

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR

Center for Pacific War Studies

Fredericksburg, Texas

An Interview with

**Joseph E. Gunterman
Waterbury, Connecticut
January 27, 2009**

**U.S.S Zane DMS-14
At Invasion of Munda, Kwajalein,
Saipan, Tinian, Guam
Swept Mines**

Interview With
Mr. Joseph C. Gunterman

Mr. Misenhimer

My name is Richard Misenhimer. Today is January the 27, 2009. I am interviewing Mr. Joseph E. Gunterman by telephone. His telephone number is area code 203-755-8166. His address is 131 Robinwood Rd. Waterbury Connecticut, 06708-2455. This interview is in support of the National Museum of Pacific War Center of Pacific War Studies for the preservation of historical information related to W. W. II.

Mr. Misenhimer

Mr. Joe I want to thank you for taking time today to do this interview today and I want to thank you for your service to our country during W. W. II. The first thing I would like to do is get an alternative contact we find out that sometimes several years down the road we try to get back in contact with a veteran and he has moved. Do you have a son or a daughter or someone that we could contact to find you?

Mr. Gunterman

My daughter, Nancy Manoli, her phone number is (203)621-1974, I don't have her address in front of me, she lives in Connecticut.

Mr. Misenhimer

"Agreement Read" Is that okay?

Mr. Gunterman

That's Okay.

Mr. Misenhimer

My first question is what is your birthdate?

Mr. Gunterman

My birthday is May 11, 1923

Mr. Misenheimer

Where were you born?

Mr. Gunterman

Waterbury, Connecticut

Mr. Misenheimer

Did you have brothers and sisters?

Mr. Gunterman

Yeah I have a couple of sisters.

Mr. Misenheimer

Were they involved in W.W.II. At all?

Mr. Gunterman

No.

Mr. Misenhimer

You grew up during the Depression. How did the Depression effect you and your family?

Mr. Gunterman

We were poor. My and father used to resole our shoes and put more water in the soup.

Mr. Misenhimer

What was your father's occupation, what did he do?

Mr. Gunterman

He was a college graduate and he worked as a stock clerk in a plumbing supply house.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was he able to keep employed during the depression?

Mr. Gunterman

Yes

Mr. Misenhimer

So you got along okay then?

Mr. Gunterman

Yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you go to high school?

Mr. Gunterman

I went to school here in Waterbury by the name of Crosby.

Mr. Misenhimer

And what year did you graduate?

Mr. Gunterman

1941

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you do when you graduated?

Mr. Gunterman

I worked for the phone company.

Mr. Misenhimer

December 27, 1941 Japan attacked Pear Harbor. Do you recall hearing about that?

Mr. Gunterman

Yeah I remember.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where were you when you heard?

Mr. Gunterman

I was in a private boy's school visiting someone.

Mr. Misenhimer

And how did you think this would affect you?

Mr. Gunterman

I had no idea at the time because you know people didn't really know what was going on.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now you hadn't registered for the draft yet, had you?

Mr. Gunterman

I don't recall.

Mr. Misenhimer

I think you had to be 21 at that point.

Mr. Gunterman

Oh is that right?

Mr. Misenhimer

Then when did you go into the service?

Mr. Gunterman

I went in in November of '42.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you volunteer or were you drafted?

Mr. Gunterman

I volunteered.

Mr. Misenhimer

You went into the Navy is that right?

Mr. Gunterman

Yes sir.

Mr. Misenhimer

How did you choose the Navy?

Mr. Gunterman

A clean place to sleep and something to eat.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you go in as?

Mr. Gunterman

I went in as a seaman first class.

Mr. Misenhimer

Oh you did. How come?

Mr. Gunterman

That's what everybody went in as.

Mr. Misenhimer

Oh I thought they went in as apprentice seaman.

Mr. Gunterman

Well yeah I guess so apprentice seaman okay.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you go in at?

Mr. Gunterman

I went in in Newport, Rhode Island.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you take your boot camp?

Mr. Gunterman

In Newport, Rhode Island.

Mr. Misenhimer

How was that boot camp?

Mr. Gunterman

How was it?

Mr. Misenhimer

Yes Sir.

Mr. Gunterman

It was all new life, you know. Inexperienced with people.

Mr. Misenhimer

What all did you do in boot camp?

Mr. Gunterman

What did I do?

Mr. Misenhimer

Yes sir.

Mr. Gunterman

I did the usual running around and doing training. I only spent about five weeks there.

Mr. Misenhimer

How were your drill instructors? Were they pretty rough?

Mr. Gunterman

They weren't bad.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have a lot of marching and that sort of thing?

Mr. Gunterman

Yeah all the routine, yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you get any kind of weapon training?

