

National Museum of the Pacific War

Nimitz Education and Research Center

Fredericksburg, Texas

Telephone Interview with

Mr. Walter Edward Skeldon

Date of Interview: September 22, 2007

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Telephone Interview in progress.

Mike Zambrano: This is Mike Zambrano; today is September the 22nd, 2007. I'm interviewing Mr. Walter Edward Skeldon. This interview is being done over the phone; he's living in Largo, Florida. This interview is in support of the Center of Pacific War Studies, archives for National Museum of the Pacific War and Texas Historical Commission, for the preservation of historical information related to this site. (Recording noise), Oops, sorry about that, Sir. How are you doing today, Sir?

Mr. Skeldon: Okay.

Mike Zambrano: And...like I said, I'll...I'll be speaking a little bit louder for this interview.

Mr. Skeldon: Good.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, well let's start off with a...with a basic question. Can you tell me where and when you were born?

Mr. Skeldon: Was born in Buffalo, New York...on 25, July, 1924.

Mike Zambrano: Did you have any brothers or sisters?

Mr. Skeldon: One brother; he was two years older.

Mike Zambrano: Okay. And what were your parents' names?

Mr. Skeldon: My mother's name was Anna and my father was Stanley, and our name was Skrzynski, S-k-r-z-y-n-s-k-i. They legally changed my name in..., I don't know, I believe it was 1950.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, is that...

Mr. Skeldon: ...'68...

Mike Zambrano: Uh...

Mr. Skeldon: ...'58...'58.

Mike Zambrano: '58?

Mr. Skeldon: 1958, March.

Mike Zambrano: Uh, what country were they from?

Mr. Skeldon: My father was from Poland and my mother was born in Pennsylvania, U.S.A.

Mike Zambrano: Oh okay. Uhm, can you tell me a little bit about your...your childhood and, oh, did you mention where you were born?

Mr. Skeldon: Yes, I did; Buffalo, New York.

Mike Zambrano: Ah okay. Uhm, did you stay there until your teenage years?

Mr. Skeldon: Well, I lived there in the same house for thirty years, then I lived in Orchard Park, a suburb of Buffalo, for thirty years; now I'm down here twenty-two years so I got eight more years to put in here...then I'm not sure where I'm going to settle down.

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter). Well, you put a lot of years in one spot. That...that's good. My parents still live in the same...

Mr. Skeldon: They're multiples.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah. So, what was it like growing up...what do you remember about the Depression?

Mr. Skeldon: Well, we were poor, yes, but we didn't know it. And I remember my father telling me years later that...he...worked at a steel plant and they gave him just enough work in two weeks to make nine dollars and that kept us off of the welfare. So nine dollars in two weeks; that was his pay and we lived on that.

Mike Zambrano: Really? And that was a family of four?

Mr. Skeldon: Family of four, and I remember going to the store...of course, the stores were neighborhood stores. It was a house and they made a store out of it.

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: Anyway we'd go...we done all of our grocery buying there. And I remember my mother was always telling me, "And don't forget to ask the butcher for a nice bone." So we would get a bone for nothing and then make soup out of it.

Mike Zambrano: Really?! Well, so you said that...that you never realized that you were poor?

Mr. Skeldon: No, everybody was the same! My friend lived just two houses away from us, a very good friend; he was the same age as I. His father had died so they lived on welfare, and he had...everything that we had, if not more.

Mike Zambrano: Hmm.

Mr. Skeldon: The only thing is...welfare in them days wasn't like today. In them days they told...they told his mother what store to go and there was a box there all prepared already with her groceries for the week.

Mike Zambrano: Really?

Mr. Skeldon: Everything was in there; the...box of cereal that...they had cereal and maybe an orange or apple or something and...meat. Of course, the meat, they didn't give you but, you know, like two days at a time because they didn't have refrigerators, and an ice box will not keep...meat more than two days.

Mike Zambrano: And that was the only assistance that she would get?

Mr. Skeldon: Yeah, yeah, that was the only income that she had...was the welfare. Oh, and they'd tell her where to take the kids and they'd get a *used* pair, rebuilt pair of shoes; they were...somebody else...wore them and the shoemaker would put soles on them, and...and then the welfare would pay him for his shoes, I guess, and women got them for her children for nothing.

Mike Zambrano: Wow.

Mr. Skeldon: But she was told where to go and when.

Mike Zambrano: Well, sounds like you had a fairly happy childhood.

Mr. Skeldon: Yeah, yeah. We made our own toys. Remember a game we used to play out in the street; the street wasn't paved; it was a cobblestone street. I guess they still have a few of them in New York City...because once you put them down, if you put them down right, why, they'll stay level and wear a lifetime with no maintenance. But anyway, we get a little pi...a...a broom, an old broom handle and cut a four inch piece off it and then tape at both end so that the...so that the ends stick up just a little bit higher than the center portion and you'd have a little club about twelve inches long and you'd hit one end of that puck and it'd fly up in the air...not high...straight, and then while it was in the

air...give it a hit with your stick and see how far it would go; that was one of the games we had – *Up and Duck*.

Mike Zambrano: So, so you went...you went to high school eventually in that same area and graduated?

Mr. Skeldon: No, no I didn't. I went to a technical high school; they had all kinds of engineering courses in there and an awful lot of drafting and math...lot of mathematics. It was a four year high school; I went three years and then I went into the Navy.

Mike Zambrano: Now can you tell me why you chose to go into the Navy as opposed to Army or the Marine Corps?

Mr. Skeldon: Well, when I was about thirteen or fourteen...I believe fourteen, I got so interested in the military I...read every book they had in the lib...local library. So then I used to walk to the main library which was, oh, I'm going to say three miles from home...then I'd walk both ways. Of course, I was going to high school...that was two-thirds of the way to the library and so then I would make my appoint...my arrangements always to pick up or return books on a school day...because I'd make one trip out of it; walk to school; continue a little further after school to the library and get another book and then...well, of course, walking was the thing then. There weren't too many cars like today.

Mike Zambrano: So, hmm. Uhm, do you recall where it was that you...I guess...I guess you enlisted, right? Because you mentioned on our previous discussion that...the...the war hadn't started yet, right?

Mr. Skeldon: Right, I'm a pre...pre-Pearl Harbor sailor. I was not at Pearl Harbor, but I was in the military. I enlisted in August...August 4th to be exact, 1941.

Mike Zambrano: Okay, and you enlisted in...in Buffalo, right?

Mr. Skeldon: Buffalo...as...and they called it a minority cruise. Anyone seventeen years old but not eighteen...anyone seventeen years old with his father's permission could enlist in the Navy or...uh, one day they would discharge you...one day before your twenty-first birthday. So what they used to advertise was..., "Mothers, give us your sons or give us your baby and we'll give you, in return, a man." So you could join anytime when you were seventeen, and they would discharge you a day before your twenty-first birthday.

Mike Zambrano: Hmm, okay. Uhm, I, of course, have the list that you...that you sent me so...I'm just going to go down here. You went to boot camp in Newport, Rhode Island?

Mr. Skeldon: Yes.

Mike Zambrano: Can you tell me a little bit about that?

Mr. Skeldon: Well, Newport is...is an old naval base and I think the only left there today is the war college where...where they sent an awful lot of senior officers...especially those that they figure will someday make Admiral. They sent them to...to school there; it's the war college. But the...in our portion of it, up until shortly after the war I guess, they de...decommissioned the boot camp there, but for years it was one of three boot camps. One was at Great Lakes; one in San Diego and third one was Newport, and today I think they just have the...Great Lakes, and San Diego. Of course, they had about six

more during World War II, but they...they all decommissioned them at the end of the war.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Skeldon: In fact, in Newport, why, boot camp was our introduction to the Navy. First day there, well then they give you a haircut...to kind of lighten your load on top. Actually, it was almost like a...like a shave job. Forget this...pull a razor and just shave right over the top of the head.

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: Anyway, we weren't going anyplace so hair wasn't important because we would be restricted to the base for six weeks, and nothing but military training of all sort – marching, school, learning about ships; what to do; how to...handle it more or less; break you in before you get there. And...we had our rifle drills and rifle range and a gas chamber; they...they gave you a good taste of gas. And...sleep in a hammock, but only one week. It was required by all boots; they had to sleep in a hammock at least one week, and that was the first and only time I had...I had ever lost a wallet – sleeping in a hammock; must have rolled over during the night; it fell out. So somebody found the wallet and didn't return it.

Mike Zambrano: Well why did they have you sleep in a hammock?

Mr. Skeldon: An awful lot of the ships were still using hammocks. Matter of fact, even in...during World War II most of the mess cooks, those that assisted at chow call...they helped pass out the food and clean up the mess deck and all of that...they slept on the mess deck in the hammocks...because easy to trace

them up and lash them and stow them; get them out of the way when the mess deck was used for...dining. And their...going...going ahead a little bit, or maybe back...whatever, we traded fifty old World War I destroyers. We gave them to England in return for access to several of their islands and naval bases, Bermuda being one of them...which we had just returned, I think, about twenty...fifteen or twenty years now. But the British, the first thing they done when they got those old World War I destroyers, they took a good number of bunks out because their sailors could not sleep in a bunk. The least little heave of the ship...roll, and they would find themselves out on deck; a hammock sleeping level with the horizon at all times. So they couldn't sleep in bunks and we couldn't sleep in hammocks...yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Wow! Okay. Uh, let's see, from there you went to...Navy Pier for your...your training; what kind of training did you go to and did you chose your training?

Mr. Skeldon: Well, it...Navy Pier is just what the word says; it was...it was a commercial pier when we arrived...arrived there, and that was in October, middle of October of '41. The only thing in Navy Pier at that time was a bunch of seagulls and droppings *all* over the place! It was...it...it stretched...stretched out into the lake...seven-eighths of a mile. At the end was a pavilion; civilians used it for dancing. When the big bands came in, that was where they'd come mostly. The school was Aviation Machinist Mate, but we had to build the school. Although we were there in October, there was nothing there. The first company to go through the school was on 1 December and that was a company of Marines. And us sailors being...not first, so we went...the second

company through the school, and we started school on December 8th. But we know what happened on December 7th.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Skeldon: We got even with them; they sent me to school on the 8th.

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter). Do you remember where you were when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor or...

Mr. Skeldon: Was at...

Mike Zambrano: ...or what you were doing I should say?

Mr. Skeldon: ...Navy Piers. And...being Sunday, why, I was over in...in the city...and around noon time. I guess we got off about...nine o'clock on Sundays; about ten o'clock or so, why, I...I was born and raised in Buffalo and the people living right next door to us...one of the married daughters was living in Chicago with her husband and infant. The baby, I guess, was about nine, ten months old...just enough where he was learning to walk (cough), excuse me, and...I was over at their house waiting for dinner...listening to the radio and reading the comics, Sunday comics, when I...when the baby was napping, otherwise the baby would have been playing with me. That's where I was; I was waiting for dinner over at the...neighbor's, Buffalo neighbors, living in Chicago.

Mike Zambrano: And what did you think; what was your first impression?

Mr. Skeldon: Didn't faze me or any of us in the house all that all...because after once or twice it was on the radio, we looked at each other and the question was, "What and where is Pearl Harbor?"

Mike Zambrano: Uhm.

Mr. Skeldon: I would say the only people in the U.S. that knew Pearl Harbor were those...military that had been there.

Mike Zambrano: Right, hmm.

Mr. Skeldon: But we know where it is now.

Mike Zambrano: Where did you go after Navy Pier?

Mr. Skeldon: Navy Pier? I went to...uh, Norfolk, Virginia. I was an Aviation Machinist Mate, Airplane Mechanic, Third Class. They...they needed Petty Officers so bad when that war broke out that...upon graduating from this school, the top one half were advanced to...Aviation Machinist Mate, Third Class; otherwise, they used to take a good four years to make the...or three years anyway to make Third Class; here we made it in the first year you were in the Navy. They needed Petty Officers bad, so...

Mike Zambrano: So right out...right out from there you become...you became a Petty Officer, but...well, how...how does that go? Is it...Aviation Machinist Mate...Petty Officer?

Mr. Skeldon: No, Petty Officers was...well, that...that would have been like I say, a Corporal in the Army...

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Skeldon: ...or a Sergeant...I mean Corporal. Anyway, and being a Third Class they put me in a squadron and made a Plane Captain out of me. I had a...a dive bomber, SBD, then that...that was my airplane. We always say the Plane Captain is the one that owns the airplane because he's the one that does

everything to it. If it needs to be oiled, he's the guy that takes care of it. If it needs a ninety hour or a hundred and sixty hour (unintelligible) or...or engine change, if he doesn't do it, he's going to be there helping to do it...now if it's a big job. But one thing they did impress on us in...in school at Navy Pier and the Navy in general stuck to it, "If you don't know how to repair anything, don't just cover it up...get somebody, anybody...and...from higher rank and they will not only do it...they watch and...and make sure that you understand so next time you can do it yourself." Because, well the Navy has a term for it – gun-decking; that means covering up; maybe making false report or something...gun-decking. You never know when you're going to have to fly in that airplane. So I wouldn't fly in any other airplane except my own...not that the other ones weren't safe, but I knew mine was going to be up to snuff.

Mike Zambrano: Now, when you mentioned the...the airplane...what...what air group was that with?

Mr. Skeldon: EGS-29 and later they changed the designators to VC. VC is a composites squadron.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Skeldon: It's just strictly fighters, then there would be a VF. They have strictly bombers then a VB, but we had two different types; we had scout planes and we had the bombers – SBDs and TDFs.

Mike Zambrano: And because it had those two different types that's why it was designated composite?

Mr. Skeldon: That's...because it had two different types of airplanes.

Mike Zambrano: And what plane, I'm sorry, what ship was this on?

Mr. Skeldon: [USS] Santee. The Santee...the Santee was one of four converted oil Navy tankers; a ship that just carried oil for the fleet...

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: ...that's an oiler. Well, they took four of those oilers and they put a hangar deck on...on top...after they cut the island for the bridge off...of the San...the original ship. Then they put a hangar deck and then a flight deck on top of it and that was the... an escort aircraft carrier; they made four of them out of oil tankers, and then they made another seventy some out of freighter ships, cargo ships, but these Sangamon class they called it...that was the strongest of the escort carriers because she was the heavy...the heaviest by about four...four or five thousand ton, and she's...and maybe a hundred feet longer; pretty close to a hundred feet longer...sixty (?).

Mike Zambrano: Do you remember how many planes she would carry?

Mr. Skeldon: Well, the Sangamon class...could carry thirty-five airplanes. But then, if they had SBDs, they only carried thirty. But they...when they got rid of the SBDs in 1943, they got rid of them off of the escort carriers because their wings did not fold; so they were hard to stow in a hangar deck; took a lot of room. So they got rid of them and then they went to thirty-five airplanes. But the general run of the...aviation was thirty-five airplanes. Of course, a lot depended on the combat mission they were going to go into.

Mike Zambrano: Now tell me again...what was your job on the deck?

Mr. Skeldon: My job?

Mike Zambrano: Yes.

Mr. Skeldon: Well, onboard the Santee I was a Plane Captain on the SBD, number seven, but then...after a South American anti-submarine patrol, I transferred off the ship and I went Philadelphia to Arresting Gear School. Now arresting gear...that's them cables that's...that are on deck that stop the airplane when they come in for a landing.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Skeldon: That's arresting gear. Well, they gave me five men and we went to school in Philadelphia and then from there we went over to...Washington, Seattle area and we waited on a new construction; new ship they were working on. And we were the nucleus of the arresting gear and I was the senior man and the only man that had...only sailor; I can't...can't say man, I was going to be nineteen years old at that time. (Unintelligible)...well, I...I was nineteen at the time and one guy in my outfit was thirty-three, but he was two year to me; he was only Second Class...Second Class and I was First. None of them had ever seen a carrier; none of them had ever been to sea; this was their first row of it. So, and I had been aboard a carrier already, the Santee.

Mike Zambrano: Oh okay.

Mr. Skeldon: And two years of naval duty where these guys were just...even my Second Class...well, they were Third and they...advanced to Second very shortly after the ship went into commission, so they...they came on there the same category I did; the...the top half of the class were advanced to Third Class. Well, although they were Third Class at the time the ship went into commission and

I was Second. They had never seen a carrier; had never been aboard a carrier; had never been any Navy ship...period! They were fresh out of school; less than a year in the Navy, and I had over two years...plus quite a bit of sea time already. So anyway, they...adhered to...like I...like somebody had once said, "It's not a democracy in the military." I might not be right, but I'm not wrong.

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter) Can you tell me a little bit more about those arrest...arresting cables and...and how they worked?

