

National Museum of the Pacific War

Nimitz Education and Research Center

Fredericksburg, Texas

Interview with

Mr. Al Jowdy

Date of Interview: September 21, 2008

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Interview in progress.

Brainerd Parrish: This is Brainerd Parrish; today is September 21st, 19...what is it...19...?

Mr. Jowdy: ...08.

Brainerd Parrish: No, it's 2008!

Mr. Jowdy: Yeah.

Brainerd Parrish: I'm interviewing Mr. Al Jowdy. This interview is taking place at Fredericksburg High School in Fredericksburg, Texas. This interview is in support of the Center of Pacific War Studies, archives for the National Museum of the...of the Pacific War, Texas Historical Commission, for the preservation of historical information related to this site. Your name is Al Jowdy?

Mr. Jowdy: Correct.

Brainerd Parrish: And Mr. Jowdy where were you born?

Mr. Jowdy: San Antonio, Texas.

Brainerd Parrish: And when were you born?

Mr. Jowdy: July 19, 1927.

Brainerd Parrish: And what were your father and mother's names?

Mr. Jowdy: My dad's name was Fred Jowdy and he was from Beirut, Lebanon; my mother was first generation Italian; she was born in San Antonio, and her parents were from Italy.

Brainerd Parrish: And what did your dad do for a living?

Mr. Jowdy: He was a butcher by trade.

Brainerd Parrish: And did your mother work or was she a homemaker?

Mr. Jowdy: No, she was a home...housewife.

Brainerd Parrish: Did...did you have any brothers or sisters?

Mr. Jowdy: Oh yeah; there were a total of nine in our family; five girls and four boys.

Brainerd Parrish: And where did you fit in in that?

Mr. Jowdy: I was number six.

Brainerd Parrish: You were number six. Where did you go to high school?

Mr. Jowdy: Jefferson High School in San Antonio.

Brainerd Parrish: And did you enlist in the Navy?

Mr. Jowdy: Yes, I did.

Brainerd Parrish: When did you enlist in the Navy?

Mr. Jowdy: In July of 1942. The reason why I...I broke my collar bones when I was playing football, and my dad didn't like sports. He felt like that...if you could play you could work and help support the family. So when he found out about it, he was very upset, so I threatened to join the Navy and he said, "Well, on your birthday I'll sign," even though he thought I was kidding...and I wasn't.

Brainerd Parrish: Do you remember where you were when Pearl Harbor happened?

Mr. Jowdy: I was...my cousin and I were sleeping in the front room on a fold out couch, and when they came and told us that Pearl Harbor was bombed, I had no idea...I didn't even know where Hawaii was much less Pearl Harbor, you know? That...we had no television; we might have had a radio, but...it was all a mystery to me.

Brainerd Parrish: And when you did enlist in the Navy, what...where...where did you go once you enlisted?

Mr. Jowdy: I'd signed up at the court...I'm sorry, at the post office in San Antonio on a Wednesday; it was my birthday; we caught a bus and we went to Houston, Texas and we went to the railroad station where the Houston Astros Baseball Stadium is today. They put us up in the Rice Hotel, and if you can imagine, a kid coming from a family of nine with one bathroom and three bedrooms...and they put two guys to a room...I thought I'd died and went to heaven! I mean, you know, big fancy mattress and air conditioning and a shower and I didn't have to wait! As I told my wife, I went from talking to the nicest recruiting guy you ever met to when we woke up the next morning and had breakfast and we went down and got sworn in...I went from a guy that was extra nice to the biggest screamer you ever heard of! And the funny part of it was...when we got ready to leave...well, going back to San Antonio...the first thing they told us...don't bring any jewelry. Well I didn't own any first of all, and I had twenty-five cents in my pocket of which I spent a nickel catching the bus to go down to the post office. So, the guy said, "Don't bring," no, "just bring shaving equipment." Well all I needed was a toothbrush and toothpaste; I

didn't even shave! So I had no jewelry; I had a T-shirt on, and in those days, we called them dungarees; they call them blue jeans now...with tennis shoes...that...that was it. So, the next morning when we got up...got sworn in, they put us on a S.P. railroad, I mean S.P....troop train, and these were day coaches; no air, (cough) and you sat up straight. And I remember we left Houston...by the time we got to El Paso, it was over a hundred degrees 'cause it was in July, and every train that came by, we got sidetracked...you know? So we ended up taking us probably five days to get...to L.A. and then they caught...we caught a bus; went to San Diego; we got there about midnight; they shaved all our hair off our head, and they washed us down, I guess, with Lysol. (Cough) Excuse me; threw all our clothes away and gave us a seabag because in those days wherever you went, you brought your mattress with you. You had a hammock which we didn't ever use, but you had to bring your mattress and a seabag and the mattress covers which you put your clothes in. So they layed out your clothes and you had to stencil each one of them, and you put them in there. And after we took a shower with Lysol or whatever...they sprayed us down...we got to bed probably about 2:30 in the morning. And San Diego at night is pretty chilly, and here we were just in our shorts walking around barefooted. And reveille was like 5:30 in the morning. Now when you're used to just rolling over and you're going to take your time...this Boatswain's Mate came in with a big nightstick, and he beat on all these hammocks and you got out of bed and they gave you fifteen minutes to get ready. Well, I didn't have to shave, so all I had to do was wash my face