Mr. Gunterman

No only pistol shooting.

Mr. Misenhimer

No rifle or anything like that.

Mr. Gunterman

Nothing else.

Mr. Misenhimer

How about knot tying? Did you have knot tying?

Mr. Gunterman

Oh yeah, oh yeah knot tying.

Mr. Misenhimer

And swimming?

Mr. Gunterman

And swimming and a boat to paddle or something.

Mr. Misenhimer

That was five weeks?

Mr. Gunterman

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then where did you go?

Mr. Gunterman

I went to sound school in Key West, Florida.

Mr. Misenhimer

How did you travel down to Key West?

Mr. Gunterman

By Train.

Mr. Misenhimer

And how was that train trip?

Mr. Gunterman

Oh it took 24 hours.

Mr. Misenhimer

Had you been very far from home before?

Mr. Gunterman

No.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you got down to Florida where did you go in Florida?

Mr. Gunterman

Sound School.

Mr. Misenhimer

Tell me about that, what is sound school?

Mr. Gunterman

Sound school is to operate sound equipment on ships to detect anything under water.

Mr. Misenhimer

The sonar?

Mr. Gunterman

The sonar.

Mr. Misenhimer

How long was that school?

Mr. Gunterman

I think it was five or six weeks.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then you learned how to operate, how to listen to the sound the pings and stuff, or what?

Mr. Gunterman

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

Is there anything particular from that school you recall?

Mr. Gunterman

No it was a whole gang of guys learning how to be sound men.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was this on the ground or were you out on a ship or what?

Mr. Gunterman

Well we had training on an old small private yacht type ship they rigged up sound equipment we used to operate with the submarines right off of Key West.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you live in there?

Mr. Gunterman

I lived in the Barracks.

Mr. Misenhimer

How was the food there?

Mr. Gunterman

It was alright.

Mr. Misenhimer

Any funny incidents happen in boot camp or in that sound school?

Mr. Gunterman

No, nothing.

Mr. Misenhimer

Nothing funny happened huh?

Mr. Gunterman

No not that I can recall.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then when you finished the sound school where did you go?

Mr. Gunterman

I went to Treasure Island in California, San Francisco.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you do there?

Mr. Gunterman

I waited around to get shipped out.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you ship out to?

Mr. Gunterman

I shipped out of San Francisco on a um, I don't recall what kind of ship because I wasn't ship oriented. I think it was an old transport. I shipped out to Noumea, New Caledonia. Thirty days, we had no escort or anything.

Mr. Misenhimer

That ship was very fast or slow?

Mr. Gunterman

Oh slow it took thirty days to get there.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was it very crowded?

Mr. Gunterman

Oh it was mobbed, they had a bunch of Marines and a few of us Sailors.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was there much sea sickness?

Mr. Gunterman

Not that I can recall.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were there other ships with you?

Mr. Gunterman

No we traveled alone.

Mr. Misenhimer

That early in the war that would have been in 43' sometime?

Mr. Gunterman

It was in January, February, um I think in February.

Mr. Misenhimer

At that point Japanese submarines were pretty active. I'm surprised you didn't have an escort of some sort.

Mr. Gunterman

No, we had nothing.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you do when you arrived in Noumea?

Mr. Gunterman

Went into a tent city on the side of a hill.

Mr. Misenhimer

What all did you do there?

Mr. Gunterman

I'd say probably a week.

Mr. Misenhimer

And you were just waiting?

Mr. Gunterman

Yeah waiting to get assigned.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then where were you assigned to?

Mr. Gunterman

I was assigned to the U.S.S Zane.

Mr. Misenhimer

What kind of ship is that?

Mr. Gunterman

It's a high speed mine sweeper, a W.W.I destroyer converted to a high speed mine sweeper.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did it have a number?

Mr. Gunterman

Well the old destroyer number was 337.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was that the DMS fourteen?

Mr. Gunterman

DMS fourteen.

Mr. Misenhimer

That letter you sent me had that on it. What was your job on it?

Mr. Gunterman

It was running the sound gear.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did you first go out to sea from Noumea?

Mr. Gunterman

Oh I think it was around the First of April.

Mr. Misenhimer

And where did you go or what?

Mr. Gunterman

Well I got in there I think we went to Guadalcanal.

Mr. Misenhimer

You didn't stay at Noumea too long then?

Mr. Gunterman

No.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you do at the Guadalcanal?

Mr. Gunterman

Well I think at that time we escorted some ships up to Tulagi.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you do any minesweeping?

Mr. Gunterman

Not at that time, no.

Mr. Misenhimer

On your sonar did you ever find any Japanese submarines or anything?

Mr. Gunterman

No, never.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have any alerts or airplanes or anything?