Mr. Skeldon: Yeah. Uh, anybody sees this plane coming in for a landing...you just bank it when he comes in and then signal out (unintelligible words) with the little paddle wheel flags; they look like paddles from a ping pong game.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Skeldon: He's the one that's transmitting signals to the...pilot in an incoming airplane. Already knows his wheels are down and his hook is down...look out for that. So then he's banking and then watching the Signal Officer's telling him...he's too fast; too slow; too high; too low. Anyway, if he gets a cut then he comes in for a landing. Now he's got to put that...got to cut back on the throttle and let that plane kind of glide in and make...making sure his tail is low so that hook can snag...snag up...under that deck pennants (sp?). That hook will pick up a wire even if it's laying flat on a deck; it will pick it up, but we elevate them three to five inches above the deck to make it a little bit easier to pick up. When he grabs a hold of that wire, he's going to...run out. We had a ten to one purchase. So for every...ten feet that the wire came out on deck, one

feet of the piston, the hydraulic piston, down below decks goes in...to the cylinder. So if five feet of the piston go in, you got fifty feet of...of wire that's coming out on deck...ten...ten to one.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Skeldon: Today they have twenty to one, and the cable is heavier because the airplanes are heavier and they don't have glide...that the...jet does not glide when he's coming in. A reciprocating engine, propeller engine, he cuts his throttle and he's committed to landing where a jet...he comes in at a hundred percent power. If he doesn't pick up a wire, he's flying; we did not have that option because we had...straight deck...in front, up forward, in front of the barriers...forward of the barriers where airplanes were parked. Now if you didn't pick up a wire, he was into those airplanes, if the barriers didn't stop him. So...a little different principle. The principle is the same but because of the angled deck, they didn't need a barrier out there; they let him fly it...even a...(unintelligible) engine coming in on that angle deck ship, yeah.

Mike Zambrano: What did the barrier look like?

Mr. Skeldon: The barrier was a...five foot steel plat...not platform, uh, stanchion on each side of the...flight deck, and between them...(cough) excuse me, was...two wires which were hooked up to one arresting gear engine (cough), and those two wires they split...four and a half feet and three and a half feet above the deck. And the principle of that was you fly...the plane flew into that and them wires would wrap around the propeller and...stop the engine; stop airplane, the forward motion of the plane. It would run out about twenty feet on deck, but

that's the only run-out he had; he was going from what...well, it depends on the speed of the deck...how much wind do you have across the deck...what speed the plane...the plane is landing at all times at the same speed, but the ship is going forward, and a plane is going in the same direction, so you subtract the...wind across the deck from the landing speed of the airplane. In other words, if the airplane lands at a hundred miles an hour, a hundred knots is faster, hundred knot...hundred miles an hour would make it easy. When you've got thirty miles of wind coming across the deck, the speed of the ship, plus the wind, say that comes out to thirty miles an hour...so you subtract...thirty from hundred...seventy...he's hitting the deck at seventy miles an hour. If you'd be out in the field at an air station someplace, he's hitting the deck at a hundred miles.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Skeldon: Because the...or it's not moving that fast...it's direction, but he's landing into the wind.

Mike Zambrano: You said before...

Mr. Skeldon: In other words...the wire runs out...well, we used to give them like...a hundred feet, yeah, a hundred, hundred forty feet...thirty, forty feet, but the closer to the barrier you came, the less run-out because you're going to be into that barrier and we're trying to save...you from going into the barrier so that...when the...my Second Class that was in...charge of the...the barriers...I had two Second Class. One I assigned to the barriers and one to the deck pennants, and so each one had his responsibility. I was responsible for all of

it, but...this way you break it down. Anyway, he had a good eye and he could tell...with the wire that the hook picked up and he would know what the run-out is and if he should drop the barrier or not, so he used to drop the barriers and we'd save quite a few airplanes that way. Lot of times...it just...matter of changing a propeller and then the plane is good again, but a lot of times you had to change the engine, so he saved us a lot of our...over the barrier. At first our Division Officer; Arresting Gear Officer; Flight Deck Officer...all that's...that's all the same guy (chuckles). He had five...five different jobs that he was responsible for, so he just let us run the bar...arresting gear the way we wanted; it worked, so he didn't say anything.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Skeldon: But he...he wanted to...he started to chew his butt out one time for dropping a barrier, so I got...I guess I kind of...eased him down a little bit because he was also...reserve, but he had *never* been in the Navy. But he had a college degree and he had a big job on the outside, so they made him a Lieutenant, so it...this was his first carrier...first time at sea. So I was kind of...his eyes; if I said it was okay, it was okay. I said, "Yes, it's okay; we...we might get stung, but I don't think so." And that's what we did get...what I meant by stung...he would drop the barrier and...and the plane didn't have a wire...then that plane...would be doing an awful lot of damage. I probably wouldn't be here.

Mike Zambrano: What was your first impression of...of seeing planes come and landing on...on that land...on that carrier deck?

Mr. Skeldon: Well, you have to remember, I seen my first...I was eighteen years old and it was really fab...fabulous; it was very interesting and very dangerous but they didn't say that...that...well, I...(unintelligible) war is dangerous! But any rate, other stories about that.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, I see here on your sheet that you...you crossed the equator on January 7th of '43.

Mr. Skeldon: Yes, that's correct.

Mike Zambrano: Can you tell me a little bit about that?

Mr. Skeldon: Well, it's an old naval tradition; I don't know how many years old, but it's gone back thousand years if not longer and it's done all over the world; not just in our Navy. Even the Germans and their U-boats...if they had any...time off at all, they would hold initiation of those that had not been initiated. Before...but they had to do it at sea; I think later...under water because if they came up on the surface, we had them, so they...they used to do it underwater. But like I say, it's in all military branches; if you crossed the equator aboard a naval vessel if you had not been initiated...if you insist not being initiated, they won't initiate you, but you will never have that entered into your service record.

Mike Zambrano: Really?!

Mr. Skeldon: (Unintelligible) entered that you crossed the equator, there will be a notation that you had not been initiated. And the initiation is a...it's a...a fun thing; sometimes somebody gets hurt, but...not on purpose. And they do an awful lot of things; everybody is initiated. On the Santee, it was our Executive

Officer. An Executive Officer is the number two on the ship. The Captain's number one; the Exec Officer is number two. He had never crossed before and been initiated. Now maybe he flew across; well, our pilots that flew across...they get initiated on the...on the way back (chuckle). Anyway, it's...it's entered in your service record. So on...the [USS] Kadashan Bay in the Paci...well, that was in the Atlantic...in the Pacific, their Captain had never been initiated, so he elected to be the first one through the line.

Mike Zambrano: Oh boy!

Mr. Skeldon: Of course, he was well liked, and they guys would do anything for him, so...although they hit him they may as well have hit him with a wet noodle.

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter).

Mr. Skeldon: Yeah, he...he was man enough to go through the line, and he wasn't in the uniform of the day. Generally your uniform of the day is...sneakers, uh, gym shoes...

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: ...and...skivvies, shorts; not bathing suit trunks; skivvy shorts; underwear...

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Skeldon: ...the bottom part; that's it! The only reason for the sneakers is because we hold it on a flight deck and somebody might get a sliver or something in their foot, so we give them that. So, all the pollywogs are in...in their boxer shorts or whatever because if you got bath...bathing suit trunks on, they're going to give you a little extra treatment because you're out of uniform.

Mike Zambrano: Ah okay!

Mr. Skeldon: And...the treatment is...whatever...(unintelligible) the pollywog, the guy being initiated is the pollywog...whatever the pollywog likes the most and...and these shellbacks are going to be...buddies of yours...might not be your buddy after, but it's all fun. It's...anyway, some guy there is always prompting with a nice little wave he's got in his hair; well, they might take a razor blade and run it right over the center of his head right down to his skin.

Mike Zambrano: Oh boy!

Mr. Skeldon: Can you imagine we pull into Brazil, and all these sailors with these weird haircuts? Maybe some guy's got a St. Anthony, you know? The top is shaved bare; the sides are cut close, or vice versa, Mohawk haircut. And then naturally, well, you had to give them a shampoo; so they got some axel grease and shampoo it into his head...his hair. You got a mustache...shave...we shave one side off. And there's always a tub. Now they might build that tub on an elevator and...and at five...four feet...five feet of water, generally four...and at four feet of water...and...and then they'll build...on the flight deck they'll build a small ramp...five foot high and the steps going up...and a plank going out, and...they'll have that pollywog up on that platform out on that plank looking down at that water on the elevator, and that's down on the hangar deck. Now you got what...about thirty foot drop...thirty-five foot?

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Skeldon: If a carrier is forty foot...you look down and you walk that plank and into that water. Well, then they put a blindfold on you and...and make you walk right out and plop in. If...if you don't go, they'll push you. The only thing is, them

elevators are flat...so them elevators up at the top, you're lucky if you had a two-foot fall, and there's a lot of fun there.

Mike Zambrano: You...you saying so...that they fall into the ocean or...?

Mr. Skeldon: No, no, no. They...they build a ship platform on the flight deck...

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, okay.

Mr. Skeldon: ...up, and they build a (unintelligible) water on the...on the elevator and they'd have the elevator down on the bottom. Now if you walked out on that plank, you'd fall down...and into that water which is on the hangar deck which is a thirty...thirty, forty foot drop.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Skeldon: But they bring that elevator up; you got to...after...after you've seen what's going on, so then they would blindfold you and stand you back out on the platform. Now you know you're going to have...four steps, and then the fifth one is off, so they'll walk out maybe...one step and then you got to prod them.

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter).

Mr. Skeldon: And, but the elevator is up at the top...but them elevators are fast and their quiet.

Mike Zambrano: Oh! So how long does this initiation usually last?

Mr. Skeldon: Well, being at wartime, un...until our planes have to come in for landing...then we clean up the flight deck and get them...bring their planes aboard...launch another set out, so it could be four hours. But you're still not done. I mean, just because the...big job on the flight deck is done...we'll have two officers down at the mess deck serving the...the crew that are shellbacks. I was a

shellback...when I went into the Pacific, so I'm sitting there and...and having an officer waiting table on me...and tell him to go get me a cup of coffee, you know, with sugar. He'd bring it back...no milk..., "Go back and get some milk."

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter).

Mr. Skeldon: We had...a Warrant Officer that had spent eighteen years in the Navy up until that time, and he said, and oh, he was an SOB! He would go out of his way to make it tough for all of the division guys, and I was one of them. So, he said, "Eighteen years in this man's Navy; there ain't nobody going to initiate me!" So, now what they done...to make sure that they were going to initiate him...the night before six guys got a hold of him; dragged him to the brig and locked him up!

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter).

Mr. Skeldon: Well, he spent the night in the brig, so that in the morning when they wanted him, they knew where to find him, so they put him in the stockade. You remember what the stockades are? They used them in the seventeen hundreds in this country?

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Skeldon: Put your head in and two arms in there and lock you in?

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: Eh, so they locked him in...in the stockade and then somebody here...I'm not going to mention your truly, but he used to get in my way an *awful* lot! And it...and it wasn't even any of his business, but he'd go out of his way to make

miserably...make it miserable for me, so...anyway, the...those that served the officers' dinner...I got a hold of one of them guy and he told me that that Chief Warrant did not sit to eat for two weeks! His backend was black and blue; his butt.

Mike Zambrano: Wow! (Chuckle)

Mr. Skeldon: But, it...it served a good purpose because there were other First Class that used to get a hard time out of him. Like I say, he wasn't even in my division, but he'd go out his way to make it miserable for me...and others! You know, there was a change in that guy like night and day!

Mike Zambrano: Really?

Mr. Skeldon: He didn't bother any...anybody after that! He found out that he wasn't Mr. Navy himself; we were *all* Navy. So it...it does serve a good purpose. You got somebody that's...that's hard, why, and...and he had not been initiated...that's your chance to get even.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, let me ask you before I forget. Do you remember who your Captain was on the Santee?

Mr. Skeldon: Captain Sample.

Mike Zambrano: Sample?

Mr. Skeldon: Captain Sample; he was a Captain of my first ship and then when I went on a...well, I was a TAD on two other ships, but we'll forget about that. So when I went on my second ship (cough) excuse me, (unintelligible) in the Pacific, USS Kadashan Bay...

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: ...and we ran around...four Seabees, ran around in one group. Now that group is...Captain (unintelligible) controlled by a Rear Admiral and the Rear Admiral was...Sample.

Mike Zambrano: Oh okay.

Mr. Skeldon: So I said with him as a Captain and I sailed with him when he was Rear Admiral. Matter of fact, the first time that I had met...Sample...I was Plane Captain on number seven on an...SBD, and I just happened to be the first guy to get the first SBD in the outfit. They gave it...I don't know why they gave it me. They didn't...number one...number one...was the last one to get...because that's for the Skipper.

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: It was...it was...flew number one. So the...the next leader after the XO of the squadron he...he would get number four, and then I had the third leader, number seven, but the first airplane. So I'm sitting in the air...airplane at the...and like I said, it's the first one that we had, so nobody knew anything about it and I'm sitting on the tarmac outside the hangar (cough) and I'm reading the pilot's handbook (pause)...

Mike Zambrano: Hmm. Are...

Mr. Skeldon: ...reading the pilot's handbook because my one concern is not to lower the landing gear while I'm sitting on deck; it would have been a no-no. So anyway, I hear some kind of a...strange pounding on the airplane, and I look out of the cockpit and there's some guy in khaki...he wanted to know where the squadron office was. I said, "Right up there; them windows up there." He

walked away. As soon as he walked, here comes that Chief (beep sound)...running up; jumped on the wing of the airplane; he said, “Don’t you know who that was?” I said, “No.” “That’s Commander Sample; he’s going to be our Captain when the ship goes into commission!” So I met him; he was a Commander, and sailed with him as a Captain, and I sailed with him again as a...Rear Admiral. But when...when we were in that foursome four in the Pacific, he sailed on Seventy-Seven...(unintelligible) island. And USS Kadashan Bay had the senior Captain, Captain Hunter.

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: We were number Seventy-Six; the flag was Seventy-Seven. I don’t know if you know the difference when I say the flag?

Mike Zambrano: Yes.

Mr. Skeldon: Admiral; he was...he stayed on Seventy-Seven, so when he wasn’t around then our Skipper was in charge because he was the senior Captain. So we had Seventy-Six, Seventy-Seven, Seventy-Eight and Seventy-Nine; Seventy-Nine did not survive the war (beep sound).

Mike Zambrano: Well, just to let you know, if you hear that beeping...it’s just that at some point in about a next minute or so I have to flip the tape, so...uhm, you just might hear me that I have to stop real quick, but go on.

Mr. Skeldon: Well, I run in four small carriers...in one group and then we had our own Admiral...you...you get acquainted with each other.

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: Of course everybody knows that you're supposed to do all the maneuvers...one way, and they do, but still in all, sometimes something comes up and the Admiral doesn't have the chance...to figure it out or that...but maybe somebody else does...or that. And then they...everybody puts in an input...to the Admiral; it's up to him to decide. So everybody gets to know each other and what their limitations are...this and that. That was our group – Seventy-Six, Seventy-Seven, Seventy-Eight and Seventy-Nine.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, let me ask you a little bit about the (beep sound)...let me ask you a little bit about the Santee and North Africa...

Mr. Skeldon: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: ...in Operation Torch. What do you recall about that?

Mr. Skeldon: Well, here's where we go into a little...bit of...uh, on the first day...it...November 8th, we sent in a...our requested bomb strike. Our mission was to supply combat air patrol and anti-submarine patrol over the ships in our group. Now the Santee went into Safi which is south of Casablanca, and...and the [USS] Ranger and...Sangamon, uh, no, excuse me, the [USS] Suwannee...the Ranger and the Suwannee went into Casablanca and the Sangamon went...twenty (beep sound)...twenty-five miles north of Casablanca, so we were a hundred miles south Casablanca and Safi...Santee, and on our first morning, we lost our combat air patrol at sea and...and our sub patrol; they flew over, just like I said, our fleet...it's invasion troops and bombardment groups and that...

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: ...and we also had a group that went over the beach that would...would take orders from a ground control and what the Army needed...to advance...this, that and the other thing. Well, anyway..., uh...

(end of tape 1, side A)

Mike Zambrano: Okay, you said that none of the planes returned?

Mr. Skeldon: Well, let's clari...clarify that. Those that were on anti-sub patrol and anti-...combat air patrol...they returned, yes, because they were over the...the water, but those that flew over the beach, none of them planes returned. And...one...the...BF (sp?) Skipper, Blackburn, Blackburn?...Blackmon?...Blackburn, I guess was his name, he...he was insistent on bomb...find...finding the ships, so he flew around till he ran out of gas and he had to ditch. So he got his...dingy, rubber raft, out of his boat, uh, plane...

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: ...and he floated around for three days before a destroyer found him and picked him up. And the...those planes in his group that flew back to the beach...some of them crashed on landing, so they didn't come back; others they...bogged down in the...the dirt. You got to remember, that airfield at Safi was nothing but a...like a...what we consider what we consider a pasture, cow pasture; it was grass, and then it was after an exceptionally heavy rain day...the day before, so it was nothing but a mud field! And the planes just sunk to the...into the top of their wheels and they couldn't get out.

Mike Zambrano: Can you...can you say the name of that field again?

Mr. Skeldon: I can't recall the name of it, no, but the name of the town in that area was Safi.

Mike Zambrano: Safi?

Mr. Skeldon: S-a-f-i.

Mike Zambrano: Oh okay, alright, that's good.

Mr. Skeldon: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: So some of them got bogged down in mud and just couldn't make it out?

Mr. Skeldon: Yeah. Well, some of them pictures were in a Life magazine, December of '24?...no, December 21, I believe it was or 22nd...anyway...of 1942. And...but they didn't mention the...the ship; they didn't mention the town or the squadron. The mentioned the city, yes, Safi, but they didn't mention the ship or the squadrons.

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: But there was only one ship there at Safi; one carrier there at Safi, not ship...there was a lot of ships there. Anyway, so...now we lost...I'm going to say six airplanes...went off the first flight, so the second flight we fulfilled, and...but they...all the days after that we never ran out of planes to...to fulfill our assigned missions...ever. But, now one of the officers...matter of fact, the...the pilot that used to fly my number seven SBD...he, oh, he...he's...his version of that is entirely different. His version is, "We lost six planes but that was over a matter of the whole invasion." In other words, maybe one or two planes the first day; one, two the second; one, two the third and...and that...that's the way we lost six planes. We lost a lot more than that over the

whole thing, but he's got his version. And then Morrison, History of the U.S. Navy, World War II...