and brush my teeth. I had no idea what leggings were, and being left handed...apparently I did everything wrong. And we had to fall out for muster in fifteen minutes from reveille. We got out there and I'm sure we looked like a bunch of sad sacks, you know? So after the screaming...and you march...four abreast...and you had four mess halls in a row, so the first line would break off and...and they give you twenty minutes, and then you fell out again and then when the screaming started about how to put on your leggings...and they'd take you up on a platform about...probably fifty feet off...and you're supposed to jump in...this swimming pool. When you get in...up there and you got your dungarees on and a shirt and shoes...when you hit the water, you're supposed to take your shoes off; tie the shoe laces together; put them around your neck so if you're close to a coral reef you won't cut your feet up; take your dungarees off; tie knots in the bottom of your pants leg...right at the bottom; swing them over your head and you catch air, and you lay in the crotch, and it'll hold you up for about two hours, and then you squeeze them out...and that was a practice. Then you start with the shots, and you're in a quarantine camp the first week; well, I was there three days and it was time to...to go to the next step and I got the mumps. Now you can imagine how I felt...having the mumps around these guys...eighteen, nineteen, twenty years old and they...they had a pretty good idea I was too young anyway. So I went to the hospital and I was probably there two days and the next thing I learned how to do is handle...handle bed pans and making up beds. At the end of eight days...of boot camp, when I came out I thought I

was going to join the company again. They had me pack my bag; we got on a train; went to San Francisco – Treasure Island; they put me on a transport; we went from there to Pearl; we checked in at the receiving station and about fifty of us were assigned to go to Pearl Harbor and start pulling bodies out on all those ships. Now those ships had been sunk for probably eight months by this time. So they'd strung lights...a lot of those battleships were capsized; they just cut holes in the bottom of them, so we could go down in there. Well, Pearl, whether you know it or not, is very shallow; that's why a lot of those ships...you know, they were still...

Brainerd Parrish: (Unintelligible).

Mr. Jowdy: ...you could...the...the decks were still awash and they were sitting on...on the...on the...on the bottom. We did that for about two days and all of a sudden, every night you'd go back to the receiving station...and they always had a list of who was shipping out and so forth. So I noticed that I was supposed to go on this transport. I went aboard the transport; they must have picked up five to seven hundred Marines; now, I wasn't ship's company and they told me this; they said, "You're just a passenger," and I'm thinking, "Where am I going?" "You don't have to know." So you did the chipping of the paint and all the dirty work for them. We got to Guadalcanal; we unloaded the troops; we left Guadalcanal...we were out maybe two days and we got hit by a torpedo and sunk; well, we survived in a raft. Now we were luckier than the guys with the Indianapolis. We did have planes that dropped supplies to us in a canvas to get the sun off of us, and we had two or three

rafts and we'd tie them together. There were sharks in the water, but in the old days, the top floated, and the middle sank down to about your waist if you stood up...but the ruling was that if anybody was hurt they got on the inside and the other guys just hung on the side or sat on the side. So we were in the water about two weeks...

Brainerd Parrish: Oh two weeks?!

Mr. Jowdy: ...but the best part of it was...that we had supplies and we were out of the sun; it wasn't the most pleasant thing in the world, but when you're fifteen...I wasn't scared...I was too stupid, I guess. I...I really don't know; you know, it's been a long time. And we took turns. Another raft we found...and it was flat...so what happened was...you'd have three guys get in that raft and sleep for about two hours and the other guys would be hanging on the side watching (unintelligible), and you'd flip flop. But we were always in contact with the ship; I mean...they knew where we were. The ships couldn't stop because there were submarines in the area; that was the main reason. We got picked up and they sent us to Noumea, New Caledonia, and while we were there...they furnished us clothes; it wasn't our size, but it was clothes. We went...we stayed there probably three or four days; then the word got out that the...the [USS] Wasp which was an aircraft carrier...got hit, and they needed somebody to go out there and pick up the survivors. Well, there was a couple of destroyers in port, so they took all of these guys...whatever they called us; we thought we were orphans, and put us on there to help them. We get alongside the Wasp, and I don't know, it was a short time later...that same

submarine that sunk the Wasp put a torpedo in us and blew me off the ship. Now we were in the water probably another four days, but it was a lot better. I mean you had more people; you had a lot of rafts; (cough) you had flares; you had ships around you; they were picking up what they could, you know? They'd pick up a few guys and then they...they had to keep moving. So anyway after that ordeal *back* to Noumea, New Caledonia. Well while I was there...there was a guy there that I thought was smart as hell; he was probably eighteen years old; big farm guy from Mississippi. He said, "Hey, Jowdy, why don't we get in submarines? We can go to New London, Connecticut." He said, "We can get out of all this crap." Man...me..., "Yeah, that's a great idea!" We...they put us on an aircraft carrier that was going back to Pearl; we got to Pearl; they took us over to the Sub Base and they assigned us to the [USS] Skipjack, and it had...came back from a patrol and we...we worked on it for two weeks and I kept asking this Boatswain's Mate, "Well, when are we going to New...New London, Connecticut?" "Any time now!" When the ship was ready, he came up to me and he said, "You still want to be a submariner?" "Oh, yeah, yeah!" He said, "You are one; you're assigned to this ship." I said, "How about New London?" "You want to be a sub, do it." So I'd already made the commitment. We went out on a patrol in the China Sea. Now you're a crew member, so you don't get to look through the periscope; it's all scuttlebutt...whatever you hear somebody say. They spotted some ships; we fired...like twenty torpedoes, and they were all duds!

Brainerd Parrish: I see.

Mr. Jowdy: Supposedly, one of them came back towards us and we had to crash dive; again this is all hearsay...because they don't tell a...a crew anything. (Cough) We were...ordered back to Pearl to see what was wrong; on the way back I got double pneumonia. When I got to Pearl, of course, they didn't want me because of the lungs, so they put me in a hospital; I was there about two weeks. The [USS] Salt Lake City had just come back from the Savo Island attack, and they were in dry dock so I was assigned to it. And they had just put the forty millimeters on the ship; before that they had one point ones...

Brainerd Parrish: I see.

Mr. Jowdy: ...and they added twenty, twenty-millimeters, so they added six quad sets of forties, and twenty, twenty-millimeters. So we were in port...well, they were there in November and December and Mar...around the first part of March we were assigned...with an old four-piper destroyer...I mean, a light cruiser, the [USS] Richmond, and the...Admiral McMorris was on it with four destroyers. And we were assigned to patrol the Bering Sea because the Japanese had occupied Attu and Kiska.