Mr. Gunterman

No.

Mr. Misenhimer

What would your position have been for general quarters?

Mr. Gunterman

I work the sound gear.

Mr. Misenhimer

And that was your battle station?

Mr. Gunterman

At the sound equipment..

Mr. Misenhimer

What kind of weapons did that ship have on it?

Mr. Gunterman

It had 4, 3 inch 51's I think.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did it have any aircraft?

Mr. Gunterman

Well they had 4, 20mm.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now when you got up to Tulagi, the fighting was over there by then right?

Mr. Gunterman

We didn't know. We had 5, 20mm.

Mr. Misenhimer

Any 40mm?

Mr. Gunterman

No.

Mr. Misenhimer

Just the 3 inches and the 20mm.

Mr. Gunterman

Yeah and they took the torpedoes off.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have torpedoes originally?

Mr. Gunterman

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

I mean when you got on it?

Mr. Gunterman

No they had converted it to a high speed minesweeper. And then put minesweeping gear on board.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now what all did you do there in Tulagi.

Mr. Gunterman

Well we just ran up there and delivered what we had to deliver and got back out and I think we went back to Noumea.

Mr. Misenhimer

Oh I see, what did you take up there do you know?

Mr. Gunterman

I don't think we had anything on deck. Prior to that the ship that was on the original invasion of Guadalcanal. And then they were on a couple of small details they did a lot of escorting. Running back and forth they brought gasoline and torpedoes and equipment for the PT boats.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you get to Guadalcanal or just to Tulagi?

Mr. Gunterman

No we never went ashore but we did go over around Guadalcanal.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then what was your next trip, where did you go next?

Mr. Gunterman

Do you want to know what happened to the ship prior to me getting on?

Mr. Misenhimer

Yes

Mr. Gunterman

They were bringing aviation gas and gasoline up to the PT base arriving early in the morning then, there was a report of three Japanese destroyers coming down through the slot. So, they decided to run out of there and they went down into uncharted waters and had a sea battle with the three Japanese destroyers. We got hit. It was three men killed and about ten injured. And they hit the number one gun above the galley deck house. It was a lot of near misses.

Mr. Misenhimer

How much damage did that do?

Mr. Gunterman

It blew up one of the 3 inch 50's or 55's whatever they were.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did they go for repairs?

Mr. Gunterman

They went down to, I think they went down to Noumea where they put a new gun on.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was anyone killed on there?

Mr. Gunterman

Yeah I said three guys got killed and about ten got injured.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then it had been repaired when you got on it right?

Mr. Gunterman

It was all over with when I got on it.

Mr. Misenhimer

What else did you do?

Mr. Gunterman

Well we went through a lot of stuff after that. We did a lot of escort duty. I don't know how many times I was in Tulagi. Then I think the next thing we were running all over the place around Suva, Fiji and I can't think off hand.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you get down to the New Hebrides?

Mr. Gunterman

Yeah I'm working up to there. Then after we went on the invasion of Munda.

You were at Munda right?

Mr. Misenhimer

Yes, I've been there.

Mr. Gunterman

Well we were on the invasion and we took 186 guys on deck with all their equipment. We had an LCI and towed that up to make a night invasion at the entrance of Munda at what was called Sasavelle Island which is what they call Endume. We had no way of recognizing on how to get to which island and they had prearranged with the natives to be in dugout canoes with candles that would bring us in a certain way. It was so bad the weather we had lost the LCI on the way up we had to shoot it up and sink it. Then we got up there there was no way of knowing where the beach was. And we put the destroyer up on the beach bow first, and the other ship that we went with sent over an LCI and took everybody off, the 186 guys and landed on the island unopposed and then we were grounded so they had to pump the fuel and the water to the stern to lift up the bow and they threw the anchor away. We backed down and went onto a coral reef and couldn't get off. Then they took all the secret stuff off the ship and transferred it to another ship. We were sitting high and dry until they called for a tug boat. There were a couple of air raids while we were sitting there but you couldn't use the 3 inch guns to go straight up in the air. So we just hung it out and the U.S.S. Rail a fleet tug came from Tulagi and towed us off. When they towed us off about an hour later as we were being towed back to Tulagi, there was a huge big air raid as we were being towed at I think about 2 or 3 knots and they came into the port quarters and the transports that landed all the troops were at the port quarters.

When the airplanes came in there were torpedo planes and fighter planes.

They did hit the McCawley, which was a transport.

Mr. Misenhimer

That was Turners flag ship too.

Mr. Gunterman

Yes. Admiral Turner. One plane came along side of us and the gunners popped him out. We were towed to Tulagi and later that night The McCawley was hit and they salvaged it and then they had it under way and then the PT boat come up at night and sank it. Did you know that?