Mike Zambrano: Yes.

Mr. Skeldon: ...comes real close to mine. He says *the first day*, so that was two missions we lost the six airplanes; I say we lost them on the first mission. I was...I was...Morrison wasn't there, I was, but my pilot was there, too, and he...looks at it entirely different. But I think that's because they want to make it politically correct.

Mike Zambrano: Now...

Mr. Skeldon: Bad for a lot of them.

Mike Zambrano: Now, did you...were you Captain for just one plane or a group of planes?

Mr. Skeldon: Say that again.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, did you...were you Captain for...one plane or a group of planes?

Mr. Skeldon: Plane Captain...is one airplane; I was...I had number seven, SBD.

Mike Zambrano: What was your pilot's name?

Mr. Skeldon: (Pause), I don't know if I want to put...put his name in here now. That is something you have to take up with him.

Mike Zambrano: Okay. Uhm, so what else do you remember about Casablanc...I'm sorry, uhm, North Africa?

Mr. Skeldon: Well, it was cool at night; hot in the daytime. Cool at night; we slept under blankets...unless you had a compartment that was below the waterline...then it's warm down there. But shoo...I did have a compartment below the waterline before we went to Africa, and let me tell you how hot it is down in

the compartment when you're...with no air conditioning and...(unintelligible) heat oiler...converted, but I don't think any of them ships had air conditioning in '42. But anyway, when I got up...in the morning, I'd put my two hands on the mattress and push myself up...

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: ...*sweat*...would come right out of the mattress; the mattress was saturated...hundred percent with sweat. So we used to do a lot of what they call air bedding with the Santee...when we...drove...not drove but when we hunted for submarines in the South Atlantic. Maybe...well, at least three times a week if not four times a week, we'd...air our bedding. The...the other day, you bring your mattress...mattress, blankets up; strip the mattress cover off; strip it and put it over the life line on the catwalk and secure it with a line so the wind wouldn't take it away, but...leave it up there four or five hours...it would dry out; make up your bunk again. And we didn't have that much room...when I say I put my two hands into the mattress and pushed myself up. If you can visualize putting your elbow on your mattress...on...on your mattress, the one that you're laying on...

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: ...and have your hand up and...fingers stretched out straight...you don't have that much room. Bend your fingers at the second joint; that would be touching the bottom of the mattress of the bunk above you.

Mike Zambrano: That's not a lot of room.

Mr. Skeldon: Your elbow and your fingers bent at the second joint...well, that's all the room in the world...that's all...

Mike Zambrano: (Chuckles).

Mr. Skeldon: ...all the room actually; you get so used to it, but it's...you know if...if you get any more than...oh, I'll tell you about one that...talking about not much room. Well I was an E-8; I don't know if you know what an E-8 is?

Mike Zambrano: Oh yes.

Mr. Skeldon: Okay, I was an E-8 and I put in the reserves...and I put in two weeks...well, actually a little more almost two and a half weeks aboard the...aircraft carrier [USS] America. Now that's one of them big ones.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Skeldon: Okay, now being an E-8...well, a reserve, I had to take what bunk was left in...the Chief's compartment, so I slept with all the Chiefs. But my bunk was...fourth one up and there was a...(unintelligible)...I imagine it was an air duct of some kind because when you hit it...it was a...had a dingy sound to it; it was right above my bunk. So when I climbed up in my bunk, I had to climb in and I sat on the foot end of the bunk, and then I'd lay down; my feet are hanging over...over the edge; I would get my upper body...lay down on the mattress and then worm my way up underneath that square duct, and I'd get up to the head. So, I don't know if I had five inches of room between my...if I was laying down; I...I didn't have five inches of room between my head and the duct.

Mike Zambrano: Hmm, can you hold on just one second, Sir?

Mr. Skeldon: Can do.

Mike Zambrano: I'll be right back. (recording momentarily stopped). Okay. Uhm, where were we at?

Mr. Skeldon: Africa.

Mike Zambrano: Yes. Uhm, gosh, how long were you there actually?

Mr. Skeldon: Uh, I mean, yeah, November 8th, and 12th, 13th we left.

Mike Zambrano: Hmm.

Mr. Skeldon: And...and we...well, on our way out we stopped in at Bermuda, and on the way back we had to stop at...we had to stop in at Bermuda and pick up...what we left there. We were ordered at...on our outward journey, we were ordered to offload all of the winter equipment and foul-weather gear that we had that we would...would not need. So I had a nice sweater that one of the women had knitted...when I was up at Navy Pier, Chicago.

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: And...and then women up there kind of adopted sailors for the holiday, Christmas holiday, so the woman that adopted me...she knitted that sweater, turtleneck sweater; nice wool, heavy one...boy, would have been good for the North Atlantic. So I never got to wear that sweater, and when we were go...on our way out, they told us to put all this...your stuff ashore, so I put...that turtleneck sweater with some other stuff. I had a Victrola; you know what a Victrola is?

Mike Zambrano: Yes.

Mr. Skeldon: Yeah, it was a wind-up I had, so you wind it up and it would play; I sent that ashore and some other stuff; clothing and whatever. On our way back we stopped in to pick up that stuff; I didn't get nothing back (chuckle).

Mike Zambrano: (Chuckle).

Mr. Skeldon: And...personal stuff; forget, you lost it.

Mike Zambrano: Really?!

Mr. Skeldon: But if there's any...uh, uniform...that the Navy had issued that was lost...they replaced it. But they didn't replace it until almost a year later. Well, by that time, I was off the Santee, so I didn't have a complete uniform; I never did have....that time and every time we had...uh, uni...locker inspection they called it...make sure that's why you had a complete sea bag?

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: Full amount of clothing? And I never did, and so I was...blamed it on the ship, the Santee. So they...the ship would write letters to the Santee and I'd write letters to the San...never got anything replaced. Of course, our ship wanted me to replace; I said, "No," I said, "I don't need it. If I needed it, I would replace it."

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Skeldon: Need it...so...

Mike Zambrano: Let me ask you this. When you were...when the Santee was operating in North Africa, what would you wear on the deck...considering how hot it was during the days?

Mr. Skeldon: Well, you had to be in uniform; shoes...well, I used to wear white socks. You can get away with it at sea, but the shore, no, or if we're in port, no, black socks; dungaree pants; dungaree shirt. Now we roll up the sleeves of the shirt, but there in general quarters, you had to roll them down. If...if we're operating airplanes then we wore a green T-shirt, sleeveless.

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh. Green T-shirt.

Mr. Skeldon: And...and a white hat. Of course, on flight deck, a white hat didn't work out, so we had a green...helmet...with a chin strap on it, so that when a...planes are turning up, you wouldn't lose it.

Mike Zambrano: Now...now was that your color on a flight deck – green?

Mr. Skeldon: Green was Arresting Gear, yeah. But...here we're talking about the Santee, so I had brown.

Mike Zambrano: Brown?

Mr. Skeldon: Shirt...and brown and helmet, and then when I was in Arresting Gear, I had green.

Mike Zambrano: Oh okay, alright. Let's see, uhm, so you...you go back to Bermuda and so...uhm, how much longer are...are you on the Santee and where did you transfer to?

Mr. Skeldon: Well, when we returned from Africa, we...we had a small, short, yard period. The Sangamon, Suwanee and [USS] Chenango...they went south and west; they went through the Panama Canal and they went to...went out...I...I don't even know if they stopped at Pearl Harbor, but anyway, they...they joined the fleet; they got out there in January of '43. And they only had like...Suwanee

and Sangamon had five days in Norfolk; uh, Chenango had a little more because she got banged up in the storm coming across the Atlantic. And...so then three carriers got out there in January of '43...there was only two other carriers there – [USS] Saratoga and the [USS] Lexington, so that...that was the five carriers that were in the *whole* Pacific ocean. Anyway, the Santee...we went...December 26th we left Norfolk and headed south, boy, and it was *cold* in Norfolk; were we glad to get out of there! So the 26th we were underway and headed south and kept on going until we hit Trinidad and that was the liberty port that we made; we were there for four days because only twenty-five percent of the ship could get off at one time. So I'm glad I was in the third group. When I seem them first two come...come back with...butt up to their knees I said, "I ain't going!"

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter).

Mr. Skeldon: Wasn't nothing over there except booze, so I didn't go ashore. Then...matter of fact, some of the guys came back to the ship without their shoes!

Mike Zambrano: Really?

Mr. Skeldon: One would get knocked down...and when they pulled it out...there was no shoes. So the heck with it; after a couple of times why, so...I didn't go ashore. And...and their whites, they never did get them mud stains out of their whites. And...and talk about hot there...yes! And they...it was the rainy season; they only had two seasons in that part of the world – rainy season and a dry season, and we were there at rainy season; that's why all the mud on the beach.

And...it would rain...you couldn't get no wetter in...in one second than if a fireman took his hose and turned it on you.

Mike Zambrano: Really?! That...that humid?!

Mr. Skeldon: Because...if we had anything to do on the flight deck, and it'd start raining, chances are good...I would say about ninety percent...nine out of ten guys they wouldn't move; they just continued what they were doing...because there's...in ten minutes that rain's going to be gone and you're going to wish...wishing for it. You'll be dry...

Mike Zambrano: Ummm.

Mr. Skeldon: ...sweat, wet from sweat and...but dry from that rain. So rain was a blessing; we loved it; we'd stay out in it!

Mike Zambrano: Yeah, sounds...sounds like...

Mr. Skeldon: And...Africa was the same way; it was hot in the daytime and...well, it's the tropics.

Mike Zambrano: Right. Well, it sounds like the...the rain was a nice reprieve from the heat.

Mr. Skeldon: That's right. Yeah, we'd stay in it just to cool off. That was nice clean water. And Santee was one terrible ship for water; they...out of all ships I was aboard, it was number one for...no water. But they not only would turn the water off, they...they would turn the drinking fountains off!

Mike Zambrano: Why?!

Mr. Skeldon: You couldn't even get a drink of water...unless you were down at sick bay!

Mike Zambrano: Why was that?

Mr. Skeldon: Well, not being an engineering type...support engineering type...had to go along with one...one...the other engineers from there...told me that they had three evaporators on the ship – one was always in use; one was always being torn down, rebuilt and the third one was a standby. So the Santee...one never worked, so it was always the one in...in duty...working...making water and the other one that was being torn down...so it...we only had two evaporators, instead of three although one should make enough water, but not when it's got to cover up a. And Regulations called for ten days supply of water, fresh water, for the engines. In other words, if the evaporators will break down today...and you cannot make water, you have to have ten days fresh waters supply for them engines. In ten days they figure you can get to port some place.

Mike Zambrano: Hmm, gosh!

Mr. Skeldon: Now other ship...the USS Kadashan Bay, I was on her...but you got up at two o'clock in the morning and you wanted to take a shower, you just went to the head and take a shower. If you...if you wanted to take a shower at two o'clock in the afternoon...but they tell...they told us, "Don't waste water!" So in a year and...and four months that I was aboard the USS Kadashan Bay, I don't think they had the water turned off five days...five different days!

Mike Zambrano: Really?

Mr. Skeldon: Here, why, it wasn't five days that they *didn't* have...water turned off on the Santee. You could take a shower; you get used to showering...at certain hours if...if that's the only hours they have. But can you imagine if...say, they cut

off for...the water would be five o'clock in the aft...in the afternoon, and you land your last...last airplane at six and you've got grease up to your elbows?!

Mike Zambrano: Yeah, I can imagine. You don't want to go to sleep like that.

Mr. Skeldon: So, well, that was no problem, because I would go over and see the Air Boss, and he'd give me a list...or I'd give him a list of guys that...waited showers...Arresting Gear, and I'd turn that...and he'd sign it and I'd just go over to the Master at Arms and...give it to him and he would tell me what head we're going to use, and...ten minutes...all my guys would be there...ten minutes...the Master at Arms would chase everybody out; turn the water on...just for us, and check the names off. No wasting water; soap down; step out; somebody else soaking down; you soak...you soaping up; step under; rinse off; step out and you're done! On the Santee, they would give us...if we were in a pinch like that...they would give us a bucket and a half a pail of water. You go and wash with that half of pail of water and then he'd give you a half a pail of water, fresh water, to rinse with, and that was your shower.

Mike Zambrano: (Chuckles).

Mr. Skeldon: That's if you had an extra shower.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Skeldon: But the regular hours, why, the shower would be open and you used...as a shower head. But...now this was early during the Santee's history because they had changed that. The one compartment was a shower compartment, and there must have been...six, seven, shower heads coming out of each bucket; well, six out of the other bucket, six out of the other one...so that's eighteen

shower heads coming on at one time, and staying on. And then the space in the...the center is where you soaped down, and then when you soaped down...you...guy gets under there; he steps out; he soaps down; you rinse off and vice versa. So you got about forty guys in that compartment taking a shower at the same time; *no* partitions!

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Skeldon: It...that's what you call togetherness.

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter), well, I guess you...you get used to that sort of thing, don't you?

Mr. Skeldon: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Well, now they have them partitioned off; one man shower, one man toilet, one man...moving. In them days, why, the toilet was a trough, a stainless steel trough. Farmers would love it because they could order their hogs and cows and everything...horses. But then on that trough, they have two boards...of course, they're made...for sitting down, so they're...had an appropriate shape, contour to them and they're real nice...highly...plastic-type finish on them, and...but no partitions any place. So there's six guys sitting in...you...you can see what the end guy is doing and he can see what you're doing and...if you don't keep an eye on one of...and the other, why, you could run into a little trouble.

Mike Zambrano: Oh...okay (laughter).

Mr. Skeldon: Okay, there's six guys sitting; now you got a six-inch pipe fit in salt water...direct from the ocean. When it goes overboard direct to the ocean, the waste, so the guy on that top end...he's a cracker jack, you better keep an eye on him...while you're on the low end because he might take a roll of toilet

paper or a half a roll of toilet paper; set it on fire; drop it in there and...go see everybody jump up in a hurry!

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter).

Mr. Skeldon: *Geronimo!* And jump! (Chuckles).

Mike Zambrano: Oh boy, wow. Anything for a laugh, I guess.

Mr. Skeldon: Well, it breaks up the monotony (chuckles).

Mike Zambrano: (Chuckles), oh boy. Uhm, tell me a little bit more about life on a carrier; what was the food like?

Mr. Skeldon: You...you asking the wrong person about food.

Mike Zambrano: Oh really?

Mr. Skeldon: Yeah, because...you had a little glimpse of my early life. Well, I got kind of used to eating most anything; I could eat most anything, and I did. So one day, I can't remember when, but I think it's a Saturday...that would be beans. Boy, they would give you all the beans you wanted! And of course, it took me three years to get used to eating beans for breakfast, but once I got used to it, I...I looked forward to beans for breakfast because I knew I was going to get all I wanted to eat.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Skeldon: And I did! They'd fill that whole tray up with...more if you wanted it. But anyway, beans and...and cereal every day, every morning. They had the dry cereal and they'd have oats, oatmeal...that was hot; you got that off the steam table. Uh, if they...if they had beans, that was it; that was the main course. And what you didn't...oh, and then they'd have a cornbread cake to go with

the beans, and (unintelligible), coffee and baked food most always. And other days, why, maybe have...eggs. Now if you had a darn good cook (cough), you could be at sea for two weeks, and these guys would swear up and down there are fresh eggs because I had shell in my...well, if you had a good cook, when we...we had fresh eggs...which we could only carry for about six days, seven the most, but...no, nine days and then you went into the...powdered milk...

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: ...powdered eggs and all of that. But if you had a good cook, you could save a lot. Two weeks later the guys are arguing, "Yeah, had fresh eggs, fresh eggs!" They...well, that's where the cook came in. When he had the fresh eggs, he saved the shells, and then when you come out with the powered eggs, you just throw in so many shells...and you'd never know it...if...if he done the eggs right. Some of them were crackerjacks.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Skeldon: And...and because of them shells in there, why, guys thought they were eating fresh eggs; they...they weren't. One weeks yeah, but not two.

Mike Zambrano: Huh!

Mr. Skeldon: And then cereal...if you took the oats okay, if you took the dry okay...you know, they had a little milk there they...they allowed it...cobblestone (sp?) pitcher falling; that was yours for your cereal. And now I didn't much go for the powdered milk, but as long as they had that canned milk...remember the condensed canned milk?

Mike Zambrano: Yes.

Mr. Skeldon: In a can?

Mike Zambrano: Yes.

Mr. Skeldon: As long as they had that on a table, no problem, because I would take about four or five tablespoons of that and dump it in with the powdered milk and it...it tasted pretty good then. So everybody had his own little concoction. So...somebody would say maybe, "What'd we for dinner?" He hadn't been...went down to eat yet, "I'd say apple juice," uh, not apple juice...apple sauce. Well, now he knows that we got apple sauce and we got pork chops and all the trimmings that go with the pork chops.

Mike Zambrano: Hmm, so...

Mr. Skeldon: And if somebody said, "SOS," they know what that is – Shit on a Shingle.

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter).

Mr. Skeldon: It's a...that's...ground up meat and the sauce and they'll put it on toast; toast is the shingle.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Skeldon: If it's chopped...uh, chipped...pork chips, then it's...orskins (sp?).