Brainerd Parrish: I see.

Mr. Jowdy: I mean...you remember...they had a two-prong fleet when they went...Yor...uh, to Midway, and we intercepted the code, so they just let them go up there. We relieved the [USS] Indianapolis that had been patrolling up there that whole time. Well, we relieved them...

Brainerd Parrish: I see.

Mr. Jowdy: ...on the 26th of March, we couldn't have been up there over two weeks...cold, miserable...and in the wintertime it's so foggy you can't see that...blackboard, and it's cold...and...and....the seas are rough...not on March 26th. We woke up for routine general quarters like we always did...an hour before sunrise; we go to our battle stations, and we're sitting around there griping because we had to be...and about that time, over the PA system, they said, "General Quarters; this is no drill!" Well, we were already there. "Man your battle station!" All of a sudden we went from doing about fifteen knots to twenty-five! What happened was either one of the destroyers or our radar...and...and in those days, radar wasn't that great. I mean they could pick up a whale and think it was a bogey. So we...we got the word that there were three Japanese transports that were going to...put supplies on...I think it was...Attu. Well, as we made the approach, and it was the Richmond and the Salt Lake City...two destroyers ahead and two behind...battle formation...boy, we were going to have a turkey shoot! Well about that time they had two heavy cruisers and three light cruisers and six destroyers; the transport turned and left and went the other way, and we were in battle formation, so...we fired the first round. Now we had ten, eight-inch guns on the Salt Lake; the first round the fire control went out, so everything was manual. As both ships were firing, and of course, the destroyers couldn't fire because they didn't have the range...so at about (cough) eighteen thousand yards these six-inch guns could reach. We...we were fortunate; we got a hit on the first heavy cruiser; knocked it out of action for, I don't know, a short period of time and then it came back. As

the heavy cruisers were firing more...the Richmond had to drop off because it couldn't...couldn't get within range, so what they were trying to do is keep the light cruisers...the light cruisers from trying to circle us. So we had a running battle...probably two hours, then all of a sudden, there was no way...we were going the wrong way...away from Dutch Harbor; we were going towards Komandorski...the Curly (sp?) Islands were along the Russian coast. So, what the Captain was trying to do was circle around and head back the other way; well, they cut us off, so we couldn't do anything. And the next thing you know...and when you're on the forty-millimeter on the stern there's nothing you can do! Aircraft...you know, our Army aircraft guns couldn't do any good; five-inch were out of range so it was strictly the main battery – eight inch. As we...started turning...those...turrets start training aft, and they had a cut out cam; they can only go so far without shooting into the ship...but the concussion on the stern...we had four hundred rounds of forty-millimeter ammunition on the shields, and the directors were about twenty feet off the main deck; the guys that...did the spotting and did the shooting, and those eight-inch guns of concussion just blew them off! And we had canvas that covered the shells; the canvas was tearing apart so they had us abandon ship. And right below was our magazine...plus the Chiefs' quarters. So the generator was down there that controlled the gun. We'd go down there, and after awhile the guns were dead astern...as far as they could go and they were just...everything...the concussion was just tearing out everything. So the thing about...an old heavy cruiser...they had to come down to loading position

where the newer ones they could load from any position. We weren't actually a turret; we were actually a mount. So they'd come down to load and when you'd hear that air blowed...blow all the barrel clean, you'd run up there; you had an escape hatch and you'd start throwing those forty-millimeters over the side, and when you'd hear that breach block close, you just go back down. And they were firing...now the battle lasted three hours and twenty-five minutes; it was the longest sea battle in modern Navy history. In the meantime, as we were doing this...then they assigned us...the two after turrets were running out of ammunition, so we had to go below decks and go all the way forward to turret one and two; they weren't firing. And we broke every Navy rule in the world; we opened the magazines, during battle, we had some dollies; some guys put those shells on there; they weight about two hundred and seventy-five pound; put the dollies down; other guys got a couple of pieces of rope and put a couple of half inches...one on each side and you were hitting those deck plates and they were bouncing...and all you could see was those shells splashing along the side. Fortunately, as I was going by the well deck, you got two caterpillar that hold our scout point...as I went by and eight-inch shell hit that airplane and shrapnel flew all over, and I got hit in the arm. I didn't think much of it, and a Corpsman came by and he pulled out his knife; burned the end of it with a match and dug it out and he said to me, "We...I'll get you a Purple Heart later," and I said, "Okay," so we went on about our duty. The only reason I injected that...because later on...two years ago, three years ago...this sore was always there; always had a scab, and I'd hit

something and it'd bleed. Finally this doctor told me he said, "I want you to check that out." I checked it and I had a cancer, and it was about that deep that had nothing...it could not have been for...it could have been from anything...that...the only reason I brought it up. Another reason I didn't want the Purple Heart is because I knew they'd notify your parents, and my mother was a nervous wreck because I'd already screwed up. She went to the Navy Department because I hadn't written home in six months, so needless to say that Chaplain...and you had that...that restricted mail, you know, you could only write on one side; he wanted me to write six pages! I couldn't write one page; you couldn't tell them where you were; you couldn't tell them what the weather was like; couldn't tell them what you were doing, so the lettering started about this big and then I got...he'd wad it up and throw it away.