Mr. Misenhimer

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

What island did you go aground on?

Mr. Gunterman

We went on Sasavelle Island.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where is that exactly?

Mr. Gunterman

Let me get my little map right here.

Mr. Misenhimer

I'm looking at my map and mine doesn't show it.

Mr. Gunterman

I got a Geodetic map.

Mr. Gunterman

They call it Roviana Island.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where is it located?

Mr. Gunterman

At the entrance to Munda.

Mr. Misenhimer

Is that by Munda Bar?

Mr. Gunterman

Yes there's an island up the channel called Parauau. And we came by Tombatuni Island and I got the Geodetic map which shows Roviana Island and it shows on there and they also call it Endume Island and then it show on the end Sasavelle Village it's on the Munda passage. Do you see it?

Mr. Misenhimer

No my map doesn't show that. You were nearer to Munda than from Rendova Island?

Mr. Gunterman

Yeah we ran aground on Roviana but on Endume beach.

Mr. Misenhimer

But that's not Rendova Island.

Mr. Misenhimer

Rendova Island is the Island where they all landed on and set their guns to fire on to New Georgia.

Mr. Misenhimer

It's a fairly large island and its about ten miles off the New Georgia coast.

Mr. Gunterman

Well wait a minute there's two islands there. Rendova is the first island and the other one is Tamberemakoto.

Mr. Misenhimer

What were the first two letters?

Mr. Gunterman

The first two letters were Tamberemakoto. That's where Endume Beach was, do you see it?

Mr. Misenhimer

No that's not on my map I don't have it on my map. My map isn't that detailed.

Any way that's where you went aground.

Mr. Gunterman

That's where we went aground.

Mr. Misenhimer

How did you finally get back? They pulled you on back in?

Mr. Gunterman

They towed us back to Tulagi.

Mr. Gunterman

Back to Tulagi and they inspected the propeller and they rendered it unusable.

So they sent us back to the States and they put a new prop. We escorted a few of the damaged ships back.

Mr. Misenhimer

You went back to the States? Where did you go back into the States?

Mr. Gunterman

We went to San Pedro. Let's go back, at one time when they had the Battle of the Sea Lark Channel the ship that we went up with was The Trever. You don't want the name of the Captain?

Mr. Misenhimer

No.

Mr. Gunterman

Okay. They were bringing them up from Noumea, New Calidonia PT boats and supplies from Noumea, New Calidonia to Tulagi Guadalcanal via Esperetos Santo, New Hebrides. That was, they left Tuesday, October 20, 1942. I got a list of all the PT boats they towed and everything.

Mr. Misenhimer

I don't need that. That was before you joined the ship right?

Mr. Gunterman

Yes. Are you interested in that battle?

Mr. Misenhimer

Sure

Mr. Gunterman

That time they received aboard deck for transportation to Tulagi four PT's The Zane loaded a hundred and seventy-five drum of aviation gas and 50 caliber ammo and the Trever loaded 14 torpedoes mark 8-3D, 56 cases, 560 gallons of lube oil number 50-1100, 3 cases of storage batteries, 7 barrels of FS smoke mixture and 1 diving outfit. That battle started on the 26 of October in 1942.

There were three guys that got killed at latitude 15 degrees, 8 minutes south, longitude was 63 degrees, 59 minutes east. The name of the destroyers the one that they had a battle with was the Akatsuki.

Mr. Misenhimer

That was the Japanese destroyer?

Mr. Gunterman

Yes, and two other destroyers. Diaries from two other guys the history and the stories. Samuel Elliot Morrison.

Mr. Misenhimer

After your propeller was damaged and you were going back to the States, could under your own power?

Mr. Gunterman

Yes under one screw.

Mr. Misenhimer

So only one of them were damaged?

Mr. Gunterman

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

And you were escorted on the way back?

Mr. Gunterman

Then we went right back to the Pacific.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you go?

Mr. Gunterman

We went back and we were involved in the Marshal Islands, Eniwetor, Kwajalein.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you do at those places?

Mr. Gunterman

I was still on sound.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did the ship do?

Mr. Gunterman

Well, we swept mines.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you get quite a few?

Mr. Gunterman

In 6-20-43 consolidation of Southern Solomon's 10-16-43 New Georgia, Rendova, Canguu occupation. After that we occupation of Kwajalein of 2-8-44, 2-25-44 occupation of Eniwetor. 7-8-44 capture of occupation of Saipan, which was Tinian also and 8-5-44 capture and occupation of Guam.

Mr. Misenhimer

You swept mines in all of those places?

Mr. Gunterman

Yeah we were in all of those.

Mr. Misenhimer

You were still on the sound system right?