Mike Zambrano: Let me ask you...let me ask you something else.

Mr. Skeldon: Yeah, different topic.

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter), no, no, I just kind of...just to get a flavor of what it was like to be on a...on a carrier...especially one without any air conditioning...uhm, mail...how often would you receive mail or would you write home a lot?

Mr. Skeldon: Well, it's...writing home...you'd write every week a letter because you're expecting your mother to write you a letter every week. Now if you had a

steady girlfriend, then it was daily letter; you'd write every day. We didn't receive mail every day, no; we might not receive mail until we come back to port which could be...one week; could be four weeks; could be eight weeks. (Cough), but...and then...that was...small carriers. But when I was the Fifth...well, I can't say Fifth Fleet because them small ones, they travel with the Fifth Fleet, too. Fifty-eight or Thirty-eight, now them were the fast carriers; the big ones, fast ones, why, you could get mail every other day because different ships coming out...joining...train, supply train...

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: ...they'd bring the mail out and then they'd know what ship is going to go alongside what other ship...why, they'd pass it over by high line...

Mike Zambrano: Just...

Mr. Skeldon: ...today, every day mail...helicopter or that...COD; he'll bring it aboard. But no, we'd...get mail...whenever a ship was in port. I was...technically they knew where you were going to be but if the orders changed, you might be in one port and your mail in another port, yeah, then you might go two months or three months. And an example of that is Palau. Now when the plans were being drawn up for Palau...Peleliu?

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: Peleliu is the group; Palau is one particular island...the group...because we invaded Peleliu and Andauer (sp?)...was on the USS Kadashan Bay, now that's a small carrier, but when the plans were drawn up, the Army wanted...air cover; they wanted to have aircraft carriers for nineteen days and

Halsey blew his top. He says, "I can't put my carriers in there for nineteen days anchored to the island!" Well, they're not anchored, but you know, close enough that the Japs would find you. So anyway, there was three CVE groups that supported the landing force...there...three...three groups. Two groups had two each and I was in the fourth group – Seventy-Six, Seventy-Seven, Seventy-Eight, Seventy-Nine; we always traveled together...unless there was something wrong with them. But anyway, we were always together. So that first group of three, they got there a day ahead of us because they bought up the bombardment group – battleships and cruisers going to bombard the beach. They started bombarding the day before, so we...come in there on the 15th...that's the...that was D-Day, 15th...and it was four CVs in that group. And then the following day another group came up; had three CVs in it; that was the reserve force. If there was trouble with the...landing party on the first day, then they sure would support them as they needed it. If there was no support needed, then they kept them for another day and then the...D+2 they went ashore at Andauer. So anyway, you figure three small carriers; thirty airplanes each – that's ninety airplanes...that's like one big carrier. So there was (unintelligible words) three big carriers there. But...now remember, the request was for ninety days, so after the...the invasions on D+1, that first group...three carriers left. The...so we were in the second group with four carriers and the third group with three carriers; they stayed one more day and they left. So we stayed there for fifteen days because...we stayed until...they had air cover of their own. In other words, the Seabees managed to build an

air strip for the Army planes to get in. As soon as they land on that beach, we take off; we are able to leave then. Now they wanted us for...the big carriers for nineteen days; we stayed there for fifteen days anchored to the island.

Mike Zambrano: Now this is what island again?

Mr. Skeldon: Palau.

Mike Zambrano: Palau, okay.

Mr. Skeldon: Oh, Peleliu. Peleliu is...one island; Palau is the group, the chain.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Skeldon: So that was September 15th, '44.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, this was...you said...on the USS Kadashan Bay?

Mr. Skeldon: Yeah, that was USS Kadashan Bay then.

Mike Zambrano: Do you remember who the Captain was there?

Mr. Skeldon: Hunter.

Mike Zambrano: Hunter?

Mr. Skeldon: Yeah, Hunter. Yeah, he...he was the guy that went through the...initiation line the first...

Mike Zambrano: Oh that's right; okay.

Mr. Skeldon: ...first man through the initiation line.

Mike Zambrano: And you said he was very well liked?

Mr. Skeldon: Oh yeah, oh yeah (chuckles). I wrote a...a book about my first four years in the Navy, and it was...a lot of humor in it because it's about me and my happenings; anything that happened on the [all USS ships] Santee, the USS Kadashan Bay, the Monterey, Charger, the Princeton...and liberties...so on, so

forth. But anyway, he was the first Captain on that ship, but he was my second Captain. Well, Hunter was the wing man of Sample when...before the war...

Mike Zambrano: Really?!

Mr. Skeldon: ...to be flying...

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Skeldon: ...squadron? Yeah. So anyway, I sent Hunter a copy of that book, and now he...now this was a couple of years ago, he was ninety-four years old at that time; I imagine...ninety-four?! I'm only eighty-three; I'm a young guy!

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter), well, you sound young.

Mr. Skeldon: Yeah, so anyway he...he read the letter, then he wrote me a...a thank you; he wrote it by hand, and so you got to...you have to study the letter to read it. My hand is like that now and he was ninety-four; I...I've got eleven more years to go! But he said in his letter, he says he didn't remember me, but he did remember the Arresting Gear crew. But he says that tell him that he had a good crew because he never had any trouble...with the...with the crew. That's true, isn't? If you've got trouble, you'll always remember it.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah, especially...

Mr. Skeldon: The good things, why, seemed to blend in, so I...he said he never had any trouble with the Arresting Gear so he doesn't know me or any of the group...which tells him that it was a good crew and they was always ready. And he says he glad to see that I did not lose my sense of humor!

Mike Zambrano: (Chuckle).

Mr. Skeldon: Because there's an awful lot of crazy stuff in that book.

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter).

Mr. Skeldon: I was crazy; now I'm just insane.

Mike Zambrano: What's the name of the book?

Mr. Skeldon: Minority Cruise Plus Two; its out of print.

Mike Zambrano: Huh.

Mr. Skeldon: Wish I would have had a thousand printed because I've had...guys ask and ask for it. They...when they read the book, the guys that had been through it they say, "Why, that's the same thing that I...happened to me!" Standing out there in Newport, Rhode Island, you know, and the bus coming in...we're a bunch of guys, civilians, going to make sailor out of them; we'd be there because we're old salts now, you know, we...we got our hair cut. "You'll be sorry!" Clowning up to them guys.

Mike Zambrano: (Chuckles).

Mr. Skeldon: And they done that to *everybody*! So, that's why these guys can relate to that. I had a thousand of them books...should...meant...tell (unintelligible) to print it.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, let's see; let me ask you about...the Charger. When...when did you get aboard the Charger?

Mr. Skeldon: Well, we...I...my orders were to report to Arresting Gear School, Philadelphia. Now they put me ashore in Norfolk...off the Santee, so I had my orders for Philadelphia and school, but when I got into the receiving station, Norfolk, they had found out that the school in...Philly wasn't ready for us. Now I'm

the only guy off the Santee, and there's ten of us all told, but there's one from this ship; one from that ship; one from the other ship – ten of us; ten different guys; ten different ships. So they got us together in...in Norfolk, and the school isn't ready in Philadelphia, so they put us aboard the Charger; the Charger is in Norfolk. Now we don't want to stay in Norfolk when we can be in Philadelphia; Philadelphia is a good liberty town; Norfolk is...well, we won't mention it. It's a good city today.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Skeldon: So there's...anyway. So that was the story behind that. In that ten group there was three Chiefs; six First Class and I was Second, and I was the junior man...totem pole, so I had to do whatever them guys said, and they said, "Let's get up to Philadelphia." So what they thought we were going to do on the Charger, I guess, was...teaching them guys...which...well, I don't know; liberty still comes first.

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter).

Mr. Skeldon: So off to...Philadelphia.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Skeldon: So one way or another, we got off the Charger; we were on it for...two different times; the total I would say about six weeks. So the Charger kicked us off and...put us...sent us up to Philly and the school still wasn't ready so the Philly receiving station sent us aboard the Princeton. The Princeton was...converted cruiser; they made an aircraft carrier out of a cruiser.

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: They made now of...out of cruisers. So, the ship is getting ready to go out on a shakedown cruise; that means we're going to be gone for a month. These three Chiefs and First Class they figured it's better in Philadelphia than going to...out to sea for thirty days, so they managed to get off again. So we're driving on the (unintelligible) so nobody wants to monkey with...with you when you're on the...the (unintelligible). So we got to stay in Philadelphia onboard the Princeton for two weeks; back into...Philadelphia just where we wanted, and that's the story on that.

Mike Zambrano: Just...let me ask you something else really quick. I'm looking at the Charger and the Princeton on your list here; one's an escort carrier and one's a light carrier, what were...what was the difference?

Mr. Skeldon: Well, it was...I...I said the Princeton was a converted cruiser.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Skeldon: They took nine cruisers and made carriers out of them. The Monterey was a sister of the Princeton; it was a CBL.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Skeldon: And...they took nine cruisers and made carriers out of them, and they were fast so they ran around with the big carriers; they carried thirty-five airplanes...each. They could carry forty-five if they were all fighters...advanced. So that's the difference and the C...CVE only travelled eighteen knots and we always said...downhill.

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter).

Mr. Skeldon: There was a CVL; they would travel thirty-two...thirty-two knots; big difference.

Mike Zambrano: Uh, I...I've heard that...would...there was a nickname for the CVEs or at least the letters...something about combustible, vulnerable and expendable? Have you ever heard that?

Mr. Skeldon: Oh yeah, yeah; Kaiser's coffins; home-life carriers; ten...ten cent carriers...that...that Kaiser's coffins...well, what else did they call them? Oh, called them a lot of things, but they called them when they were in trouble, too.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah, I...I...I I've read that...troops going ashore were really appreciative of...of...or I guess really...really glad that these light carrier or escort carrier pilots would come and give us so much support on their landings.

Mr. Skeldon: Yeah. Well, if...if they did not have the CVEs, a Seabee would have had to be there, and it takes four years, three years...wartime to build a big carrier. Kaiser turned out fifty jeep carriers in one year; *fifty* carriers in one year! Can you just imagine that?!

Mike Zambrano: That...that's an amazing number.

Mr. Skeldon: Yeah, the first one was commissioned on 8th July, 1943, and the last one was commissioned 8th July, 1944; *exactly* to the dates! He built one...well, they set everything up to see what they could do. He built one in four days.

Mike Zambrano: Four days?!

Mr. Skeldon: Yeah, can you imagine that?! Everything was ready; Kaiser had...he was the originator of the sectional; build it on a beach; build it in sections; bring over

to the (unintelligible) dock or railroad...no, he'd build them on the railway...like you...they're built on land; they slide into the water. And he'd build them in sections; well, the...the...up until that time, ninety percent of the ships were riveted and they were built one plate at a time; yes, it'll take you three years...three years. These big carriers today are built the way Kaiser used to build them. They build in sections on the beach; different areas of the country; ship them over; put them together and...like a jigsaw puzzle, and build them in two years.

Mike Zambrano: Oh okay. Uhm, let's see, after your...your period of time on the Charger and the Princeton, you went to...uhm, it says Naval Air...Naval Air Facility?

Mr. Skeldon: Naval Air...but it's a...

Mike Zambrano: A...AG...

Mr. Skeldon: ...it's a facility, yeah. It's...not quite an air station.

Mike Zambrano: Okay. It would...it says...

Mr. Skeldon: (Unintelligible) Classified Auxiliary Air Station, but it was a facility. Yeah we...that was just to kill time; the ship was still being built. You just...that was in October, right, October?

Mike Zambrano: Let's see, uhm, it says it was June of '43.

Mr. Skeldon: June of '43?

Mike Zambrano: Yeah, just before Naval Air Station, Astoria.

Mr. Skeldon: Yeah. Oh, that's...Arresting Gear School. (beep sound)

Mike Zambrano: Oh!

Mr. Skeldon: That was in Philadelphia Navy Yard, not in the Navy Yard, near Naval...(pause) Facility. Yeah, that's not a Navy...but they do land planes there but it's...they don't want them classified a naval air station...

Mike Zambrano: Oh okay.

Mr. Skeldon: ...facility. That's...that was the Arresting Gear School.

Mike Zambrano: And you said you...you...was just pretty much killing time there?

Mr. Skeldon: Yeah, either...either waiting to go to school or...waiting for the...transfer to the ship, but that...this is...waiting to go to school.

Mike Zambrano: Now...

Mr. Skeldon: Now, at...at June, the following month is when we started school...in June '43.

Mike Zambrano: And how was that school? I mean, what impression did it leave on you?

Mr. Skeldon: Where was it?

Mike Zambrano: Well not...no, *how* was it?

Mr. Skeldon: How was the school? It was...well, obviously it took up one little corner of (beep sound) back in deck hangar...one minute, and it was...classroom mostly. The only time we went out in the shop is when they wanted to show us how to pour sockets. Lot of people spliced line; quite a few people spliced cable, but in Arresting Gear you...you have to...not only do those, too, you have to know how to pour a socket. It's...use...zinc and you have to melt it down to nine hundred degrees, so it...it's a hot job.

Mike Zambrano: Is this a...one that you would be required to perform on the ship at sea?

Mr. Skeldon: Yes, yes, you had to do that because that...that arresting gear wire...when it comes out of the deck, it's...it's got a manufactured socket on it at one end and

the other end, why, you had to pour a socket (beep sound), and...and also...sometimes they snap for one reason or another; maybe too much of an off-center landing or too much below; maybe the engine was set up too...too heavy. Half the cable snaps then you have to...either...either read...read (?) the whole engine or pour a socket. But if there's too much of the wire gone off it, then you'd have to re-read the whole engine. That means take the one cable out, the old one, put a new one in. Now you got a pour a socket on the end then. The...in...in the yard...well, then the yard workers do it. But...out...in the middle of the ocean, you do it.

Mike Zambrano: Hmm, okay.

Mr. Skeldon: 'Cause, if one socket is missing, you might have...might be able to use the other...end because they're double weaved, and you might not (beep sound). Then if that one goes, then you're out an engine...then you'd put the big...landing...well, hole...on them pilots. You know, you...you got two wires missing...instead of nine wires...only got seven! And chances are...because that one broke...chances are good because it's the best one for the...easiest one for them to pick up.

Mike Zambrano: Now you said that there...there are nine arresting wires on a carrier?

Mr. Skeldon: Right, nine...on...on the small carriers; nine and...three barriers, and on the big carriers at that time, they had, I believe, thirteen deck pennants.

Mike Zambrano: Wow!

Mr. Skeldon: And five...

(end of tape 1, side B)

Mike Zambrano: Okay, I'm sorry. You were saying how many...how many wires on the larger carriers?

Mr. Skeldon: Big carriers had thirteen...(cough)...thirteen deck pennants and five barriers (cough), and the small ones had nine and three. Now, they used to stand three barriers up when they're operating planes; we only stood up...two, and the third one was our spare; ace in the hole. Anyway, regulations says...you have minimum of two barriers up. Well then they...two barriers...I remember a time when I went onboard the USS Kadashan Bay...we had two carriers that were down...that were smashed up; we didn't get a chance to...rework them. Then we still had planes in the air, so...we ended up...the...we brought the last plane aboard; we only had one wire out of the two, so it...instead of having three barriers with two wires each...it would have been six wires that we could stretch across...as a barrier; we only had one wire, so five wires, five barriers were gone...be up to one. And the Lieutenant asked me if we should land that last plane. I said, "Well, what are our options; we don't have any; got to land him! Either that or he's going in the drink!" So we landed him and he knew what was in store for him, so he made an exceptionally good landing. So you do what you have to do!

Mike Zambrano: No, right, I understand. Gosh!

Mr. Skeldon: But the real trick is pouring them sockets...I said nine hundred degrees, and nine out of ten times you're going to have to pour it at night because all day long you're going to have to be landing planes. Well, well you're busy, but you're preparing for all this other stuff. If...if it happens...early enough in the

day time, yes, you can pour it in the day time, no problem. But pouring at night, that's where the pickle comes in; you've got darkened ship. So what we do is we...pull an awful lot of that cable out of the engine and pull it into an empty compartment that we can find off the catwalk preferably...uh, quickly where they clip the munitions together where they make them belt links, fifty calibers, for airplanes.

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: Get one of them clip rooms, an empty one, and you bring that wire in there, and being night time, you have to do it in the dark, so you close the door but you can't close the door because you got three-quarter inch cable coming through the door, so then you tie the door closed as...well as you can and stuff rags...in...so no light will shine out.