Finally I got it on...so I definitely didn't want her to know. It's kind of hard to explain to a lot of people the pride. I mean, when I put on that uniform, I felt like I was ten feet tall. I mean there was nothing in this world that could have changed my mind even today; there is absolutely nothing...and when I tell you...at a fifteen year old dummy...those were the best years of my life! Three and a half years...I met some of the greatest guys in the world; guys that I used to think were hayseed, dumb hicks; they were from farms but they were the true friend. I mean, these guys were the ones that knew from the old school how to help somebody out. I had an Ensign that taught at either Yale or Harvard and he took a liking to me, and he had a pretty good idea I was too young; he was assistant division manager, so he said to me, "How far'd you

go in high school?" I said, "You know, I went first year." He said, "We're going to get you a correspondence course and before you get off this damned ship you're going to have your high school diploma." Yeah sure, I thought he was full of...every day he took time out of his own and we'd go down in Chiefs' quarters...right next to those generators, and he'd drill me until I finally got it right! And it was people like him that, you know, that...it's hard to describe; it really is...the loyalty and the together we had. I mean, these guys...even though you'd go on the beach and you'd fight another ship or you'd fight amongst yourself (unintelligible)...when it came time for the nut cutting...they were there! Anyway, after all this action, then we got hit in one of our fuel tanks; salt water went in and you saw steam come out of the stacks, and they ran up the flag, "My speed's Zero," so we were dead in the water and the regiment is...God knows where; she wasn't close. Now this is hearsay, the guy said to me, "That goddamned Admiral said, 'God bye and good luck!'"

The four destroyers stayed with us. We're dead in the water; they had us on the fantail because our...what happened...our rudder went out and they were steering from after steering, and we only had five degrees either way. Now I heard all this afterwards. We're bailing water; now if you can imagine the water is *very* cold, so we're bailing water and the Chaplain comes down...I remember his name was Hodges. I don't know where he got that whiskey from...the wardroom, I guess, and he came down...I'm fifteen...I didn't even know how to drink; I didn't smoke...you know, they must have thought, "What is this stupid idiot doing? We're really losing the war!" I took a swig

and I couldn't breathe; I was more worried about not breathing than I was that cold water a second! So when the Captain said, "Abandon ship, and you'll last about a minute," I'm looking at the other guys...and you know, they just kept bailing, so I just kept bailing. I don't know how long it last. All I remember was being the stern you could feel that vibration. What happened was...those guys in the engine room had shifted fuel tank...to the other one and they got up some speed, you know, like a bunch of high school kids; we were going crazy. You know, here were are in our shorts and it's cold and we got oil all over us, and just cheering, you know...I can't tell you what happened; I can tell you what I heard. Two destroyers laid a smoke screen around us; you got to remember, it's broad daylight; clear weather. The other two went in on a daylight torpedo attack which is suicide, and at nine thousand (unintelligible) is just maximum. You know you don't even...not even close. Whatever happened and whatever they did...because those guys were the heroes! Little ole tin can out there taking eight-inch shells all around them, and they got hit. Anyway, (cough) the Japanese, for some reason, broke off and left; we got up enough speed; we had about a fifteen to twenty degree list from our hits; we only lost two men! Don't ask me why or how...and here we are hollering like a...bunch of teenage kids; cold and finally we put some clothes on, and we went to Dutch Harbor, and these four destroyers, you know, they were our God sent; I mean these guys...they were telling us what heroes we were because we kept it going, and these four cans as we called them...they saved our butt! Nobody talked to the Richmond; we didn't even

want them around. Anyway, we got...got patched up; went to the States; some guys got leave, but I was only in...I don't think I was in seven months by this time.

Brainerd Parrish: I see. Well let me ask you...what was your job on the Salt Lake or...in this battle?

Mr. Jowdy: I was...I was assigned to the 9th Division which covered that part of the fantail.

Brainerd Parrish: I see.

Mr. Jowdy: In other words, you scrubbed that deck; you chipped that paint; your battle station was the forty-millimeter, and I was...

Brainerd Parrish: Okay, so that...

Mr. Jowdy: ...the second loader at the time.

Brainerd Parrish: I see.

Mr. Jowdy: So you've got a guy that's down in the magazine and you got what we called escape hatches; it's about this big; he's passing up and you've got four of them...'cause you got four guns; you got four guys down there; they're passing...

(end of tape 1, side A)

Brainerd Parrish: ...so you were like the second loader?

Mr. Jowdy: Yes.

Brainerd Parrish: Okay.

Mr. Jowdy: ...and, you know, second loader...he wasn't real smart; you know, it...just...all you had to do...you had to remember to hold it up here 'cause you had a clip

that hold...held the four shells together, and you didn't want to touch any of those releases because they'd come apart. And you held it like this because as it went up...and the...the platform is about this high...so that guy's...the second loader passes up to first loader; he's got to hand it to him so when he grabs it from underneath and he puts it in...he wants to make sure so it doesn't cock; if it cocks you'll jam the gun. So that Gun Captain has to pull the lever back that drops the breach block down that has the firing pin and even though the other three guns are still firing. Then you got to straighten it out; start all over.

Brainerd Parrish: Well after you...then you said after...about seven months you'd in and then some people went on...leave.

Mr. Jowdy: They got leave.

Brainerd Parrish: What ...how...happened to you?

Mr. Jowdy: Nothing; I mean I got...they told me...I said, "Well, why don't get leave? I had two ships." "Yeah, but you were a passenger; you weren't ship's company so it's not recorded." I thought, "Thank you!" Anyway, they went on leave and...*shocking!* This guy's going to take me ashore in San Francisco and teach me how to drink and smoke; I'm going to be a big salty dog! So I'm sitting in this bar and I don't even...I ordered bourbon and coke, I think. I'm trying to puff on this cigarette; tastes nasty and I'm coughing. A friend of mine, a Boatswain's Mate, off the ship come in...he said, "Jowdy, you better be sober, you son of a bitch 'cause your mother and your sister are right outside in a cab." I thought, "Oh, my god, how the hell did they know I was

here?” Anyway, that was the light side. We had a good time for eight or ten days that we were there; they went back; we got patched up; we went back to the Aleutians patrolling. I think we helped cover the landing of Attu. I remember it was cold as hell, and it wasn’t like anything in the Pacific or the South Pacific even though the Army had a lot of problems because of the weather...’cause all your equipment would get screwed up, and the fog and so forth. Anyway, this was towards the end of ’43...’40...’43, yeah! We went from foul weather gear...