Mr. Gunterman

Yes all the time, my whole career.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you ever hear any Japanese submarines?

Mr. Gunterman

No.

Mr. Misenhimer

You never located any?

Mr. Gunterman

No.

Mr. Misenhimer

You were not up on the deck while they were doing minesweeping were you?

Mr. Gunterman

Oh yeah we could see what was going on.

Mr. Misenhimer

How do those minesweepers work? What do they have to do that?

Mr. Gunterman

Well, there's several different types of mines. There is the anchor mine which is a mine connected by wire to a cement base dropped to the bottom of the ocean, there's magnetic mines which are drawn to metal, there are acoustic mines which go off with the sound of the propellers, those when and if we had to do it we had a jackhammer on the bow of the ship that would hammer on a big round metal plate like a manhole cover and send out sounds.

Mr. Misenhimer

And that would set off those mines?

Mr. Gunterman

We never did any acoustics nor magnetics, we got a lot of mines in Eniwetok or Kwajalein, I'm not sure. As a matter of fact we went right between two of them once.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was your ship ever attacked by Japanese planes after Munda?

Mr. Gunterman

I don't believe so. Not directly, we were in Saipan when they had air raids.

Mr. Misenhimer

They didn't directly attack your ship?

Mr. Gunterman

No.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you ever fired on by enemy ships?

Mr. Gunterman

No just that one thing there, at Sea Lark.

Mr. Misenhimer

What else happened?

Mr. Gunterman

What else happened, well, when we swept Saipat at which time we had all the destroyer minesweepers came from Europe and we were on our way to Saipan and a couple of days before one early morning we tied in with ten or twelve high speed minesweepers. We were the last of the gang going up, we were single file, what we had was large orange markers, floats with flags on them with cables and a concrete base same as the anchor mines and as they swept from the outside in to Saipan two days before the invasion they would sweep from the outside in. At the end of the run we would drop a orange marker if they went back and forth we could show the ships where it was safe.

One incident was when we got close to the beach the Japanese fired upon us. That was one fight we got engaged in and the Captain ordered to haul out of there to go out to the ocean. He did not drop the anchor buoy and he was criticized for it and his Herman Wouk wrote in his book. It was called the yellow stain incident, you know what it means like when he crapped in his pants. We used to take the fleet oilers off the coast of Saipan for days at a time just back and forth and the fleet would come and refuel. Guam, we went down there after Saipan which was July 21, 1944.

Mr. Gunterman

Anyway, we were assigned anti-submarine patrol off of Oroku peninsula. Are you familiar with it?

Mr. Misenhimer

Yes, I've been there.

Mr. Gunterman

Oroku peninsula was the peninsula on Saipan. When the Americans went in and invaded the Japanese ran out to the Oroku peninsula which was a high flat space with high cliffs and the Japanese were trying to come in and take people out of there by submarine but we and a few other ships patrolled right off of there. What was happening at that point, the Japanese were going out there and committing suicide by jumping off the edge onto the rocks and killing themselves. We didn't see any of it.

As a matter of fact the only time I saw a dead person was off of Saipan as we were doing anti-submarine patrol and there was a Japanese floating in the water.

Mr. Misenhimer

A lot of the civilians committed suicide on Saipan by jumping off those cliffs.

Mr. Gunterman

Yeah. We ultimately did a lot of escort duty we went from Suva, Fiji one time to around New Zealand. Very, very rough water and it was so rough the bow would come up right out of the water then it would come down and slap on the waves on the way down and once it would come down underneath the waves the fantail would come out and the propellers would be exposed and they would be spinning like hell until they hit back. We went down with the transports, I think they lost seven guys on the way down they got sea sick and fell over. They couldn't get them.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then what happened?

Mr. Gunterman

The tow targets for the fleet. Are you familiar with tow targets?

Mr. Misenhimer

Were these in the water or in the air?

Mr. Gunterman

On the water. You see with the minesweeper, we had these big cables, and I didn't say about the anchor mines how we got them.

We had two paravanes off the back of the ship with big cables with big cable cutters. Its similar to scissors. If your towing if it grabs onto the cable and would cut the cable of the mine. There were times when we lost Paravanes. We spent a lot of time at Pearl Harbor towing targets and also for the fleet, let me tell you about the fleet. The fleet would calibrate their guns. We had a big sled it was like a big flat piece of wood with a little bow on the front of it sticking up and we had cables attached to that. On the sled was a high metal frame with a white sheet on top of it. We would take camera men from the ships whoever they would be, the battleships and they had a measuring gauge in relation to the target and measure on either side of it. So when the ships didn't want to sink the sled they would over fire and under fire and they would take pictures of it and they knew exactly what they were firing. Now the battleships went out I guess 22 miles and 12 inch guns. Off the horizon during the daytime you could see the repercussions up into the clouds and at nighttime you could see the flashes. We did a lot of that for destroyers, cruisers, battleships, we never did it for torpedo planes. One time when we were practicing off of Pearl, the cable hit a wave and tipped the sled over, of course with the antenna sticking way down in the water they couldn't get it to be returned. And I for one was out there swimming in an effort to throw the lines over the sled to retrieve it. Then the sharks had come, the guys used to catch the sharks. You know they were all half crazy.