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: Well now, the people there inside are committed...to inside until the job is done, and you're going to heat that zinc to nine hundred degrees and it's got to be a certain specification of zinc...and...Navy has it, and we have it in the storeroom on the ship. And you're using two blow torches and a blow pop which is what plumbers use...blow pop and two torches. Now generally I...I have six guys in that room, so it's going to be and my two...next leaders – the guy in charge of the arresting gear and the guy in charge of the barriers because we had been to school; we know how to do that...the three of us. So now we had three guys that had never seen it done, and we let them get their hands dirty...involved in this, too. You have to...clean the socket...muriatic

acid, water...to neutralize the muriatic acid because otherwise, the muriatic acid would eat right through the...the metal. And make sure you don't get any of that on your skin, and then we...ceased the cable back far enough to pour a socket with a little extra; (unintelligible) the cable. It means opening it up...you can clean out the...the grease that's in there; get that (unintelligible) center of there; there's a (unintelligible) center in there...clean that or cut that (unintelligible) center out; spread the wires so that they as...as close to being by themselves as possible. You don't want...two, three, four wires clinging to each other...as spiraled as they are...on...because then the zinc won't hold...adhere to. Well, anyway, when you get that dipped in acid; neutralized it, and then pull it together with a safety wire...all of those strands of loose wires so it can slip the barrel; that's the barrel...is what you just cleaned a minute before; slide that down there...without getting grease on it or anything, and then when you've got the barrel in place...the...in...in position that it's supposed to be them wires should stick out at the end of the barrel just a little bit, at least a quarter of an inch, half an inch. They cease the bottom...seasonware (sp?) with some special gook on there; try to stay away from asbestos. They had some kind of a special putty put on there, and then the zinc wouldn't flow right through and out the bottom. In other words, you build a dam on the outside of this...barrel and then spread the shoe wires inside the barrel; get them to occupy all that space...as much as possible and not have them all together. And then...nice clean piece of tin on the top of the barrel to extend the...the (unintelligible) of barrel with...you can pour zinc into because that

zinc, when it closes, is going to shrink, so you'll have a...like a...crevasse...crevasse in the zinc. You want that out of the barrel, not in the barrel because...then that's a weak spot.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Skeldon: So now, when everything is...and the way you get...you know you got that nine hundred degrees as you...you put a mark onto the barrel with a cup of (unintelligible), and it's a nine hundred degree (unintelligible) stick. It looks like a piece of chalk. You could mark a line on the barrel and you won't see anything, and then when you got to nine hundred degrees you'll see that line...come out. Then you pour the socket; scrape off the top...futz (sp?) off of the...slag off of the top of the zinc...or...slowly without splattering it, and not too slowly so that it settles in the bottom and hardens before you get the next batch. So you...you pour in there and pour it all the way up till you can't pour no more. Now, we leave that set at...at least a half and hour to an hour. An hour later, okay, we'll open the door; let everybody out; don't monkey with that socket; too hot to handle; you couldn't touch it, so by this time it might be three o'clock or two o'clock in the morning. I'll secure the guys, and...but that Lieutenant...he's...but...anyway, I tell them, "We can't do nothing till the morning." "Well, when will it be ready?" "It'll be ready for...when our first launch is up, we'll have it ready then." "Okay." Otherwise, it...we'll will launch planes and if one of them planes had launched...had to come aboard, we'll bring him aboard, so that's...no time at all. So, yeah, they secured the guys; well, they...they could get an hour's sleep because reveille was

generally around three-thirty; an hour and twenty-minutes; that's another story.

Mike Zambrano: It sounds to me like...it was...uh, maybe for lack of a better term, a...a day and night job because in the...in the day you would be retrieving airplanes and at night you would be doing any repairs that were...required...

Mr. Skeldon: Nope.

Mike Zambrano: ...in order to do that retrieving?

Mr. Skeldon: Nope, that...that's...you...we...if that would have happened, say eight o'clock in the morning...

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: ...we...we'd of have had that socket poured and together...before nightfall.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Skeldon: See, we could have done all that in the day time. And...and we might land the planes in the meantime, yeah, but we'd take the wires off...the...the other side of that.

Mike Zambrano: Hmm.

Mr. Skeldon: In other words, there'd be a little gap in the...instead of having nine deck pennants up there, he might have seven...

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Skeldon: ...but you can still land airplanes, oh yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Okay. Oh, no, I...I didn't mean that you couldn't land airplanes, but it just...would seem that...

Mr. Skeldon: Well, yeah, well...

Mike Zambrano: ...like you had a lot to do.

Mr. Skeldon: ...planes...when the planes are in the air, my Arresting Gear men have nothing to do. Uh, that'd be nice, and if...if they're...if it happens in the daytime, they're *all* available; those fifteen guys in the crew. I...I could have fifteen of them doing something.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Skeldon: Yeah, we could do it in the same room, but we could have the door open, and we would have had a couple of fans there blowing out, yeah. Oh, it...it could be done in the daytime and we *preferred* that it be done in the daytime.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Skeldon: Today, instead of using that...muriatic acid, they have a small, portable sandblasting machine, and they actually put the wire in, cable in there, sometimes I call it wire; they put that cable in there...in...into that machine and just like doctors working on...on babies that have to...that are in quarantine; maybe on oxygen or something...

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: ...and he puts his hand in...these rubber gloves; works on the baby without interfering with his air...uh, this is almost like that; portable sandblaster, and it sandblasts the wires. Oh, and they come out shiny and clear and clean...and less dangerous for the crew; that muriatic acid, why, (pause)...

Mike Zambrano: Sounds like you need to be...to know a little bit about chemistry and...is it metallurgy, I guess?

Mr. Skeldon: See, all I know about it is stay away!

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter), is what?

Mr. Skeldon: Stay away; that's...number one!

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter).

Mr. Skeldon: Stay...muriatic acid, yeah, boy, that'll eat right through metal (unintelligible words), I guess, concrete, too. (Unintelligible words) that pretty good.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, let me just put the tape on hold for a second here, sir. (Recording momentarily stopped.) Okay, so...I think when we last talked, we left off...uhm, just at the very beginning of the...USS Kadashan Bay.

Mr. Skeldon: Yep, somewhere around there.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, do you remember when you first got to the ship?

Mr. Skeldon: Well, I remember even a little before that. We finished Arresting Gear School in Philadelphia and I had five men under me; two Third Class and three non-rated men. We had all gone to Arresting Gear School together, and then when the school was finished then we lay over a couple of weeks. The Navy got a little bit more crews in a weeks and they...we made up a five-car train; they shipped us across country, and we arrived in the Seattle area the middle of October, 1943. And we had to wait for what they referred to as New Construction, so there was a new ship being built by Kaiser.

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: Henry Kaiser, I don't know if anybody doesn't know, was uh, a friend of Roosevelt in some way, but the...the Admirals turned his request down to build escort carriers. So Kaiser, the following day after being notified that his idea was turned down, got a hold of President Roosevelt and he him that he

would built fifty carriers; fifty of them no less, in one year and he did; he did!
But he introduced something that they use today that they use in building
carrier and other ships, uh, compartmentation.

Mike Zambrano: Oh okay.

Mr. Skeldon: He builds them in sections all over the country and then transports them to
where he's going to assemble them, and he used weld...welding instead of
riveting; that speeded up construction. Now today, even the big carriers are
built in compartments. I think there's about a hundred and forty
compartments, and they put them together and...they'd have a ship.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah, I think they even do that with...with buildings now days, too. It's kind
of...

Mr. Skeldon: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: ...become the...the way to go.

Mr. Skeldon: And Kaiser built himself a great, uh, kingdom I guess you might call it. But
anyway, one of the first...very first things that he had was...uh, hospitalization
insurance for his workers. And out of all of his empire that he had built, the
only thing left is his insurance company.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Skeldon: Still sells hospitalization insurance.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah, yeah, that's true!

Mr. Skeldon: You carry the worker, he said, and they'll...do the job, and I guess it was true.

Mike Zambrano: So how long were you on the Kadashan Bay?

Mr. Skeldon: Well, the Kadashan Bay went into commission in January...18th, 1944, and I left it in Pearl Harbor...uh, 1945, April 14th. And the reason I know that is because April 12th we were half way between California and Hawaii on our way to Hawaii. And we were in the middle on the 12th, and that's the day that President Roosevelt died. And...

Mike Zambrano: Hmm.

Mr. Skeldon: ...reached harbor on the 14th and they asked me if I would accept a transfer; they wanted...it was a CVL, converted cruiser, converted into an aircraft carrier and they wanted a First Class Petty Officer on the Arresting Gear aboard. And my division officer asked me if I would accept the transfer, and I said yes I would. So the Kadashan Bay was stateside out after being re...repaired, and at the same time the Monterey was...out from after being repaired; she was damaged in that great typhoon...that is noted by a lot of people, and they...by the name of Halsey's Typhoon. And she...sustained quite a bit of damage, and she was...successfully (unintelligible) on her way out; it was her second trip, yep.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, just a couple of ...I...I'm going to kind of toss out a couple of names here of...of when you were on the Kadashan Bay and if you remember anything in particular, just...just let me know. Uh, let's see, the first place here on the list here is...Palau.

Mr. Skeldon: Palau, yeah, that's a group of islands just to the east of the Philippines and the Navy had decided that they needed Palau to guard their...right flank of the Philippines when they...were...scheduled to invade it. Actually, the

scheduling of invasions were to invade the southern end of the Philippine group. That would have been...Mindin...Mindanao...southern most group, and...and it's a big island. They were going to invade that so they could...could have their landing fields and moved on. You know, once...once the landing strips were built on an island, the...Navy carriers would move on to the next place where they would need air power; air fields.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Skeldon: And so Mindanao was the first and then...slated in successive order was...Luzon, uh not Luzon...

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, Ley...Leyte?

Mr. Skeldon: Leyte! And then from Leyte they were going to go to Luzon.

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: If they had airfields on three of those islands, they could control the Philippines, so that was the reason behind Palau. But in the two months before that scheduled invasion of Palau, Halsey and a the Third Fleet hit Palau; they raided it for three days, and the funny part of it is...well, it may be not be funny, but...uh, the side story was...after the third day of invasion they...fell off. In other words, they pull away from land a couple of hundred miles and refuel and rearm and replenish.

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: And a group of four small carriers were there to cover the...the train, the supply train, the replenishment fleet.

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: And there was...CVEs, escort carriers, so when the fleet, the Third Fleet, were replenished, they took off for their next raids which was on the Philippines. But while they were in that area, those CVEs that were with the replenishment group, just happened to be the Sangamon class, four of them, and if you know...the Sangamon class was four CVEs that were made from Navy oil tankers.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Skeldon: Took a fleet of oil tankers which I believe I mentioned earlier...

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: ...he was one of them...and it was in the group; there was only four of them; they sent their planes over to raid Palau. Well, while they were fueling the...the carriers, why, then the Santee, or the...I should say the Sangamon group, they threw their two cents in at Palau. But anyway, the end story of that Palau...Halsey went to Leyte from there, and they struck at Leyte for two or three days and they met so little resistance that Halsey...suggested bypassing Mindanao and go right into Leyte. Matter of fact, he wanted to bypass Palau, but it was so close to the invasion date Nimitz counteracted that request and said, "No, there are too many plans are...are in the oven already, and too late to change them," so the Palau raid was made which could have been bypassed and (unintelligible). So anyway, they did do away with the southern island, Mindanao, and they went right into Leyte.

Mike Zambrano: Now Leyte, we're talking Leyte Gulf and the battle of?

Mr. Skeldon: Battle of Leyte Gulf, yes.

Mike Zambrano: Now...

Mr. Skeldon: October 20th.

Mike Zambrano: We talked about...the Taffy numbers and you said you were with Taffy Two?

Mr. Skeldon: Yes, I was with Taffy Two. What they had done was...they put six CVEs in one group and there would have been two Admirals. If...if you'd take one or three CVEs...if you took three CVEs...it would have been up to one big carrier, so there would be like one Admiral. So they had six of them here; the only thing is they kept them in groups of four...four, and then they would augment that four with two; then made six and they'd done that the same thing. Well the four that was in one group would have an Admiral and then the two...would have an Admiral. Now, if you had to split them up somehow or another, you could put an Admiral with...with each of the two groups because they'd never split them...more than that; two together...never more, uh, never less. Anyway, they would...so then you...figured they would need eighteen CVEs so they made them up...up into three groups; each group had six, and I would...happened to be in Taffy Two. So on Taffy Two...Taffy One took care of...of Surigao Strait; Taffy Two...Leyte Island and Leyte...well, it was...a little island; I can't remember the name of it that was...that...they secured that two days before the invasion and that would protect our west...western...or eastern flank, and then Taffy Three was...further north and they kind of cruised off of Lake...Samar Island and...and they were caught by the Japanese fleet coming out of San Bernardino Strait...

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Skeldon: ...(unintelligible).

Mike Zambrano: Now do you remember what the Admiral's name was that was in charge of Taffy Two?

Mr. Skeldon: Taffy Two, we had Admiral Stump who was in charge and Admiral Sample which was under him, but Stump had all six carriers, but he was with the (phone ringing)...the two and then the four in the group was Seventy-Six, Seventy-Seven, Seventy-Eight and Seventy-Nine...[all USS] Makin Island; Kadashan Bay; Ommaney Bay; Erno Saddle Island, then Ommaney Bay; so there'd be six, seven, eight and nine. So we had Admiral Sample, but Admiral Sample was...subservient to Stump; Stump was senior.

Mike Zambrano: Okay. So, now I...I know that you worked on the deck and it's not like you could see the shore from where you were, but was there a lot of action in the sky or...or was anything..., you know, stand out to you about the battle?

Mr. Skeldon: Well, I can't quite make out that question.

Mike Zambrano: Oh, I'm sorry. I was just...just saying that I...I know you couldn't see land from where you were, but what was happening in the skies above; was there a lot of action in the air?

Mr. Skeldon: Well, that's true, and the carriers very seldom ever see land. It...be...being as susceptible as they are to damage...anytime, especially escort carriers...the least little thing and...knock them out. We always stay away from land; we don't want the...the Japanese to know where we're at, so a carrier can be anywhere from fifty to a hundred miles from shore and still be effective, and...and have a lot more protection. Because you're further away, you've got

a lot more squares miles; they're going to have to hunt to chase you down. So, yes, we were far away. And at Leyte, I would say we had next to no problem with the air raids which was not true with Taffy One and Taffy Three. They...both of them were closer to the straits – Surigao and San Bernardino, and that's where, I think, this one Japanese fleet would come from.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Skeldon: So we were kind of in the middle, protected by them too, but we were close enough always to the other two to assist...assist, yes.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, hmm, uh, anything else that you remember about...(unintelligible)...jumbling my words, I'm sorry. Uhm, anything else that...that might stand out about the battle that...that you recall?

Mr. Skeldon: Well, the Jap fleet came out...actually, it...it probably started on the 23rd of October. Now, we're sitting north of...Leyte furnishing air cover to the...for the invading troops ashore...

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: ...and also that they called in...radioed in any assistance that they would need...whether it was a strafing or a bombing mission, our planes would be right overhead and ready for close air support, and that was a good by-product of the Marine Corps and the Marine Air; they developed the...and they were really crackerjacks at it. But anyway, there were two submarines, American submarines, in the Sulu Sea and they spotted the middle group of the Japanese fleet. And being under orders to con...contact and observe, they did not strike

at the Japanese fleet. So they contacted Pearl and when their message was received and acknowledged, then they are open for attack, so the...two...two American submarines attacked and sank two Japanese heavy cruisers; damaged a third and possibly it...they thought it was in sinking condition, and they had...that...done damage to another cruiser. So they had damaged two cruisers...(unintelligible) early and sank two...and then they were subject to depth charges, and the submarines' names are [USS] Darter and [USS] Dace, but I could never keep either one of them sep...separated. One of those...that evening...that night I should say because it was dark, while running on surface, ran aground, so her running mate...whether it was Darter or Dace attempted to pull her off. They had a cable over to them, and they tried to haul it off while...well, a land-locked submarine would have...have her in reverse, and between the two of them, they could not budge it. They ballasted it and everything else and they couldn't...but, so they had to set charges and they blew it up rather than let it fall into the Japanese hands. And the other submarine had to take the...the crew aboard, so they had to go to Australia because you cannot operate with that many people onboard; it's tight.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Skeldon: (Unintelligible)...on a submarine to begin with. So that was on the 23rd; the report was received and Halsey had word on it, so the next morning he had his planes over the Sulu Sea and...and that's when the Musashi...the Musashi was a sister to the Yamato which was an 18.1 inch guns that was bigger than even the...our Iowa-class battleships.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Skeldon: And, it's quite a story about...Musashi when it was building; there's a book on it...Build the Musashi. I've read it; it's quite interesting. Anyway, Halsey's torpedo planes and dive bombers...between them, they sank the Musashi. So as indestructible as it was, why, it was sunk by airplanes. And if you have air...air control, then that's possible, but if we did not have air control at that time, I would have...never happened. But anyway, it was...a couple of other ships that were sunk and badly damaged. And...and at last light, the Japanese had turned and were in a retreating motion and that's what the Third Fleet claims...reported to Halsey...the Japanese fleet was retreating south (?). So...then on...on the 25th...or probably, well, on the...on the 24th, yeah, [USS] Independence, converted American cruiser into an aircraft carrier...

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: ...she was spotted and...and sunk by Japanese air power coming from Luzon. And that was the last of the, well I can't say big, but fast carriers, because that was a converted cruiser, yeah; they carried thirty-five airplanes. Anyway, she was sunk...but great...more damage done to an American cruiser which tried to snuff out the fires aboard the Independence. Her crewmen suffered more casualties than the Independence itself.

Mike Zambrano: Gosh.

Mr. Skeldon: Was on the 24th; on the 25th of...during the night that fleet turned around and came through the San Bernardino Straits, so she did not retreat, and she caught the Taffy Three. Six jeep carriers out there, and...you have to

remember the jeep stayed to eighteen knots and the Japanese ships were doing twenty-five, so how far can you run when you're doing eighteen to their twenty-five?! They did manage to run into one rain squall which gave them a...twenty-minute reprieve, and the Japanese could have headed them off, but when they're...Japanese...when they're committed to one plan, they stick to that plan...like night and day.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Skeldon: You do not vary it! Under strict orders. Is that the...Samurai? I don't know, but...anyway they...they could have cut off that...them carriers at any point and annihilated all of them, but they did manage to sink the [USS] Gambier Bay...