Brainerd Parrish: (Unintelligible), go ahead; I’m just going to make...unless you want some water.

Mr. Jowdy: No, not...we went...

Brainerd Parrish: I’ll give you some before I take a swig.

Mr. Jowdy: ...go ahead. We went from foul weather gear...when we got to Honolulu we turned it all back in. Now we went from weather that was like thirty-five; cold and...to Hawaii where it was seventy or eighty. We took on fuel and ammunition and what minor repairs, and the first place we went was Tarawa or Tarawa; we called it Tarawa. Whatever they say...historians or whoever, the only thing I have against historians...theirs is all hearsay; they weren’t there. What I saw maybe the guy on the bow didn’t see and what he saw maybe I didn’t see, so my version of it on those forty-millimeter on the stern...those Japs had captured some six or eight-inch guns from Singapore and brought them to Tarawa. So when you go on a bombarding run, you start of mainly (cough)...I’m going to say eighteen thousand yards. So you’re only

going two or three knots which is maybe five miles and hour just to keep you steady. And you have whatever section you have; you make that all the way to the end. When you make it to the end, you make a turn two thousand yards in and then you come back. Now the eight-inch are firing because they're the only ones have the range. As you close in then the five-inch...you got eight-inch and five-inch...and them Japs start shooting those shore batteries...I don't care what anybody says...*every* shell looks like it's coming at me! And every third one's got a tracer; that's how they spot them. I don't know...J.C. had to be looking after us; I mean, here we were and I thought, "There ain't no way we're going to get through it!" First one is over; second one is short, so you expect the third to be a...they never got our range. We had splashes; we'd get to the end of the second run, and then you'd hear a whistle which is collision. I think it was the [USS] Princeton, but it was a converted carrier, jeep carrier; the rudder jammed and it was heading for a...*right* for the fantail of the stern. And you seeing this damned ship come at you...and I didn't know whether to abandon ship or run forward. And all you could feel was the ship vibrate; we were backing down, and it just missed our bow, so it was a constant...you know, not only did you have to worry about the enemy you had to worry about your...your own! And some of those guys...and I'm sure they didn't do it on purpose...they were firing...we called them Washing Machine Charlies...these Japanese observation planes; they sound like a damned washing machine. And they'd get up real high and especially at night; they knew you wasn't going to fire at them, so they'd just keep you awake, and

some of those guys were shooting twenty-millimeter and they couldn't reach so all you could hear was that shrapnel coming down on the deck and I'm thinking, "This...what are we doing?! We're supposed to be winning the war!" Anyway, Tarawa was bad. When we finally left and we were there...I thought Tarawa...it's no comparison to Iwo Jima, but at that time, you know, this guy was talking about...the Marines didn't get the Navy's support. If he'd have said that at Tarawa, I would agree with him 'cause there wasn't that many there. We could have bombarded more; he never told you about "Howling Mad Smith," that god-damn Marine General that waited for the tide to come out before they landed. He was supposed to do it when the tide was in, but he didn't. See these guys tell their side of the story; I like this guy, but I don't like the idea of him saying...the Navy's fault; we didn't give them enough support; maybe we did and maybe we didn't; I wasn't an Admiral. I do know that that "Howling Mad," made...that's how he got his name...

Brainerd Parrish: I see.

Mr. Jowdy: ...he didn't give a shit! You know he said, "I'm going to take the island in four days; he didn't care how many got killed! I hated MacArthur but the one thing I can say about him...he was a lot more cautious, you know, (cough) and he took a little at a time. This guy here was gung-ho! Hey, maybe that's the way they're supposed to be; who knows! We took a lot of casualties and they did, too, but you know, they want to be *Semper Fi* and be the heroes and remember all the...hey, that...that's your end of it! We took a lot of heat; we

took...they never mentioned that suicide planes started before Iwo; I mean, they started before the Philippines.

Brainerd Parrish: I see, I wasn't aware of that.

Mr. Jowdy: Oh yeah. In fact, if the truth was known, we started it. Colin Powell, no, Colin...what was that guy's...was his name Colin? In the Philippines when the Japanese attacked; he was the first suicide plane.

Brainerd Parrish: I see.

Mr. Jowdy: And I was thinking...his name was Colin...I don't...I don't think it was Powell.

Brainerd Parrish: It was Colin something, but...

Mr. Jowdy: Anyway...

Brainerd Parrish: So after Tarawa where did you guys go?

Mr. Jowdy: We went from there to the Marshalls – Kwajalein, and Mu...what was the name of...there was Abemama; there was...

Brainerd Parrish: (Unintelligible).

Mr. Jowdy: ...Abemama...they were all at...but the biggest one was Kwajalein.

Brainerd Parrish: I see.

Mr. Jowdy: And they landed there; it wasn't that big; the outer island...of the Gilberts which was Tarawa...that...that's the reason why they wanted Midway 'cause that was the next step going toward Pearl. So when we knocked them off at the...at the Gilberts then we went to the Marshalls, and we were there. From there...we called it R&R...we went to Ulithi or one of those islands; we got replenished and we went back to Pearl 'cause we'd been hit and we...and we got repaired. Then we joined Task Force 58, and that's...

Brainerd Parrish: And what was Task Force 58?

Mr. Jowdy: That was Halsey's group. When you look out there and you see twenty-five carriers and about twenty battleships and about fifty cruisers...as far as you could see there were ships! Now this was late '44. I don't know if you remember when they called it The Great Mariana Turkey Shoot?

Brainerd Parrish: I've heard of that.

Mr. Jowdy: Yeah.

Brainerd Parrish: Yes.