We brought them aboard and somebody said hey you know if you take the eyes out of a shark and boil it in hot steam it breaks open like an egg and on the inside their eyeball is like a pearl. Now I got two eyeballs like pearls up in my house. One time we almost got hit, night firing, and it came very, very close to us. Another thing we used to do was tow targets off of Hawaii and they would have those big guns on diamond heads around the Island. They used to publish in the paper it was going to be night firing to go ahead and take everything good off the shelves and the walls. We used to do that and we did it for the Army one time and it was a beautiful afternoon and they would commence firing and you could see the splashes maybe out half a mile. Then the next one would be a quarter of a mile then the next one would be closer to the ships "cease firing, cease firing". They thought that we were the ship they were supposed to sink. They had to raise hell with them. That's about all with the target towing. We spent a lot of time in Ulithi. Are you familiar with Ulithi?

Mr. Misenhimer

Oh yes, I've heard of it.

Mr. Gutnerman

Well that was a fleet anchorage, we spent a lot of time there.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now they had a great big anchorage there.

Mr. Gunterman

Yes, they would put the fleet in there and one night in came a Japanese plane that crashed into the Franklin which was a brand new aircraft carrier it, was right along side of us. Quite interesting they had an island by the name of Mog Mog, and that was a recreation island. There was a grave there with a girl's name on it. Well, I became interested in that and I have corresponded to the Island people in Mog Mog, they are really from Yap. That girl was killed in the invasion of Mog Mog and they pre warned them to get off the Island. Well the chief didn't want to leave, and he dug a secure foxhole and when they started to shoot there was a girl there and she jumped into the grave and according to their tradition you shouldn't have so she got up and ran and she got hit. As she got hit, after they took the Island they took her out on a Navy ship but she expired. They brought her back to Mog Mog and built this memorial there for her. They still decorate it every year. I have pictures of it and I got pictures of people on the island. The people on the island are quite interesting. It was strictly natives, the women are still topless and that was the fleet anchorage. I wound up going up to, we had become an older ship, we were changed from DMS 14 to an auxiliary ship AG 9. We were not fast enough to stay up with the fast destroyers but would you know there was a lot of them that got hit with the kamikazes. Do you subscribe to the Destroyer Magazine? I get the WWII. We did a lot of target towing escort duty while they were up north. We didn't get involved with Iwu or Okinawa.

At the end of the war we were up in Leyte Gulf where most of the fleet was at that time. I believe they were preparing to go to Japan because they had in fact sent a lot of the B 29 to bomb Japan.

Mr. Misenhimer

Okay now tell me what happened after you went to the Leyte Gulf.

Mr. Gunterman

We were at Leyte Gulf when the war got over. I was being transferred back to the States to go to electronic school and the war happened to be over and we were probably one of the first from that area going back to San Francisco. We went to San Francisco then home on leave and then they decided to let everybody out and I was mustered out in the end of December in 1945.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you came back from over there, did your whole ship come back or just you?

Mr. Gunterman

Well I was transferred off and then ultimately came back and then they sent it to the Norfolk and scrapped it.

Mr. Misenhimer

You weren't with it then were you?

Mr. Gunterman

No.

Mr. Misenhimer

Is this what they called a four stacker?

Mr. Gunterman

Yes. They cut one stack off and they put a tank in there for fuel.

Mr. Misenhimer

What was the speed of that ship?

Mr. Gunterman

They say it was 30 knots.

Mr. Misenhimer

But probably not, huh.

Mr. Gunterman

Yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer

What would you consider you most frightening time?

Mr. Gunterman

Well I think that Munda was the most outstanding and it was my first time for any action and I became very interested in Munda and I am still interested in the people and correspond to them and send them a lot of stuff. I often wonder what happened to the anchor. Ultimately I have been corresponding with Solomon Roni who was a school teacher on Sasavelle.

He got a group together and they knew the anchor was there because they couldn't figure out how it got there, such a huge anchor, and so I arranged for it to be picked up and they built a raft, tied it to it at low tide and chipped away the coral and they lifted it up and towed to their beach. I said, "Now that you have it there, let's make a monument." so I sent them a big bronze monument and they built a monument there and I got them a United States flag and I got them a flag that flew over the United States capital and that flies at the memorial.

