retto. There were a lot of ships that were wrecked in the harbor there, they weren't able to get out, just sitting there, we went in to get supplies one day, just one of the carriers would go in at one time, cause the other two would be out there, we got out late that evening, and when we did we loaded bombs and

those rockets and ammunition, it was so late in the evening, we hadn't had time to store them in the right place, they were just piled up in the hangar there so we went out there joined up with the task force, I believe we had one destroyer with us, a destroyer escort, we got out about 15 miles, it was just about sundown, The clouds were real low and broken and we were at General Quarters, we had been ever since we left, and when we got out there, this one plane, they told us who he was, he'd been hiding in the clouds, he came down and we were all shooting at him, and you've got a picture over there, in the museum, where that plane just barely missed us.

E: I've seen that photograph; he's banking just off the port side.....

G: That's where I was, and I was shooting at him, smoke was just trailing from him when he hit the water, we thought we had it made. In about 5 minutes or so they said there was another out there, I don't know how many had come in and were going to attack us, the fighter planes had shot down most of them but this was a two engine plane, he probably wasn't but half a mile off when we first saw him, because of the clouds we all starting firing at him, we had one engine ablaze, fire coming from it when he went through the flight deck....

E: He must have come right over your head, practically...

G: I was about right along here and he landed about here (motions to interviewer) I bet it wasn't 30 feet from me when he went through the flight deck and blowed a bunch of us over into the fire and everything...

E: What's going thru your mind about that point?

G: It about halfway knocked me out and when I hit the water....

E: Oh, you went overboard?

G: Right, and I had my helmet on, and they always told us in boot camp, don't ever go in the water with a helmet on, but that's the way it happened.

E: You didn't have time to think that one through did it?

G: That water is kind of cool; I don't know what temperature it was, it kind of brought us back....

E: Who was out, did some of the other guys fall overboard too?

G: Yeah, then the fire was so bad, some of them were trapped and they had to jump over, there was several out in the water but they started,....me and Howard Burke and some of the gun crew, we all went over at the same time when the plane hit. We had one cell flashlight, it was hanging on this belt, we were out in the water and it was getting dark, I don't know, it seemed like there were 15 or 20 of us, we said "Turn on those flashlights on so somebody can find us, well, we turned those flashlights on and we heard a plane, and everybody said, "Turn it off, turn it off, it might be Japanese". When it got close enough we could tell by the motor whether it was ours or theirs, they said "Turn it on, turn it on its ours". We saw that ship.....

E: How far away from the ship at this time?

G: This was just probably 5 minutes later and all of those bombs and ammunition down in the hangar deck, all that fire, they started cooking off, well, you've seen these 4th of July fireworks, that's what it looked like, I don't know what these other people thought, but I thought, whose the worse off, am I worse off or are they?

E: Probably better off not being on board.

G: I don't remember how many, I've got a list of all the people that got killed down there.....

E: It said 25 this morning

G: But anyhow, an hour or two, I think we were out there a little over two hours in the water, it was dark

E: Did you have a Mae West on or something?

G: No, have you seen these belts, you've got one over there in the museum, about like this, if you squeeze it, I had one of them on, that's what most of us had on. That was enough to keep us floating. After a while, there is a ship, ... we'd been flashing those flashlights, I don't know which ship, it came by, on the bullhorn they said, "Hang on we're going to help the ship, we'll be back to get you." Well, we thought they'd come back, but we didn't know when. At the Philippines out there, when the Gambier Bay got sunk, they were out there for two days and two nights, now that didn't happen. There were too many people knew that they were out there in the water, all those ships got sunk

E: That was what they call a "Snafu".

G: It was, if I would have known about that then, I would have been worried about me. Here, I knew that it was going to be a long night, but they would get us at daylight. But they did come back later and picked us up....

E: Even if it was night.

G: At night, and the Dennis, a destroyer escort (editor's note-this was the USS Dennis, DE 405, May 4, 1944) picked us up, me and two other men that were out with us. And 60 years later, on May 4, I had my friend get on the internet and find some of those men on the Dennis and on May 4, the 60th anniversary; I called two of those men and thanked them. We had a long talk, one of them lived in Pennsylvania, he was a mailman, on the Dennis, and the other, was from the Dallas area, I don't remember what his job was. I

called those people.....

E: I bet you felt real good talking to them.

G: The Dennis also picked up a lot of people from the Gambier Bay.

E: I talked to some of the guys on the the Dennis, they went to the reunion at the St. Lo and Gambier Bay, here in San Antonio about 6 months ago. I met some of them. They're getting around, to these reunions, sounds like they deserved it.

G: They picked us up, I don't know if it was still night or was it next morning, we took the shoes off in the water, too much weight. The Dennis didn't have room for all of us, so they put us on a patrol craft there and that patrol craft carried us into the Bay and there were 3 or 4 destroyers that were wrecked, and they were holding each other up. Some of them the bow was on the rudder, some them the fantail was on the rudder.....They didn't have facilities for us, so they put us on a troop transport in the harbor, so they put us on that troopship. I don't know how long we stayed there, maybe two weeks or maybe more on that troopship in the bay, the kamikazes would come over in the Daytime and try to sink the ships in the bay.

E: Now, this was which bay now?

G: That's at Okinawa; Kerama Reta was just another island just...

E: A hop skip and a jump away.

G: We were on that troopship, years later, I wrote to the archives, and I got the deck log on these days, I know what ship picked me up, what day, and how long I was on there and then transferred to so and so ship, I'd tell them I wanted that for a certain day, their deck log, they'd send it to me, and I got all this at home...

E: You pieced together the whole story, from the archives,... that's why these archives are important too.