Mr. Jowdy: Well, they were bombing Pearl, not Pearl Harbor, but Truk which was our Pearl Harbor. They didn't want to land on it and they were knocking out the air fields at Peleliu and Yap 'cause that was the next step towards...the Navy wanted Formosa; "Dug-out Doug" wanted the Philippines, you know, with the "I shall return." Anyway, it so happened that that day and being...you know, we finally saw some action because there was aircraft near. The American fighter pilots shot down...like four hundred Japanese planes; they call it The Great American Turkey Shoot at the Mariana. From there, we went back to Ulithi; a little rest and recreation; then we headed for...for the Philippines, and Leyte was where we landed the troops. And the next funny story is...the troops were inland, and the next thing you know, we had to stop firing. We were bombarding; we had to stop firing. "What the hell's going on?" And here you see Dug-out Doug with his whole entourage and cameras on the beach, and this guy with that stupid corncob pipe and the sunglasses...and he's wading ashore..., "I shall return!" Well the first one didn't take, so he

took...two or three times; these guys are fighting, you know, three or four miles ahead of him! All of a sudden, we got a call...three heavy cruisers; four destroyers; we're going to go bombard Iwo Jima! First of all, I didn't know where the hell Iwo Jima was; had no idea! No air coverage...so we made a speed run; we got there at midnight and the lights were still on the beach; we caught them completely by surprise; we bombarded and it didn't take them long turn off those light and start shooting back! We were probably there forty-five minutes...whether it was a diversion...I couldn't tell you. The only thing I can tell you...we were there! The next morning we zigzagged and stayed under cloud cover trying to get away from anti-aircraft. There were probably six Bettys as they called them, two-engine bombers, and they dropped bombs; we shot a few of them down. We get back (cough) to the Philippines, all of sudden we're assigned to Task Force 58 which was Halsey; he wanted to go chase that ghost fleet that the Japanese had. We take off and the tankers couldn't keep up with us we were going so fast. Anyway, wherever we were...the next thing I know...we're in a typhoon, and it's tossing those battleships around. If you can picture a battleship fully dressed at about seventy thousand tons, flipping them in the water! You'd see the stern come up and you could see the propellers turning and the carriers were taking water on the flight deck; it was a disaster for three or four days! Now my opinion, he should have got court-martial. I'll tell you later on in the story...we finally got out of it; it was either three or four or five destroyers capsized, so there was a lot of guys in the water. The word that I got was that, "We can't stop

and pick them up; we've got to head back," because the Japanese fleet came around and they were behind our landing force and the only thing that were there were those little jeep carriers at Liscombe Bay and I forgot...the Bell of the Woods...whatever...and here this guy was chasing a nobody fleet. One of the Admirals that was in charge of either a cruiser or a division or whatever...he just told him, "Screw you," he stayed there, and I think that he picked up about six hundred men of the eight hundred men were there. Now they couldn't say nothing to him because it'd make Halsey look like crap, so anyway he got out. We get back, and by the time we got back all of the carriers were...released their airplanes. And of course, you know, we were still a hundred miles away, so that's how they...they attacked those ships. Now the old battleships were in that Surigao Strait and they knocked them off. After all of the screw-ups, it was time for us...we went back to the States...

Brainerd Parrish: I see.

Mr. Jowdy: ...this is '44.

Brainerd Parrish: Did you go back to Pearl and then the States...

Mr. Jowdy: Yeah.

Brainerd Parrish: ...or just...?

Mr. Jowdy: Get back to the States, and I finally get a fifteen-day leave. Fortunately a guy told me, "If you go to Sacramento, they've got...at that time they called it SAC...base there, and there's Kelly Field in San Antonio," said, "You can get a flight," said, "Man, you've been out at sea for a long time." I get there and there's a room full of Colonels and Admirals and Generals, and here I am a

Seaman First...so the guy said, "Let me see your orders." I showed them; he said, "You been out at sea that long?" Said, "Yeah." He put me up in the front and you can imagine what the Admirals...I got on that airplane and flew home, and you know, it was...not only was it a free ride, but I had a forty-eight hour pass before my leave started, so I'm home a day before.

Brainerd Parrish: I see.

Mr. Jowdy: So I get home and it's in July; at the same time they're landing in France! They're also landing on Guam and Saipan; that's why you never heard a big story because Europe was first; the big show was there and these guys caught hell on those two islands. We were in the States; when we came out, we were there forty-five days. We got fixed up and we went back and joined the fleet. Then we...we were with them at Yap and Peleliu. In the meantime, after...after Iwo Jima, they sent us to Hahajima which is nothing, and it's a hundred and fifty miles closer to Japan.

Brainerd Parrish: I see.

Mr. Jowdy: There's nothing nearer, and I've never figured out why these three heavy cruisers and four destroyers went...whether it was diversified or...I have no idea! Everything went well except the radar picked up about twenty torpedo boats coming out of a cove or something, so we start firing and they're firing and one scared the other or whatever happened, we both broke off and we headed back. They Iwo Jima Campaign was to bombardment. The one thing I didn't have time to tell them there...when we left our bombarding position to

go back to Saipan to get more ammunition, the [USS] Pensacola took our place. Before we got out of sight she got hit three times right where we were!

Brainerd Parrish: Oh is that right?! Oow!

Mr. Jowdy: It is amazing, and they showed the screen where she got hit, and that was our sister ship, and I thought, “Boy, somebody’s *really* looking after us!”

Anyway, we followed the landing; we were there it seemed like forever; I mean it...it was...got to where it was routine; you were shooting at planes in the day time, and bombarding and you were at general quarters. And I know those guys had hell on the beach, and they...they were serving us sandwiches which...which didn’t make any difference; it was other things more important. The whole thing was...like really a nightmare! I mean, all you could see was that ugly Mount Suribachi and you’d think...and it was always a cloud cover and it was cold. The greatest thing that happened, as we swung around to make our second run, being on the stern, as we swung around, I happened to be looking up at Mount Suribachi and I saw them raise the first flag. Every ship in that harbor blew their fog horn.