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Skeldon: ...with gun fire, so it was the only one American carrier, notice I said American, carrier that had ever been sunk by gun fire...because there was a British carrier that was sunk by...(unintelligible).

Mike Zambrano: Right; that's true, I was just thinking about that as you were saying it.

Mr. Skeldon: Well, I...in all my years in the Navy, I had learned one thing – never to...claim to be the first or the last because you'll...like the first ship here and the first ship there; we are the first (unintelligible words). You'll always find somebody, if you *really* checked on it first. It seems..seems like you never get...get through with that...first...(unintelligible). Anyway, Gambier Bay was sunk and four other CVEs in that group, Taffy Three group, were damaged. And then...when the Japanese fleet finally turned and retreated they were subjected to air attacks. So then this [USS] Saint Lo was sunk and a couple of

others...took another hit, but only the Saint Lo...so two of them carriers were sunk. And Taffy Two...being...we were only twenty, twenty-five miles south of Taffy Three, and...but the Japanese didn't have air...any airplanes out except for a couple of seaplanes which were gun spotters which our planes made short work of. I say ours, why, could have been Taffy Three and Taffy Two. And so anyway, Taffy Two had word of the Japanese...enter attack on Taffy Three, so we had to convert our planes from...depth charges to torpedoes thousand-pound bombs and that takes at least an hour. So, although the attack started at eight, by nine o'clock we had our planes over Taffy Three and...attacking with torpedoes and thousand-pound armor piercing. Because...even a five-hundred pounder, if it's anti-personnel, it's not much use against a battleship or a heavy cruiser, so...and Taffy One was in the same process of switching over from anti-sub patrol to anti-ship patrol; they were arming their planes with torpedoes to bring them up and...and get that Jap fleet. Well, by a few minutes after nine, the Japanese Admiral ordered his ships to converge on him and regroup because they were all scattered all over, and he had...had very little control over them. So the Japanese ships, although they were right in the middle of Taffy Three, they, like I say, they...strict...adherence to orders...they had...point-blank range on their guns...they turned around and...all the...I'm not going to say it...all...and regrouped; there's a word there that I skipped, so use your imagination.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Skeldon: Anyway, then when they regrouped they decided to...to haul for the San Bernardino Straits and get out. Because to a certain extent, they thought it was the main fleet that they were attacking.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Skeldon: Because the CVEs were so different, new, they didn't even have silhouettes of them to compare them with anything. So they...retired. In the meantime, Taffy One was under air attack then, so they had to recall their planes again...for coverage. So that's pretty much the story of Samar, battle of Samar.

Mike Zambrano: Gosh. Uhm well...well, how many...what kind of hours did you put in? I mean this is a battle that takes days; I mean...uhm, were there night operations?

Mr. Skeldon: Well, well, (cough) no, we got to sleep...all night. You...you have to remember now, reveille aboard ship during war is always one hour and twenty minutes before sunrise. Now sunrise, if it's at five o'clock, that means that you get up at three-thirty...because you got an hour and twenty minutes. Twenty minutes is for...you get up; dress; put your flash cover over your bunk so a...a sudden burst of flame coming through...that's a flash; that will set your mattress afire. Now a mattress is only two...two inches thick, so it's not much of a mattress, but...but a flash...so there's a flash cover that protects your bunk; otherwise the fire spreads. And if...if you're going to wash up, wash up and then one hour and your general quarter station. So, reveille was like at three-thirty, so by eight o'clock at night...we...we'd always have our last plane

secured at sunset because we did not operate nights. Today they operate twenty-four hours a day, but during the war, no, they didn't. We did put up planes if we needed them, and just about that time in '44, the middle of '44, night squadrons were coming out. So the [USS] Enterprise, I know in our group, when I was with the Third Fleet, I...I was not on the Kadashan Bay then...following year I was on the...with the Third Fleet. We had the carriers at night...(unintelligible). Well, (unintelligible) during the day time unless it was a big raid, then they would work twenty-four hours. During the...during the invasion of North Africa, I was putting in twenty-one hours...days...three days, so they did get...oh, in the day time when the planes in the air, the Plane Captain can sleep...so, and catch up sleep that way. But on the Kadashan Bay, around...in the Philippines, if we had air, enemy air, in the...over us then we would be at the battle stations. But the Gunners were out...under orders not to fire at the ships because our flash from our guns would give the ship's position away and that's what they were looking for. Once they find a...find you then their...their planes would drop flares, and they'll drop a flare every ten minutes. They'll have to move (unintelligible words) then you really will. So we...we managed to get our sleep up...up until that time.

Mike Zambrano: Hmm.

Mr. Skeldon: Can't say the same for the Third Fleet. They had air up all the time and they were under air attack about...mostly during the night; slept in the day time. Them plane couldn't any...Japanese planes couldn't get any place; we'd shoot them down.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, I imagine the Japanese didn't have very much night time flying capability either.

Mr. Skeldon: Oh they did; they had...they had planes in the air and they would drop these flares that would illuminate the fleet, and then they would send their kamikazes in. Heck, they didn't care if they didn't come back; they weren't supposed to come back. So once they find a fleet, well then, them kamikazes would...or horizontal bombers. But the horizontal bomber...yeah, at night it would be tough, but in the day time them ships couldn't dodge you...them bombs; you could see them fall.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Skeldon: So it was bombing...from ten thousand feet; chances are real good that...it won't score any hits. Dive bombing...that's the way to hit! So their kamikazes were diving...right to the end.

Mike Zambrano: Now the pilot that you...and your group were serving, uhm, did he come through the battle alright?

Mr. Skeldon: Say that last part.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, did the pilot that...that you were serving or working for, did...did he come through the Battle of Leyte Gulf alright?

Mr. Skeldon: Yeah, he got through alright. He...if I remember, well, we had a couple of planes that landed in the drink and one guy he was picked up by a native dug-out canoe and he was with them for about thirty days. And...I don't remember the full story, but...when the...when the Filipinos picked him up, they weren't...he floated around for one day in his dingy and when they picked him

up they weren't sure if he was American or...or Jap, but...as they were approaching him, and then when they got to him, why, they knew he was American and...and they took exceptionally good care of him. But he lived with them...and always on the move. He said then...they finally turned him over to...almost a...a coast watcher; he was American that did not surrender when the Philippines were turned over to the Japanese.

Mike Zambrano: Hmm, okay.

Mr. Skeldon: They ..was a...a guerilla fighters and...and American submarines used to supply them with (unintelligible) food; bags of medicine and whatever.

Mike Zambrano: Right, hmm, alright. So after the Battle of Leyte Gulf, I...I see you...you've got Mindoro listed down here.

Mr. Skeldon: Well, Mindoro...that was (beep sound)...that's just south of Luzon in this little sea, and to get there we had to go through the Surigao Straits. Now once we get into...in to sight of land, you have to remember the Japanese got their eyes on us and they know where we were at, so we had to go through the Surigao Strait and the Surigao Strait is only about six or ten miles wide, so you can see land on both sides of the ship. And we always tried to make a night cruise through there. And those are...uncharted...uncharted waters, and they...raise a little twist in there and it's...the ship has to maneuver around; they could turn. But the Filipino guerrillas, they kept that waterway lit up pretty much; we didn't have to worry about Japanese seeing us because, you know, because of the fires, bonfires...

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh (beep sound).

Mr. Skeldon: We needed those bonfires to navigate through the...through those waters, so the Filipinos...(unintelligible) why, they kept them fire...fires burning for us...going and coming. So then when...when you get in through there then you got the...the Surigao Straits and Sulu Sea and you...you got to go up and...now there is when we were under the night attack going through the Sulu Sea, and now to keep heading north two days and then we were at...on Mindoro, and December 15th was the D-Day there. And our orders were to drop the troops off then come about...retreat (unintelligible words) not retreat but (unintelligible).

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Skeldon: So...the troops there, the troops would be covered by Army Air Force planes from Leyte, but there was a heavy...exceptional...exceptionally heavy rain (beep sound), and the fields (unintelligible) were nothing but dirt fields; farm fields, so the...the Army couldn't take off and use them soggy fields. So we got to stay another day there. So we stayed...15th and 16th, and we supplied the troops with the air cover. Again, on our return trip we were under air attack again at night; the day time we had no trouble because our planes would keep them away. But at night we were under orders not to fire unless we were actually spotted and bombed (unintelligible), so...

Mike Zambrano: So you wouldn't give your position...

Mr. Skeldon: ...anyway we went...from the time we went through the Sulu Sea until we cleared Surigao Straits again on our way out, it was like five days, five nights...five nights we were under air attack. So very little sleep did we get

then. But sailors you see a lot of times in the movies...(beep sound)...they're laying down; their sleeping; taking naps?

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Skeldon: That's true; at sea, especially during the wartime they encourage that because if you have no work to do...sleep...because you don't know if you're going to sleep that night.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah, that's true.

Mr. Skeldon: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Uh, let me...let me just flip the tape over here real quick...so (recording momentarily stopped).

(end of tape 2, side A)

Mike Zambrano: Okay, it's...it's back on. So you were saying...it just...any chance that you guys could get some sleep you would take the opportunity?

Mr. Skeldon: Well yes. Yes, we would and nobody would say anything. And a sailor, I think, they can sleep on a picket fence on the points.

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter).

Mr. Skeldon: Good training.

Mike Zambrano: Gosh, so...hmm, uh, think we were talking about Mindoro also or do we...we didn't quite get into all of Mindoro; is there anything you recall about that or was it pretty much, you know, the same...

Mr. Skeldon: Well, we supplied the troops on shore with air cover. It was supposed to have been supplied by the Army Air Force but said their fields were socked in with rain; yeah, they couldn't get off.

Mike Zambrano: Hmm.

Mr. Skeldon: Stayed an extra day. Oh, and this...this was the first time that the CVEs, our group anyway, well...well, while I'm talking about our group, it was...the ships that were in Taffy Two...

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: ...not just damaged by the Japanese, so that was the reason we went to Mindoro. Taffy Three and Taffy One were pretty well banged up, so they went to...either stateside or Pearl for major overhauls and rebuilds or whatever...what have you. And our ships weren't touched, so we were a hundred percent combat ready, so we went to Mindoro. And we...this time we went right with the bombardment group. In other words, the...they might have been World War I battleships, but their fourteen and sixteen inch guns *worked just as well!* The only thing they didn't have was the speed.

Mike Zambrano: How fast...

Mr. Skeldon: But they were faster than we were. We did eighteen; they could do twenty-two.

Mike Zambrano: And that was considered slower?

Mr. Skeldon: So...so we were...now we're running around with...fire power. So if we got...any air combat or...like that, we got an awful lot of gun power...gun fire.

Mike Zambrano: Well did...weren't you usually escorted by a group of...say, destroyers and cruisers and some battleships?

Mr. Skeldon: No, no. Escort carriers...whatever they run...up until this point, we...all we had was destroyers, couple of destroyers and...and/or DEs.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Skeldon: Like...when we went to Leyte, we had three dest...we had six CVE group...Taffy One or Taffy Two, Taffy Three...there...there would be in...in each group three destroyers then four destroyer escorts. So...and generally the destroyers were the older ones, World War I. And...anyway, the reason World War I destroyers worked just as well for us is because they had more speed than we did, so they could run around us and protect us from submarines; that was the major thing...submarines. And they done a good job on that!

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, good enough job so you...never had any...any submarines attack?

Mr. Skeldon: Oh yeah, yeah, but...they're few and far between in the Pacific; in the Atlantic we had more. But we...we had...by this time, hunter-killer groups were trained and ready so there wouldn't be a hunter-killer group...not too far away from us, generally astern of us, but...they would keep the submarines down. And as long as a submarine was down, it could only do like...probably eight knots, but he couldn't do that very long; he'd run his batteries down. So generally when they were cruising under...water, it would be doing like four knots; we could run away from them. So what they'd do is lay and wait. That's where our anti-sub patrol...come in then, (unintelligible) ahead of us and always keep the submarine down then he can't...(unintelligible) position to fire at you.

Mike Zambrano: Now can you explain to me a little bit about these...these hunter groups?

Mr. Skeldon: They're (unintelligible). There'd be one CVE and he would...and he would have up to five destroyer escorts; maybe one destroyer and four destroyer

escorts. Sometimes you run around with just four, but generally you'd have five. And...Commander that was...in charge of that group...he would be on the...on the destroyer and then the DEs under him, and...and they...they all had their assigned positions. There'd be...generally one each port and starboard...(unintelligible) CVE, and then two of them up forward maybe twenty, thirty miles up forward so that...that's over an hour of cruising for the CVE (unintelligible words) twenty miles. So anyway, they would flank around a carrier unless they...had a submarine; then two of them or three of them would take off. The Commander Escort Group would...order which ones; generally it's always those that are closest. There was one hot destroyer escort...

Mike Zambrano: Hmm okay.

Mr. Skeldon: ...destroyer...[USS] England, and boy, that guy got six submarines!

Mike Zambrano: The USS England?

Mr. Skeldon: Yes.

Mike Zambrano: Ah, okay! Uh, wasn't there a parti...

Mr. Skeldon: (Unintelligible words).

Mike Zambrano: ...there's a famous quote, I think, something about, "There will always be an England in the U.S. Navy"?

Mr. Skeldon: (Unintelligible), now...now that is not named after the country.

Mike Zambrano: Right, that was the...the destroyer.

Mr. Skeldon: (Unintelligible words).

Mike Zambrano: Hmm. Uhm, let's see...you've got Luzon kamikaze next on your list here...January of '45.

Mr. Skeldon: Well, again, that was going up to the Invasion of Luzon...in Lin...Lingayen Gulf. Now that is all...Lingayen Gulf...that is also where the Japanese invaded, and they invaded the Philippines. They...they put a landing party ashore on part of the coast...I'm going to go back to 1942, they put a landing force on the northern coast of Luzon, and then they put another group...two or three days later...the Lingayen Gulf. So there was a nice invasion beach and cove there, so the (unintelligible) group could lay off and...(unintelligible). And, so anyway, we left.

Mike Zambrano: Hmm, uh...

Mr. Skeldon: We left for the...Luzon Invasion on...about January 1st, no before that...20th of January, uh, December 29th we picked up the...the relief...volunteer relief force. The invasion group went in on D-Day and then...reserve group comes there...one or two days after D-Day, and they would fill in which troops ashore were needed or if requested them, so we were like a day behind the...two days behind the bombardment group and one day behind the invasion force. This is one of...one of our great big chain; the ships are, you know, almost in sight of each other, but that...that's how long it was.

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: Then you have to thin it down to get through these different chokepoints – Surigao Strait and then the...the Vellawon (sp?) Straits...and anyway, from the time we...are first in sight of...Luzon, yeah, Leyte...then go through the

Surigao Straits and then Sulu Sea, then (unintelligible words) and then by Mindoro, we go on to the point then heading out towards the Chin...South China Sea, and it would...on our starboard side now would be Luzon and it was the 8th of January. We left port on the 29th of December, so this the 8th of January...the seven...eight o'clock in the morning, five to eight...seven...five...we noticed a big air...dog fight forward of us, uh, about twenty miles, and all you could see is these specks in the sky and you know what they are because they're going around like crazy...

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Skeldon: ...and all of a sudden we see one break away; he's heading...as...as I'm looking at him, he's heading...towards my right, and it was quite a ways out, but now he's getting bigger, so he's...closing with us, and...and somebody reported him and he was identified as our anti-sub patrol...paid too much attention (unintelligible words)...until he got right over onto our starboard beam. He was out at the horizon, and now he's about eight miles out and he makes a sharp turn and he's heading right for us. Well, then he's identified as a Japanese; he's up about two thousand feet or so, and they always make a bead for the carriers, so over the top of all these other ships...I think these were merchant ships; troop transports; cargo ships; supply ships; you name it. Well then they all opened up to gun fire and tin cans opened fire on him, and we opened fire when he came...came into range. He definitely established that he was...heading for the island, and I was right there on the starboard side watching all of it...splinter (sp?) shield...for me, that's all; ducked behind that

splinter shield. It's for the Gun Direct...forty millimeter Gun Director. You could...you could definitely see that all of a sudden he dropped a little bit; changed his course of flight, and upon reading other books, I...it...it had been determined that that...at that point is when he...was hit and killed. So his body motion just gave the stick enough head room to go forward a little bit, so then that changed his trajectory from the island to...the water line, and that's where he hit us...right at the water line...nine by seventeen foot hole right below the island.

Mike Zambrano: Wow.

Mr. Skeldon: See, not...we didn't hit him; he would have hit at the island; we would have...quite possibly had...hun...hundred guys killed or so. But this way, there was only three Purple Hearts; nobody killed.

Mike Zambrano: Really?!