Mr. Misenhimer

What island is that on?

Mr. Gunterman

That's on Sasavelle, Sasavelle Village. It was on Endume beach.

Mr. Misenhimer

How big of an island is that?

Mr. Gunterman

It's not very long.

Mr. Misenhimer

It's pretty small.

Mr. Gunterman

Well, they took that because it was the entrance to Munda. Then they used that for supplies then they used to set up guns there and fire them over into Munda.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you get home with any souvenirs?

Mr. Gunterman

Nothing.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you think of the officers you had over you?

Mr. Gunterman

They were very good guys, of course you know we had Herman Wouk on the ship he was our communications officer and ultimately wrote "The Caine Mutiny". Then we had Gene Reynolds who was the producer of MASH and My Three Sons. I still correspond with both of them.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you ever see any U.S.O. shows?

Mr. Gunterman

No. We were sea going.

Mr. Misenhimer

You didn't get off the ship much, huh.

Mr. Gunterman

Never, we used to go over in Pearl Harbor and drink beer at the Marine Canteen.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you ever get liberty to go into Honolulu?

Mr. Gunterman

Oh, yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer

How was Honolulu?

Mr. Gunterman

It was loaded with sailors.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have any experience with the Red Cross?

Mr. Gunterman

Nothing.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you ever hear of Tokyo Rose?

Mr. Gunterman

All we had was a daily newspaper that was one sheet of paper and it talked about her.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you crossed the equator did you have any kind of a ceremony?

Mr. Gunterman

Well I went over, I think, on a troop transport but there was nothing really there.

We went across that equator several times.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now April 5, 1945 president Roosevelt died, do you recall hearing about that.

Mr. Gunterman

Yeah you know I was standing in an ice cream line on a repair ship trying to get an ice cream.

Mr. Misenhimer

What was the reaction people had to that?

Mr. Gunterman

All in all most of the people my age were products of limited history. I was over there and I didn't know where the hell I was on this earth.

Mr. Misenhimer

May 8, 1945 Germany surrendered, did you hear about that?

Mr. Gunterman

Yes. Over the news that's about it we didn't even have a radio on board, just a speaker up on deck that was cheap.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have any kind of a celebration when Germany surrendered?

Mr. Gunterman

No.

Mr. Misenhimer

When they dropped the atomic bomb where were you then?

Mr. Gunterman

I was up in the Philippines.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you think when you heard about that?

Mr. Gunterman

Well of course everybody was happy when the war was over and everybody went nuts. As a matter of fact I was talking to an ex-Sailor yesterday who was there and talked about how they started firing guns and star shells and screaming on the radio and flashing the search lights all over, it was a big celebration.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you got out did you have any trouble adjusting to civilian life?

Mr. Gunterman

No I went right back to the telephone company.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you do with the phone company?

Mr. Gunterman

I did a lot of jobs. I was in the plant department as a splice's helper and we used to splice telephone wire. Then after the war I came back and became a splicer then I wanted something better so I became a telephone installer, after that I became a telephone repairman, then I went into marketing and I spent 25 years in marketing, at which time I was the contact person for the majority of big businesses here in Waterbury, all of the big brass mills, Timex, and Uniroyal, and hospitals.

Mr. Misenhimer

What phone company did you work for?

Mr. Gunterman

Southern New England.

Mr. Misenhimer

Is that part of the A T & T.

Mr. Gunterman

Yes, now A T & T.

Mr. Misenhimer

It was part of AT&T then right?

Mr. Gunterman

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you use your G.I. bill for anything?

Mr. Gunterman

I went to night school at the University of Connecticut for a while.

Mr. Misenhimer

What was the highest rank you got to?

Mr. Gunterman

I was a sonar man second.

Mr. Misenhimer

Would that be a petty officer?

Mr. Gunterman

Yes, second class petty officer.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you in any of the typhoons in the Pacific?

Mr. Gunterman

No. The only bad storms we had were going down to Australia.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you get to go ashore in New Zealand or Australia?

Mr. Gunterman

Yeah we went on a couple of liberties down there. I think we went to a race track, I'm not sure.

Mr. Misenhimer

This was Australia or New Zealand?

Mr. Gunterman

New Zealand.

Mr. Misenhimer

Have you had any reunions?

Mr. Gunterman

Yeah, we had quite a few of them. I started with a machinist mate and we had as many as thirteen reunions.

Mr. Misenhimer

When was your last one?

Mr. Gunterman

Off hand I don't know, five years ago I think.

Mr. Misenhimer

So you are not having them anymore?