G: ... so finally, probably two weeks, we left to Manus Island, that was one of our anchorages, we'd go in and out, they finally took me to Pearl Harbor. I didn't have any shoes, I don't remember when I got shoes, not just me but other people, we weren't going anywhere, so we didn't need any....I want to back up a little bit, to Pearl Harbor, we tied up right there, right next to the battleship Arizona, all that old rusty superstructure was still on there, the ship was sunk, but some of that superstructure was sticking out of the water. That's my first trip, I saw that and we tied up there, and I just wondered if that the way the ship I was on would ever look like that. We left Manus and went back to Pearl Harbor, they unloaded us on Ford Island, right there in the middle of Pearl Harbor, they unloaded us there and we stayed a while

E: And the Arizona was still there...

G: Still there...we didn't get back to the States, our ship got tore up on May 4th, we got back to San Francisco about the last of June, we was out 2 or 3 days and they said you can request duty anywhere in the U.S. and you can get it if they have room for you. I was just a hundred miles from Dallas, so I said I want to got to Dallas.. Well, they didn't need anybody, so they sent me to Kingsville, there was an airbase there, I stayed there till I got discharged.

E: When did you get discharged?

G: In March of '46.

E: Who was your best buddy there on board the ship?

G: Howard Burke.

E: O.K. yes, that was the other gentleman you mentioned earlier.. Was there another Group that you were fairly close to??

G: We had buddies, part of the crew would get liberty today, you had to buddy with them, then tomorrow there was another group and you couldn't buddy with them. I stayed in the war, I got down to Kingsville a week and the war was over, and I stayed down there till I got out.

E: Did you stay in pretty close contact with your wife to be and your family when you were over there, I mean when you were overseas?

E: Yes, I'd write a lot of letters, and get a lot of letters. As soon as I got discharged, talking about those letters, you know those pillows they used to, when people go to Hawaii, and get them to show they been there, I bought my wife one of them, she still has it, she took the stuffing out and took all those letters I wrote and stuffed them in that pillow. The boys of mine said we got to get them and put them together and see what you had to say.

E: What did you say?

G: I said go ahead. Before they mailed them off the ship the officers had read them...

E: They censored them didn't they...?

G: They censored them, you couldn't write anything in there...

E: So what do you feel about the Japanese after all these years?

G: I felt sorry for them because they,one time, I don't remember where, we were being attacked, we shot down this Japanese plane, blew it up and tumbling in the water, all the gun crew were cheering and the gunnery officer was standing on the side, and he

said “Hey men, don’t cheer like that, a man just died there.” That’s what we were out there for, to kill those people, I felt sorry for them but there was nothing we could do. Wars are crazy, but sometimes they are necessary. I never hear anybody else...we were just thankful we were still alive.

E: Did you lose any of your buddies when the ship was hit?

G: Yes, we’d go on these invasions, and I could look around, and as far as I could see in any direction were ships and I’d think, every ship and every man out here, all this material and all these men, the only reason they are out here is to kill other people.

E: What a waste!!

G: But it’s not fair.

E: We haven’t figured out how to avoid them yet. I don’t know that we ever will.

G: We never will

E: What did you think about your officers that were on the ship, that were leading you guys, did you feel good about them? And petty officers and chief petty officers...

G: I feel good about them, we needed them, they had a job to do, if they didn’t keep their men under control and do what they said, we didn’t have any business being out there, we may not like it, but its warfare, when we were in boot camp, some of them people they didn’t like this old drill instructor, he knew what we were going to do when we left there, and if you didn’t do your job a bunch of us were not coming back.

E: It wasn’t a popularity contest anyway.

G: He was pretty strict and harsh, but that was good and when we’d take a 5 minute

smoke break, he'd sit down and talk to us just as friendly as me and you.

E: Yes, he was just one of the guys then.

G: But when we got up he was a different man and that's what we needed. I felt sorry for the Japanese people because of the way they were brought up.

E: How do you feel about them now?

G: I think we are still catering to them too much; it was alright when we were trying to get the country back on their feet, our country is going broke, helping other countries. I think we still ought to be friends with them, I'm glad we have bases over there in Japan, if we didn't have them the communists would have taken them (over), some of the things that we do now, I don't actually approve of that.

E: So how did you feel when you came back to the United States after your time in the South Pacific? When you first came, you came in to San Francisco?

G: We came in at Mare Island....

E: Did you see the Golden Gate this time?

G: Yeah,

E: How did that feel to be home?

G: Well, it was good, they gave us that 30 day leave, and I went home, and about the third day, I was restless, I couldn't settle down, and it wasn't just me.... Robinson Major?they couldn't adjust overnight to what was going on, the majority of those that came back, we didn't have that PTSD or whatever it is then, everybody just worked it out amongst themselves.

E: Did it ever bother you after the war; did you ever have nightmares or any of that?

G: Yep.

E: Did that settle down over the years or does it still bother you?

G: Both.

E: Yes, no, yes, no

G: It doesn't bother me as much now as it did, but there's not a day goes by that I don't think about it. I don't tell anybody, but I just remember.

E: It's hard not to remember. Well, what else can we talk about while I've got you on the live here? What would you like to tell me?

G: After I got out, I married my girlfriend, we raised two boys, they've done good, good boys, they've got good families,every morning that I get out of bed I'm thankful that I'm still here.

E: Because a lot of them didn't come back, who knows why some of us did and why some of them didn't?

G: Why am I here and why some of them are not.

E: Well, we'll never know that.

G: And I guess we don't need to. Just be thankful every day when we get up. We've got our troubles, but other people's worse than ours.

E: O.K. Let me take this opportunity to thank you for what you did for us. Everybody feels the same way.

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