Brainerd Parrish: Oh, is that right?!

Mr. Jowdy: Oh, uh, if I would have told you that I had tears in my eyes and I could have stuck out my chest and hit the wall...I mean, it was one of the greatest feelings in the world even though *they* did it, we didn’t do a damned thing, we were just supporting (unintelligible). I don’t understand or maybe I...I’m missing something...that our generation just...I don’t know what generation...they don’t understand that flag waving or, yeah. If I was younger and I went to a

football game and they're playing the National Anthem and you got some guy sitting there with his hat on and drinking a beer and talking...in my day, some guy'd come up and just knock the crap out of him! I don't know what happened to us; what we did...did we give them too much; didn't we tell them enough? And when I hear people come up to me and they'd say...and I've spoken at a...a few of...Rotary Clubs...and this one guy asked me, he said, "Well didn't you feel bad when they dropped the atomic bomb?" And I looked at him and I said, "You know, the only reason I felt bad," said, "they didn't drop it on Tokyo or Yokohama...or drop more." "How can you say that?!" (cough) I said, "If you're ass was at Okinawa or Iwo Jima, you would have been just like me! When you saw those suicide planes and the suicide swimmers; suicide boats...and they just didn't give a damn about life." They were sending ships out that had enough fuel to get there, but they couldn't get back and...and...I must be missing something. I...I don't understand why these people are blaming us and you get some of these tree huggers as I call them...you know, they're going to save the world! And you've got some jackass that wants to run for President...said he threw his medal...thinking, "You son of a bitch, you weren't in the war zone long enough on a river that you could do all of that?! And...you have people like that gal...the guys were in prison at...at the Hilton...and...and they make a hero out of her?! Uh, am I missing something? Did I do something wrong in life?"

Brainerd Parrish: I don't know. Did you have any experience of any kamikaze?

Mr. Jowdy: Ah! Constantly; every day! The thing about it is you've got to remember...when they first started...these four little ships, DE – Destroyer Escorts and Destroyers, were based a hundred and fifty miles closer to Japan; they called it Pickett Duty. Their job was to pick up bogeys, as we call them, on the radar and relay it to the fleet. And every carrier would send every fighter they had available to greet them. The guys on the director...uh on the radar might pick up three or four hundred bogeys...that's how many planes would be up; the fighters would meet them; they might shoot down two hundred and fifty or three hundred; these guys were not experience. They knew how to take of and crash into somebody; I wouldn't say they were sitting ducks for the fighters but they didn't have to worry about them shooting back because they didn't have any of them. So they shot down a lot, but there was always at least a hundred that would get through to the fleet. First of all, they'd head for any ship, any available, so they might come at you and you're shooting at them; you might shot them down; they might miss the target and go over. And somebody in Japan decided, we got to get rid of those pickets first; so those pickets caught hell; we must have lost a hundred of them! They were crashing into them, and those ships aren't that big. They'd have a five hundred pound bomb and just...so from the pickets they start moving in; then they decided to hell with...with any capital ship other than carriers; they're the ones that given you the most trouble. So what you had was the carriers down the middle; the battleships next; the heavy cruisers then

the light cruisers and then the destroyers, so they had to fly through a lot of flak before they got to them.

Brainerd Parrish: Yes!

Mr. Jowdy: But still we got...

Brainerd Parrish: Did the Salt Lake ever...did any of them ever hit the Salt Lake?

Mr. Jowdy: Never hit us; they flew over our stack and crashed into, I think it was one of the battleships. We never...all we got was fragments...

Brainerd Parrish: I see.

Mr. Jowdy: ...but we never got hit; we saw a lot of ships get hit. The [USS] Bonhomme Richard; the [USS] Bunker Hill...I mean, these...and one airplane would hit one of those carriers and if they had their aviation fuel on, I mean...I saw one of the elevators just blow straight up in the air, so it wasn't a sight to see.

Brainerd Parrish: What about...you talked about some of these suicide boats that would come out after you?

Mr. Jowdy: Yes.

Brainerd Parrish: What were those like...P...I mean...?

Mr. Jowdy: No, they'd be like a motor boat.

Brainerd Parrish: Oh, I see, and...

Mr. Jowdy: And then when you were at anchor, especially at Okinawa, you had the Kerama Retto which were...the transports and the tankers were there. And you'd go in between; you'd take on fuel on one side and...and ammunition on the other, and you'd go back out. These guys would swim out to a boat and

try and go up the anchor chain and just kill somebody. So after awhile, you had people standing watch...

Brainerd Parrish: I see.

Mr. Jowdy: ...to look out for suicide boats and suicide swimmers.

Brainerd Parrish: Okay, (cough) well what about...so after Jima...where did the Salt Lake go?

Mr. Jowdy: We went to Okinawa.

Brainerd Parrish: And...I see.

Mr. Jowdy: We were there...two months; it was...just seemed like forever. They had it set up...at least at Iwo, when you ran out of ammunition, you had to go back to Saipan, and on the way back you could get a little rest and recreation; you pick up a few supplies and come back; at Okinawa there was no relief!

Brainerd Parrish: No relief?

Mr. Jowdy: *No* relief in sight! And that guy didn't mention that the whole frigging fleet was there at Okinawa. I mean...

Brainerd Parrish: Well, the fleet took a lot of damage at Okinawa, didn't it?

Mr. Jowdy: Oh yeah. We lost...as I said, more ships and more men at Okinawa than we did the whole war. You know they talk about Pearl Harbor...but...it was a disaster, but it was nothing like Iwo and...and Okinawa; *nothing* at all! I mean we lost men...one ship might lose fifteen hundred men; those carriers, but...

Brainerd Parrish: Do you recall where you were when the atomic bomb was exploded...say over Japan? Where were you at...?