Mr. Gunterman

No, everybody is gone.

Mr. Misenhimer

What ribbons and medals did you get?

Mr. Gunterman

We received 6 battle stars for the WWII battle service, from Pear Harbor to the Marianas, in addition we received a Navy Unit Commendation that's about the best I can give you.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you going to give me someone in California?

Mr. Gunterman

Charlie Engel, 71 Ball Rd. Walnut Creek, California 94596, telephone 510-939-3656.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was he on the ship with you?

Mr. Gunterman

Yes, he was on it from, he was one of the first people who saw the Japanese planes coming in to Pearl Harbor. He is quite a gabby guy.

Mr. Misenhimer

So he is a Pearl Harbor survivor?

Mr. Gunterman

Yes, he goes to all of the survivor reunions.

Mr. Misenhimer

They had a big one out here last fall in Fredricksburg, Texas.

Mr. Gunterman

Yeah, he was out there they had him all dressed up in different uniforms and everything.

Mr. Misenhimer

Well, Joe is there anything else you recall from WWII?

Mr. Gunterman

Well I became interested in this retrieving of the anchor and the monument and all else.

Mr. Misenhimer

Well, Joe, thanks for your time today.

Mr. Gunterman

Let's see what else I can tell you. That Japanese officer that I became acquainted with that was on that Japanese destroyer that we had a sea battle with, I became friendly with him and it was quite interesting because his destroyer got sunk at Guadalcanal along with a few other Japanese ships when we lost a lot of ships in the Canal.

He was up on the bridge, he had trouble getting off the ship because of so many body parts. Finally the ship went down, and he got off and he got sucked down and then he thought he was going to die and all the things he thought about. In the morning he grabbed onto a piece of wood and some Marines came out and picked up all the survivors of which he was one covered with oil and blood. So they picked him up threw him in the boat and brought him over to the Canal and washed him up, realizing he was Japanese. They sent him to New Zealand to a prisoner war camp and of course he believed in Hari Kari but had no way of killing himself. The missionaries came in and gave him a Bible, so he read it, came kind of intrigued, so he read it again, and he said he devoted his life to religion because now he had a purpose to live. He went back to Japan and studied theology and became a high official in the Japanese religion. We corresponded with him and he said he was going to be in Boston on such and such a date which is only two hours away, and he says I'll meet with you there. So my wife and I go up to Boston and met him at Winton Hotel lobby and I said to my wife, I'll go over there and register see if you can find some Japanese. I heard them laughing like hell. She had met the Japanese people, she was an English major she taught English to the Japanese. I wined them and dined them, took them to the very best restaurant in Boston, took them to the Kennedy Museum, and had a great time. I hear from them all the while they are the most beautiful people that you can ever imagine meeting. They are the same as you and I. They are human beings.

So anyway, that's one thing to come out of it. I've corresponded with a lot of people especially guys from the Zane, and different stuff. I have been trying and I haven't been able to because of the scarcity in time sending the stuff to Herman Wouk and Gene Reynolds, and this Charlie Engle in California. I got some recent pictures of some stuff published that I had duplicates made of the ship and so forth but one of my next efforts is to get a book here and put all the stuff that I have written and received in one book. Which my family someday may or may not be interested but it's there. Is there anything else I can tell you?

Mr. Misenhimer

Is there anything else about WWII that you remember?

Mr. Gunterman

No as I say we were all novices and didn't know what the hell and under the circumstances you didn't know if you were going to make it to the next day or not. The skipper that we had was no good, there was gambling on the ship.

There was a big investigation.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was he the model that Wouk wrote about?

Mr. Gunterman

Yeah, Captain Queg. Not a very nice guy. I can tell you some incidents that happened on the ship.

Everybody hated him so much, we had bed bugs, the ship was so old and dirty, the guys used to collect the bed bugs and put them in a tobacco can and when the mess attendants were making his bed they would throw all the bed bugs in his bed. The next day he would be up scratching and everybody was laughing at him. A lot of crazy things happened. When we were in New Zealand three or four guys decided we were anchored out and going to get underway in the morning. That night they stole the Captain's Gig. They went ashore and got drunk and brought a girl back on the ship at night and everything. That was crazy stuff.

Mr. Misenhimer

Well people had a good time when they could.

Mr. Gunterman

Yeah, well you go through your stuff and if there's anything more you can think of or need any assistance, hopefully I haven't been too boring.

Mr. Misenhimer

Oh no, not at all. It's been very interesting.

End of Interview

Transcribed by:

Hannah Bertrand

Church Point, LA

3-10-09

Oral History by:

Richard Misenhimer

P.O. Box 3453

Alice, TX 78333

Home: (361) 664-4701

Cell: (361) 701-5848