Mr. Skeldon: Three slightly wounded. So about...about five minutes after our hit...well, smoke is coming up from the hangar deck...(unintelligible words) down in the hangar deck they were fighting the fire, and I was in charge of Repair One...flight deck. So my secondary job was...Repair One for later...and...that job called for a Chief; we had no Chief. I was the leading PO, so...(unintelligible) Arresting Gear, so I was in charge of the...there, too, and Arresting Gear. So they called me up and told me to take all the men that I have and all of the pumps, portable pumps, that I have and those that I can pick up on the way and go down and pump that compartment out. So, Repair Two is busy fighting the fire on the hangar deck and Repair Three and Four

are in the engine room; they're shoring the bulkhead up; keep the water from coming out and collapsing the bulkhead...whatever. You got these guys, ten guys or eight guys behind me and they got pumps that I know of; whether they picked up any more I don't know because I'm leading the way down and they're following. The necessary attachments that go with the pumps...what with the suction hoses and (unintelligible), balance, whatever...till we get down...I get down as far as I can go...down the ladder without getting my shoes wet; one more step and I'm in the water. And I squat down and I...look out the hole; I see it's a big hole and you can see a good portion of it in the water, so I said, "Okay, let's turn around and get out of here." So the guys turned around and we went up to the next deck level...up...topside, and...I got on a telephone and called Damage Control and told them that if I...if I start pumping that compartment out I will pump out the whole South China Sea because I can see the whole fleet out through that hole, and most of it is below the water line, so they told me to stand by and...they must have yakked it out between them there in the Damage Control. And then later they said, "(Unintelligible), return to flight deck and stand by," so that's what we did. And...and we sailed for four days with that hole in the side of the ship and...and we had a...a seven degree...list starboard and forward down; we ended up with seven degree list. But...when we stabilized we had fifteen degree and then by pumping fuel and moving ballasts...the anchor that was on the starboard side, well, they just cut that lose and got rid of it.

Mike Zambrano: Hum! Wow!

Mr. Skeldon: Pumped...pumped a lot of fuel, water, whatever, gasoline; whatever could be moved. Talking about gasoline, why, that was right next to the gasoline compartment where he hit. He couldn't have hit us in a better spot than if we would have put a bulls eye on the ship!

Mike Zambrano: Really?

Mr. Skeldon: He would have hit us ten foot lower, he would have cracked our keel. If he would have hit us ten foot higher, we would have burned to the water line because he had twin incendiaries aboard. One was a dud, so that one didn't go off. If he would have hit us ten foot forward, he...he would have hit our gas tank; he would have blown...blew up; if he would have hit us ten foot aft, he would have hit us in the engine room and we'd have been out of power; out of luck. So he (unintelligible)...there was a guy had a hernia operation on January 7th, day before...

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: ...and he was laying in his bunk in sick bay. Now that was a deck above where...where the hit was...a deck above, and on the opposite side of the ship; he was on the port side. Now when we got hit, he jumped out of his bunk in sick bay; when his feet hit the deck, the bottoms of his feet burned, so he got back in the bunk and he said, "F_____ them; if they want me, they're going to come and carry me...carry me out!"

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter).

Mr. Skeldon: Because he...he couldn't get out.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Skeldon: Now...now this bomb burned under water and the deck on the other side of the ship, deck above...was that hot. Of course, you know these ships are painted with anti-retardant paint.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Skeldon: I don't know if I mentioned it in the Santee earlier description. Santee after the Invasion of North Africa...they got word...of what was happening in the Pacific – fire going from one compartment to another through the bulkheads...

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Skeldon: ...through the paint.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Skeldon: We had to scrape all the paint off of the inside of the ship, yeah. Maybe I mentioned it; maybe I didn't, but yeah.

Mike Zambrano: No, I...I think you did, but I think I've read that also, too, there...there was that problem...that the paint would catch on fire.

Mr. Skeldon: Oh, that fire retardant paint...that saved a lot of fires.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah, I can imagine.

Mr. Skeldon: Now, aboard them carriers, especially today, today everybody in the Air Department...they don't care if you're a Yeoman, office type, if you're in the Air Department, you go to Fire Fighting School, and I had been...Fire Fighting School four different times and four different places. (Unintelligible words), the Firemen. And the problem was, you know, the...the fire would start, say, in a hangar deck and the planes are exploding and burning and...the Repair Party gets up there, and they might have the fire pretty well subdued, and then

all of a sudden a bomb that's on the airplane or the gas tank blows up
and...and wipes out that Repair crew.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Skeldon: So then the next guys that are around there, they grab the hose and they go right in there and they're not experienced with it...then if there's foam...they'll put a solid stream on it and wash it away; the Fire Fighters upped it. If you got a foam, you don't monkey with it; leave it!

Mike Zambrano: If you have a...a what?

Mr. Skeldon: Foam.

Mike Zambrano: Oh boom?

Mr. Skeldon: It's...foam...f-o-a-m.

Mike Zambrano: Foam? Okay.

Mr. Skeldon: It's a powder; they mix it in with the water before it comes out the hose nozzle, and it comes out in a foam, and it puts a blanket down. And once you get a blanket over, say, gasoline, the gasoline won't burn. But if you walk through it, your footsteps are going to brush it away. And there's always that possibility of it flashing then, and there'd be a vacuum and that's what you don't want...is a fire vacuum. So don't...if you're moving around, you move your feet slowly so you don't disturb that foam. But if you're going to fight a fire, you don't...put a solid stream of water on it...on the foam. But if it's a gasoline fire, you don't use a...solid stream; use a spray...like a shower.

Mike Zambrano: Hmm, okay. Yeah, I can see why they send you to school for that. I mean I...I've never heard of any of that.

Mr. Skeldon: Well, incendiary bombs, the Navy spent millions of dollars because [USS] Oriskany...I can't remember the year, but it must have been sometime probably in the 50s or 60s, they had an incendiary fire, and that incendiary...that would burn under water, so they almost burned the ship down, yeah, the almost lost the ship. So they experimented with...for years and the outcome of that was...from now on all of the ships, all of the carriers carried their incendiary bombs in a special compartment that's built over the side of the ship. So if there's a fire any place near that incendiary, they'd just flip a switch and that whole compartment is dumped over...and into the drink. That's one way...and...incendiary fires...the...the Navy always did have fog that put that hose on for it and it would come out like a shower...

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: ...so now, for incendiaries, you take that fog and you break that down again; still finer, so that it comes out like a mist. Now that is real fine water; a mist, and you...you have to have...like...burning glasses on...more like welder's glasses really. But the real dark glass and...and the lead man...he'll have them glasses on because otherwise you can't see into that...it's like a million candle power of light...incendiary. So now this can get...get in there real close and see what's happening, and you *do* have to get in close. But then...but then again, there's your boom, a water boom, that they put on the...end of the...well, Fireman's hose...that's got a...like a eight foot reach. It's a pipe with a sprinkler head on the end of it. But you also call the engineering department and tell them to cut the water pressure; water pressure is generally

a hundred pounds. But when it's in an incendiary fire, you tell them to cut it back to fifty, and then you're breaking it down even finer yet...and that...that's the way you go in with these glasses on with the water pressure cut down in half and with a mist. If it gets kind of hot, the ping (sp?) behind you will water you down; they'll put water on top of you, and that's the way you fight it.

Mike Zambrano: And how long...how long did...did you fight these fires the Kadashan?

Mr. Skeldon: Well, it only took a matter of minutes; maybe twenty minutes. The hangar deck...all the fires were out and it...it...and the one below the water line there, that took care of itself...so...

Mike Zambrano: Well, with this hole in the side of the ship like you described, uhm, what did they do; did they...batten down the hatches for that particular section of the ship or...

Mr. Skeldon: Well it...that is, but you have to remember, a big carrier and a CVL, they were built on combat ship's hulls; we were built on freighter hulls, so there's only three compartments really – A, B, and C. So you close down; we closed down the...any time you go to general quarters, you got the...got the ship closed down, so we have three compartments and water will seek its own level, so we got through...seven degrees...well, we had fifteen, but we corrected that to seven. And, so that's the way we were running. Now if the water level could get up high enough over some of these bulkheads and spill into the B section, now you got a Titanic; that's what happened to them. They had water-tight compartments, but it was only vertical, not horizontal, so the water kept rising

horizontally, and then it'd spill over the top and into the next empty compartment.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Skeldon: Yeah, so, yes, we...when...when you go into action, all your compartments that can be sealed are sealed off, and the escort carriers really only had three compartments, so it was...it was A, B and C. So our A section was, except for above the water line, why, clear.

Mike Zambrano: Is there any...any other big different like that between a, say an Essex-type carrier and...and a carrier like the Kadashan Bay?

Mr. Skeldon: Well, it's...that's like putting a...a fly against a...(unintelligible); a fly is bigger. He...he's more maneuverable; he can run away, so escort carrier would do eighteen knots; that's tops; I'm talking flank speed now. And a big carrier would do thirty-two. A big carrier had *hundreds* of compartments, water-tight compartments; *hundreds* of them; we had three.

Mike Zambrano: Hmm.

Mr. Skeldon: The big carriers had four screws; two rudders; we had...most of them had one screw; one rudder. So maneuverability, speed, maneuverability, water tight integrity, armament, uh, the best armament on the carriers is their airplanes, so get your airplanes off the ship. If they're not...if they're not properly...armed for the occasion...but if you're like that Taffy Three, if you're trapped, you still get the airplanes off. If he has no gas and can't fly, we going to push them off!

Mike Zambrano: (Chuckle).

Mr. Skeldon: Because if you don't get rid of him, he's nothing but a big bomb sitting there waiting for somebody to explode him, so we will push him over the side; get rid of him.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Skeldon: I...I seen...we had airplanes come in and blow a tire upon landing; maybe hit the deck a little too hard, and the tire would blow out. And if we had more planes in the air...now the question is...is that airplane closer to the fantail or is he closer to the bow? If he's closer to the fantail, that's where he goes, over the side. If he's closer to the bow, we will fight and get him because it's going to be one heck of a big fight to move that airplane with...what...with a flat tire. And we don't want to lose any of them airplanes that are up in the air.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Skeldon: So clear the deck one way or another! So I've seen airplanes moved aside because of a flat tire.

Mike Zambrano: Now, question...earlier you said that the...that the ship was at a seven degree list. Is it possible to land a plane or launch one with a seven degree list?

Mr. Skeldon: We did.

Mike Zambrano: Really?

Mr. Skeldon: Other things...the book (unintelligible) but we did. Also the barriers, getting back to...the Arresting Gear, the barriers...it's nothing but a wire fence...that if an airplane does not pick up a deck pennant, it's looked as not picked up a deck pennant...

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: ...rather than flying directly into all those airplanes that are parked forward...today they don't have that problem. All those airplanes are parked forward. Now...you...you got to put the (unintelligible) fence up to stop him, so we had three of them barriers; three fences in plain language.

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: Each...each barrier had two cables; one was four and a half foot off the deck and the other one three and a half foot off the deck. So there would have been...four cables because one was...one barrier was always left down that was an emergency. You lose one of the...your others, you still have one more. So anyway, we had an occasion when...where a lot of planes come in...one after the other, and they were chewing up my barriers...hitting them; taking...taking the barriers out. So instead of three barriers, two wires each barrier, so that's six wires, we ended up with only one wire.

Mike Zambrano: Oh.

Mr. Skeldon: One barrier with only one wire and the Arresting Gear Officer asked me what my suggestion was, "Should we land this here next plane or what?" I said, "Or what; yes we land him." Now the book says no, you never land them with less than two barriers, but...we had no other place to send them at that time, so...

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Skeldon: ...we could have sent them over to one of the other ships, but they were busy landing their planes and...and we don't want to...waste any time. Because

when you're landing airplanes, you're heading into the wind, and a perfect target for a submarine because you're...no zig zagging then.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Skeldon: So we landed them safely, and made the best landing, I think, (chuckles) that...nobody know what's happening; a lot of times they give a little bit more, yeah; eyeballs everything better.

Mike Zambrano: Hmm, uhm, let's see...okay, you had told me that the ship is still able to sail after being hit by the kamikaze. Where did you go to for repairs?

Mr. Skeldon: Well, let me...let me finish with that then. Uh, our gas...our gasoline tank was intact, but the pump room sustained a little damage; we couldn't pump gasoline, so we couldn't operate; couldn't pump gasoline; we couldn't operate. But after working all day...probably and all night, they got the pump working but they couldn't...fuel as fast as they liked, but we could fuel airplanes. So what we did was...these here other three carriers that were with us...as they needed airplanes, we'd send them replacements. We'd send them our planes over so that they would be under full strength, so we ended up with four fighters and two torpedo bombers and we kept them. And we floated with the fleet for, our fleet, for two days. At eight...this happened in the morning, eight o'clock, all...all day the 8th and the 9th, and on the 10th we got orders...well, we didn't operate; we just stayed with them. We did not maneuver with them always; we tried to...we kept up the speed which was probably fourteen or fifteen knots when we were not landing planes, but when we were landing planes, we...we'd try to stay away from them and would

travel at our...our most...economical course and speed so...so that we wouldn't suck in too much sea water and rupture those bulkheads.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Skeldon: So we didn't...never took it up to eighteen. So fourteen, fifteen, why, we could handle. But...so we kept these four planes aboard, then on the 10th we had orders to join a slow convoy, slow convoy...that was six knots; seven miles an hour. We joined them and we kept our planes on deck but in a need of emergency of any kind, if there was some Jap plane or something in the air, we would put our fighters up; if there was a submarine around, yes, we would put our...maybe two fighters up and torpedo bomber, one or two. And so we had enough air power to give a little bit of protection for us and the convoy that we were with. These were empty cargo ships of some sort or landing craft and we took them back to Leyte Gulf. So we went into Leyte Gulf. At Leyte Gulf there was a Ship Repair Unit. Ship Repair Unit is a...a...just what the title is. Generally what it was...was...a lot of these civilians that worked in the shipyard during...during the early part of the war or before the war even, and they...very patriotic...they wanted to go into the military, so the Navy was glad to get them and they put them in the Ship Repair Unit because that's...their original trade.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Skeldon: And then they...so they...now they have the experienced guys there. And they had these floating dry docks; they built them in the States and they took them over in sections...they would...in the Pacific, they'd lay them on one side and

float them across under tow to...and they pulled them all the way to Leyte.
Now Leyte...was...was still fighting on the beach.

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: And Leyte Gulf was pretty well secure. So they...right at these here sections, put them...bolted them together and we could have put a battleship in...in there; not a big carrier, but a battleship they could. Well, when we went in, the CVE there was a...a gun boat in there with us.

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: And they pumped the...compartments out on that...floating dry dock; lifted a...lifted that up; we would float it...or...or put it in the water. We...floated us in then they pumped it out and would raise us up out of the water. You could walk around on that deck inside there, and matter of fact, the guys were out there scraping our hull while Ship Repair Unit was...working on the side.

Mike Zambrano: How long do you think it took to repair that hole?

Mr. Skeldon: Well, they just put a temporary patch on overnight; next day we were in the water and two days later, oh, then we started stripping the ship and...and as we were going...heading towards the States, we'd stop at different island and offload the...you know, I...I got that a little bit mixed up. We did not go into dry dock...for that hole. They...they rolled us over. We went into dry dock in...November and the scraped our bottom off, but in January we didn't go into that dry dock. The dry dock was there, but the Ship Repair Unit rolled us over and they put a temporary patch on us. And we went to the different islands and we offloaded...we offloaded our planes at one; we offloaded our

aviation stores at another one, and our fuel, aviation fuel and so on and so forth...at most outlying points, so that helped logistics. I'm sorry about mixing them two up.

Mike Zambrano: Oh, that's okay.

Mr. Skeldon: November, we went into dry dock and...the...the ship's crew scraped the side and...and dry dock crew...they painted it; they had a painter who was in this here steel, wire-screen basket so that he wouldn't fall out, and the crane would operate it; lower him down to the bottom and he'd be spraying the paint. Now that was really something. It's hot, plastic paint underneath the...underneath this here fifty-gallon drum there's a blow pot with flames heating up that paint that's in the fifty-gallon drum, and this guy's got his asbestos glove on because it's still hot when it...when it's going through the sprayer...

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: ...and he sprays the side of the ship as the crane is raising and lowering and moving him over to the next section. It's six inches wide and every bit of, I would say, eight or ten foot vertically and that would be one sweep; he's got ten foot of ship painted (chuckles). And then they would raise him until he got to the top...above the water line, and then they'd move him over and he'd paint. So anyway, the...scrape the bottom...the...the ship's company done that, and three coats of hot, plastic paint on the ship, and then we're in the water; twenty-four hours...ready for another ship.

Mike Zambrano: Really? Now that is fast!

Mr. Skeldon: Yeah, in...in and out...twenty-four hours. That thing (unintelligible).

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter).

Mr. Skeldon: It's like I...I got to talking to one of the crew from the float barge...uh, floating dry dock...

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: ...I said, "What the heck would you guys do if the Japs would pull an air raid on this place here?" He said, "Oh," he said, "we'd just (unintelligible) into our compartment and sink it just like a submarine."

Mike Zambrano: Really?!

Mr. Skeldon: Their birthing compartments, living compartments, and their galley and everything was built right inside of them, so that...if...if they were under attack, they'd just sink it and sit on the bottom of the bay that they were in, and when they got an "All clear," why, they'd come back to the surface.

Mike Zambrano: Wow, that's amazing!

Mr. Skeldon: Yeah, you'd think they'd get submarine in it. (chuckle)

Mike Zambrano: (Chuckle), yeah, they should. I...I think I've seen pictures of those, and I think the West...a picture of the West Virginia I think it was...sitting in one of those dry docks. It literally...kind of pulls a ship right out of the water, right?

Mr. Skeldon: Yep, well, you know, you don't have anything and then way out in them outlying points...and then all of a sudden you see there's a floating dry dock there, so...and...and they want them as close to where the action is as possible because...you save a ship from sinking.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Skeldon: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Skeldon: Even like...like with us, they rolled a ship over and they welded a patch on the side, and there was about two feet of that patch still in the water; they couldn't roll us over any further, so they welded that under water.

Mike Zambrano: Hmm!