Mr. Jowdy: We were sitting in Saipan; we were taking on store, and the next move was going to be Japan. We'd already...after Okinawa, we were already patrolling the China Sea...

Brainerd Parrish: I see.

Mr. Jowdy: ...for mines; you had minesweepers there and we'd bombard Japan a little bit, and of course, at that time, I mean...the Navy would send three to four hundred planes at one time over there. And the B-17s were taking off, and if they were shot up, they could land at Okinawa; I mean Iwo Jima. So they had fighter coverage by this time. So then after this...I guess it was going to be a lull, so I guess the planners were trying to figure out what we screwed up and what we didn't; what we going to do, and I don't think anybody was looking forward to that. I mean, we'd hear stories about...they'd have the women and children sharpening cane poles, you know? If they'd just kill one, that would be enough, and I'm thinking, "It's ridiculous!" Anyway, that's where we were. Now for a guy to hear me say atomic bomb...I didn't have any idea what they were talking about, and today...probably think I was crazy! But I'm thinking how can a little boy weighing five pounds, I think they said, drop by parachute and it wiped out fifty or sixty thousand I think; they're so full of crap! What these guys won't tell us! Next thing I know, they dropped another one, and all of a sudden, as we called it scuttlebutt, this guy's telling me, "Hey, Jowdy, the war is over!" "Sure it is; yeah." Then after it finally sinks in, all of a sudden, or at least me...I felt like an orphan. "What the hell am I going to do?" I don't remember any part of civilian life; I was...

Brainerd Parrish: Well, let's see...when that happened what was the mission of the Salt Lake City after that...immediately after?

Mr. Jowdy: Well, because we were an old ship; we were assigned to Ominato...it's called Honshu. In Japan it's the northern-most island; it's Ominato Bay. So they sent all the old ships there because they were going to show off the pride of the fleet; the isle...which saw nothing. The [USS] Missouri which was bullshit because it was Truman's and Dug-out Doug...it should have been Nimitz instead of him. I don't know whose pull; I don't have any idea; I wasn't there, but all of the newer capital ships went to Tokyo Bay.

Brainerd Parrish: I see.

Mr. Jowdy: We went up there, and being a Gunner's Mate, we escorted...senior officer, I think he was a Commander and they met us, and as we were walking down the street, the Japanese...their courtesy was to turn their back to you...

Brainerd Parrish: I see.

Mr. Jowdy: ...because they were ashamed. And believe me, I had a BAR that I'd never fired; I wouldn't know what to do with it (laughter); anyway, 'cause I was a Gunner's Mate...we went to a warehouse and they gave every guy on the ship a Japanese rifle and a bayonet, and every officer got a saber. So they signed the peace treaty which we weren't a part of, you know, because of all the big shots; we went back to the ship; we waited for...they had a hurricane going on there; we waited for it to end up; we had to be in the States in Portland, Oregon...

(end of tape 1, side B)

Brainerd Parrish: Okay, so you were making a speed run back to the...

Mr. Jowdy: Back to Oregon.

Brainerd Parrish: Okay.

Mr. Jowdy: We were going to celebrate Navy Day in Portland, Oregon. Well, we hit a typhoon; we finally got out of it, and the scariest part...for the war being over...as we approached the Columbia River...you've got fresh water pouring into salt water...we hit a wave, and it rolled that cruiser over at about thirty-eight, forty degrees where spray was coming down the stack and I'm thinking, "I'm not going to die! And I'm right here and the war is over!" So, anyway, we celebrated Navy Day in Portland, Oregon in 1945. Then my next assignment...we took off half of the crew and we left them there in the States and we made speed runs to...Eniwetok, I think, and we'd pick up five hundred troops and bring them back. They'd take the other half off and rotate. I made two or three of...we called them Magic Carpet runs.

Brainerd Parrish: That was part of that operation Magic Carpet...

Mr. Jowdy: Yeah.

Brainerd Parrish: ...so...

Mr. Jowdy: So because I was too young and I wasn't married, I didn't get off the ship until the end of November and they sent me back and they had a place called Camp Wallace which was south of Houston and just north of Galveston, and it was an old Army blimp base, and that's where you went for your discharge and they called them Rup...Ruptured Ducks. I don't know if you remember that or not, but it was...it looked like...that was your discharge. When I get

there, thank god, guys...they'd given you a physical on the ship at Treasure Island; you get there and another physical; none of these doctors are in a hurry because they got to stay in. So you get in line and the lines from here *forever*, and I'm in a hurry; I'm only two hundred miles from home, so I thought...every day..., "You got malaria," so they'd take a shot...blood out of here; check it; it's negative; next day they'd take..., "I think it's positive." This went on till just before Christmas...I went over the hill; I was there about four days and I came back, and of course, medical people don't know crap about military. The guy said to me, "The longer you're going to do that, the longer you're going to stay in!" I said, "The longer you keep me here, the more I'm going to go back!" He said, "We'll take your clothes away from you." Okay, anyway, he didn't and I did it two or three times; finally I got out the 17th of January...

Brainerd Parrish: I see!

Mr. Jowdy: ...of 1946. I made the mistake of hurrying to get out; I joined the reserve. I made a couple of cruises during peace time, and I quit, and in 1950 they came to my house and told my mother, "Your son's got to report to San Diego." And I told the guy, "I don't have any clothes." "I don't give a damn; here's your ticket!" So they put me on an ammunition ship...I reported to San Diego; they put me on a ammunition ship and I went to Sasebo, Japan, and we served in Korea for seventeen months.

Brainerd Parrish: I see.

Mr. Jowdy: Then I came back and the guy said, “You want to re-up?” “No.” So that was the end of my...

Brainerd Parrish: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Jowdy.

Mr. Jowdy: You’re welcome.

Brainerd Parrish: We certainly appreciate this...and very interesting.

Mr. Jowdy: Okay, I hope I wasn’t too boring.

Brainerd Parrish: No, I...

(end of interview)

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