Mr. Skeldon: Yeah, wonderful guys them Ship Repair Units; SRU, Ship Repair Unit.

Mike Zambrano: So where to from there? Where did you head out?

Mr. Skeldon: Oh then, we...we had a temporary patch; we went to the States. But like I said, we stopped at all these here different islands and depending on what we had...that's what we all called it, but we always tried to make it the western-most island to off...offload different things because you wouldn't want to put deck pennants over in...in some island that doesn't have deck pennants.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Skeldon: See, in other words, certain islands carried certain stock, so these repair ships...they knew where to go to get what. And at the same time, when I was in the office and...and I had to order deck pennants or...or zinc or...or...whatever...more or less I would know what island we were going to; I'd put an order in for such and such stock while we were there at that island. Then the off...that...when the...when the ship...when a U.S. warship left California heading west towards Japan...when they left the States, they were a transport; I don't care if it was a battle ship. They loaded some cargo on it...wherever they could; they loaded cargo, and then when they got to Pearl Harbor or...maybe Espiritu Santo...

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: ...they would go in there and offload...depends on what...like I said what your cargo is...where it went, and they would offload. Now that helped solve the...log...logistic problem. If you, if only freighters took them...there you got the whole fleet coming into San Francisco or San Diego or what, you load them down now that you got all of them ships; they're like a transport and offload them later. Like...like if the Enterprise was leaving...after maybe a major overhaul in San Francisco or Seattle...when they...when they were finished with their overhaul, they would load that down to the gills with airplanes and they'd offload them. Where? Hey, why not Espiritu Santo? You can't get too much closer to Japan. Or if they were going to go on some kind of mission from Pearl Harbor, like we did on the Santee...not the Santee, the Monterey, uh, we'd offload all the airplanes at the...Pearl Harbor. And then you had your squadron onboard, but you couldn't operate because you...you had the flight deck loaded.

Mike Zambrano: Gosh! Yeah, I guess that makes sense. I mean why dedicate other ships to bringing out materials if...

Mr. Skeldon: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: ...if you...you could have your combat ships do it.

Mr. Skeldon: Right! It's going that way anyway. The only thing is you can't operate; they don't have to operate between the States and wherever is secured, or relatively secure.

Mike Zambrano: So where in the States did the Kadashan Bay actually end up?

Mr. Skeldon: Well, she ended up in...California...L.A.; there's a yard there, civilian yard, and they patched us up and rebuilt the ship. In the meantime the crew get a...a leave. I don't know, I think we got nineteen days then. Anyway, we could come back to the ship and then we had a little shakedown; everything was good, so they loaded us up with airplanes and we dropped them off at...at...I don't know where they dropped them off. When we got to Pearl Harbor, they asked me if I wanted to transfer to the Monterey; I said, "Yeah." He said, "Be on quarter deck in half an hour," I said, "I'll be there in twenty minutes." And I was transferred from one ship to another in Pearl Harbor in dungarees, and that's a...pretty much of a no-no, because Pearl Harbor was strictly regulation. If you had a wristwatch and you were in town on liberty...if you recall, our white uniform...the sleeves were very much short of your wrist. In other words, your wrist was...was not covered with a sleeve, so if you had a wristwatch on and it was on that area, the Shore Patrol would pick you up; send you back to the ship; you're on report.

Mike Zambrano: Really? (beep sound).

Mr. Skeldon: Wearing a wristwatch...it's non-regulation. Now if you'd slide it up your arm and get it underneath that sleeve and they don't see it...if you got...can you imagine walking around...uh, Hawaii...Honolulu with sunglasses on...in uniform and the Shore Patrol picks you up because you're wearing non-regulation glasses, yeah, you're on report.

Mike Zambrano: Huh!

Mr. Skeldon: Imagine walking around that sunny...Honolulu...being on the beach there...sunglasses, no, you don't do that. The only ones that wear sun...sunglasses are pilots and flight crew because they were issued sunglasses.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Skeldon: They're the only ones that had wristwatches issued to them so they could wear them.

Mike Zambrano: Well, what would happen if you got on report?

Mr. Skeldon: Well, then you'd have to go and talk to your Skipper, and he'd (unintelligible)...well, depends on him. If he...if...if he felt good (beep sound), a good crew, why he'd give you a walk...uh, a talking to and that's it; chew your butt out a little bit. But...it...it wouldn't be too much, but the thing is regulation was regulation; they were spiffed up.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Skeldon: They, oh, if you walked on the grass, if you're on a beach some place had a naval air station or...navy training station or anything...you walk on the grass and you...you had it; you walk on the sidewalk. And today, they don't care where you walk.

Mike Zambrano: (Chuckle).

Mr. Skeldon: That's the difference in the military.

Mike Zambrano: So what...what made you go over to the Monterey Bay [s/b Monterey]; I mean why didn't...I mean you go with the Kasashan Bay all this time; you'd been

through Leyte Gulf and some other actions, why...why did you chose to go to the Monterey Bay?

Mr. Skeldon: Well, I was pretty much of a loner; I was and am. I asked my two...Second Class if they...either one of them wanted to go...because if they were going, it would have been an automatic promotion for them.

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: Uh, "No," they said, "we used to this ship; we're used to the crew; we got a lot of friends here," but with me it was the other way around. I got friends here and I said, "Now (unintelligible) next ship that I'm going on, there's guys over there that are going to be my friends." So...so I was on...actually I was on five different ships during the war, but two of them were TAD, so I...don't...don't count them. But one time, two years ago, I went to one of these here reunions...Escort Carrier Sailors and Airmen association.

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: It...it's the whole group of escort carriers.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Skeldon: It...it's...of course, all groups don't belong to the...but I would say better than fifty percent of them do. And...I...I see this here one sailor and he's got his ball cap on and it says "Charger" on there.

Mike Zambrano: (Chuckle).

Mr. Skeldon: I went up to him and I asked him I said, "Well, how many guys do you have here (beep sound) at the reunion from the [USS] Charger?" He holds up one finger; he says, "One, me."

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter).

Mr. Skeldon: I said, “No, two! You and I.” I said, “I was aboard the Charger, too.” I was aboard it for six weeks. He had half a smile on his face now because he’s got a ship mate.

Mike Zambrano: Oh just...just hold on one second. I’m going to flip this...I’m going to add this other tape in real quick, so just hold that thought.

(end of tape 2, side B)

Mike Zambrano: (Unintelligible), so you’re the only two Charger that’s at the reunion?

Mr. Skeldon: Yeah. He...he was happy because now he’s got a ship mate there.

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter).

Mr. Skeldon: The...this year when I went to the reunion, I didn’t see him or at least I didn’t see any cap with the...with the Charger’s name on it. So even the Princeton, the Princeton was sunk, but...I was only onboard that for about two weeks in Philadelphia, and they were getting ready to go on...their shakedown. And generally they got to Trinidad and make a cruise around there for a couple of days and then come back...a month. But the...the small group, there was ten of us traveling in the New (unintelligible) Group and...and they would rather have been in Philadelphia at the time, so...I was the junior man on that...that man detail. Boy, I would rather go to Philadelphia, too, so that’s where we ended up...back at Philly! And the Princeton...went along without us.

Mike Zambrano: So, let’s see. So you’re at Pearl when you transfer over to the Monterey?

Mr. Skeldon: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: And you essentially had the same job on the Monterey?

Mr. Skeldon: Oh yeah, yeah. There was a First Class there, but he had just made First Class, you know, like maybe two, three months ago whereas I had mine for over...well over a year; probably a year and a half, so I was...senior to him, you know, so we had no problems. He was a real nice guy, but he...he survived the war, but he didn't survive the peace. There was...what was it...19...82, I guess it was, I flew down to Florida...no, it was '83 I flew down to Florida...and I had contacted him before hand, and he had a son that lived in Orlando, and I had a son that lived in Orlando, so we got together, but he was already in bad shape.

Mike Zambrano: Oh.

Mr. Skeldon: He had a cane he had to walk with, and if there was anything at all on the floor...on a sidewalk in front of him, even it was just a...sheet of newspaper, he'd have to walk around it because he couldn't step over it. He said it...it...anything high...I don't know, if it's out of proportion or what, so imagine going from the car to the restaurant because we went out to have lunch...

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: ...yeah, I had to...half carry him. He had his cane, but still I was on the other arm and...I think I had more weight on me than he had on the cane, but he was a nice guy, so I...figured we better not go to any more restaurants or that...just stay at home. Well, from the kitchen to the living room...well, there's tile in one room and a rug in the other room, so there's a...a little bit of a lap and he had a project to get over it.

Mike Zambrano: Really?!

Mr. Skeldon: His son's house, not his, so...yeah, he was in bad shape. And then the following year I came back to...(cough) excuse me, visit again and oh, he had deceased so...find another ship mate. Well, like I say, I'd board this ship; that ship and the other ship, and it didn't bother me because now when I go to these different reunions, why, I got my choice! And same thing with...with these...CVE group. I go into the different ships; some of them...that had more sailors than present...they have like a...like a room (unintelligible) of the room; go in there and shoot the breeze with them; tell a couple of sea stories with them and exchange it...so they all got to know me and...I'm welcome all over. Now, if I'd of been just one ship...then I...then like them...and like a lot of other guys, you know, they're restrictive, yeah, again, smooth sailing. I've been to over seventy reunions already!

Mike Zambrano: Really?!

Mr. Skeldon: Three...three reunions a year for twenty-three years; you can figure it out.

Mike Zambrano: Wow, that's a lot of reunions.

Mr. Skeldon: Lot of fun! That's the way I look at it.

Mike Zambrano: Do you have any more planned for this year?

Mr. Skeldon: I have one more reunion, and then I have a family reunion. Yeah, I been to two already this year. Uh, escort carriers – the Monterey and the next one will be a Navy Enlisted Reserve Association; it's a bunch...of reserves got together and formed that association...which it's all over the country...of all over...wherever there's a Navy Reserve...

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Skeldon: ...good outfit.

Mike Zambrano: Well, getting back to the Monterey, what can you tell me? You get to the Monterey and...what's it like?

Mr. Skeldon: Well, Monterey and Kadashan Bay and the Santee as far as that's concerned, they're (cough)...pretty much the same because the Arresting Gear units are the same; are four gear and all of them had just three barriers, but now I...I don't remember if the Santee had four; something always tells me that the Santee had four barriers, but I wasn't in the Arresting Gear then so I couldn't say, but they did have nine deck pennants. So that lead...leads me to think that maybe they had three. The Arresting Gear is the same; the size of the...well, on the Monterey now, the one big difference was they...they had the Arresting Gear pretty much divided in...in half. So one half would take...take the duty on odd days and the second half would take it...on even days. So I told Ivan, he was the other First Class, I told him to take...to take the first and I would take the second. I said, "I realize I...I was more...(unintelligible) than on odd days than on even days, but I'm not worried about it at sea; you're not going any place anyway." The only difference in the...in the deal was...chow. The...the group that had the duty would go to early chow, and then they'd come back. If they had the Arresting Gear secured for any reason during the day, the...unit or the group that had the duty would take the duty. If it was to land a plane...only one plane or that...well, half the crew...they'd land it and

let the other half rest because you'd never know when you're going to have to stay up all night or whatever.

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: And...there was no...splitting that. So when we were at GQ, everybody was there. If it was just...to launch the four planes or we cover four planes, you could do that with half the crew...and the other half could rest. But that was the only difference really. But...there was still chow. Now they had the...the Tin Shop cut out pieces of tin, stainless steel, and...they would cut them in different shapes. They had four sections; they cut four different shapes, and then a fifth was for dupers I guess you might call them. Anyway they would feed according to...to shape. It...the one that had the duty...the...the whole ship...if it was the third section that had the duty, well then the third section maybe it was a heart shape. They would have head of the line privileges...chow line, and then heart, diamond and spade and...whatever; all these different shapes, and they would...that's one way they had control of the chow line. Of course, First Class could go...most any time and...and...to the head of the chow line. And...a...little...little bit of spurts like that they would...little bit of difference here and there, but nothing great. Gear is the same; squadrons operate, more or less, the same, but you got more of them. Then you're running with the big carriers, so you got battleships and cruisers with you. Generally the task group...there'd be maybe four task groups. Generally...towards the war...there actually was five but one was always in

port resting; there's be two big carriers and two little ones; little ones like CVL, light carriers; they don't like to be called little.

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter), I can see why.

Mr. Skeldon: But I understand; I heard from one guy that has a...a sight on the web that the original description of a CVL was "Aircraft Carrier Little."

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter).

Mr. Skeldon: But then they came out with the "Light," because they didn't like that "Little," I guess.

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter).

Mr. Skeldon: Anyway, you run around (cough), two big carriers; two small carriers and one battleship; maybe one or two heavy cruiser; one or two light cruisers and then about twenty destroyers in two rings – one in close and one out at the horizon. The horizon is generally around eight, ten miles. And...and then some of the groups would maybe have three big carriers and small...two light, and one battleship, again, the rest of them would be the same – light cruisers and destroyers. There'd be a task force. Do you...do you know how they designate task force; task group, task unit?

Mike Zambrano: Uh, you mean the number?

Mr. Skeldon: The numbering and what it means – task group; task group; task unit; task element?

Mike Zambrano: Yeah, yeah...

Mr. Skeldon: Well...

Mike Zambrano: ...but I always wondered about the number; how did they designate the number?

Mr. Skeldon: The...the first number...if it was a three, it was the Third Fleet. If it was five, it was the Fifth Fleet. Now Task Force-38...that tells me it's the Third Fleet, Eighth Task Force – 38.

Mike Zambrano: Oh!

Mr. Skeldon: If it's a Task Group, now you got Task...Task Group. So you got a 38.4, so it's Third Fleet, Eighth Group...or Task Force 38, and 4...the fourth group, so a group is what...two carriers, one battleship...

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Skeldon: ...because there's...yeah, and accompanying destroyers, so there's four groups. Now a Task Unit, would be...take that group and break it down again, so you add another point to the number, and so then that would TU 38.4.1.2 or...point whatever, so you could break it right down to one ship.

Mike Zambrano: So Taffy Two would have been...what; group or unit?

Mr. Skeldon: Taffy was just a...a name.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Skeldon: It...so Taffy Two would have been Task Unit 77.4.2.

Mike Zambrano: Hmm, okay. Huh.

Mr. Skeldon: 77...7 was Seventh Fleet 77. So that would've been Task...Task Force 77.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Skeldon: And then point four...77.4...now, 77.4 was all three groups. But now when you run into Unit 77.4.1, that's Taffy One. Taffy Two 77.4.2; that would've been Taffy Two.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Skeldon: So, that was just...a nickname they gave it.

Mike Zambrano: Oh, okay. So, just getting back to the Monterey, what was the first action that you saw while you were on her?

Mr. Skeldon: Monterey?

Mike Zambrano: Yes.

Mr. Skeldon: Went to Okinawa (cough), excuse me. We went to Okinawa, and of course, there was nothing but mopping up then, but the kamikazes were still coming out. And...at the beginning of Okinawa, they were coming out...by the hundreds; they'd come out in droves! But they started to work on the destroyers then...They...what the heck did they call them?

Mike Zambrano: The Picket Ships?

Mr. Skeldon: Picket Ships, yeah. They started working on them...because they got..finally worked it out that the Picket Ships were doing all of the warning and wipe them out first. But...the Navy turned around and put a bunch of anti-aircraft guns on...landing craft...

Mike Zambrano: That's right!

Mr. Skeldon: ...and...and put them out there with the Picket Ships. Then...now...and so now when they run to a bunch of these here rockets, why, then...then...it didn't help

them any. So...for every...for every weapon that's discovered, there's a counter weapon.

Mike Zambrano: Since we're talking about Picket Ships, do you recall the...destroyer, Laffy?

Mr. Skeldon: Yeah. Yeah, I...never sailed with it, but she...she was attacked...what, by about five or six kamikazes...seven? I think she had nine raids in one day, but they weren't all kamikazes, so I think it was nine raids, but five of them were kamikazes; I think they took about four or five hits, didn't they?

Mike Zambrano: Yeah, five or six; some say...hit by seven kamikazes. It really depends on who you talk to.

Mr. Skeldon: Yeah. Well, uh, you get different versions; you looked in the same direction and somebody...one guy will remember it one way; another guy, the other way. And I remember years ago, I...I read a paragraph that they passed that paragraph around and they wanted like six, seven different guys...to read that paragraph. So, and then they'd question them...individually.

Mike Zambrano: (Chuckle).

Mr. Skeldon: And some of them...(unintelligible) would end...difference of like...night and day...by the time the seventh interpreter would...each one would write...read the paragraph and then write his version of it, and by the time it came to the seventh person, why, it was...quite a bit of difference.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah, I...I've heard of that test.

Mr. Skeldon: So, that's true; lot of truth in that.

Mike Zambrano: So, Okinawa...uh, I notice on your list here you wrote, "Okinawa Gunto (sp?),” what's the Gunto?

Mr. Skeldon: Yeah, that's Japanese; I think it's a...it's a...does it mean island or a group of islands?

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, I don't know; I'm going to have to look it up.

Mr. Skeldon: I...I did know the definition of it at one time, but, like everything if I don't write it down...I've got a short memory. Not really, because I'm remembering a lot of this.

Mike Zambrano: You certainly have!

Mr. Skeldon: Remember a lot of this because I wrote *a lot* about this; I wrote four books.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah, you mentioned that before; any...any possibility of...getting any of those?

Mr. Skeldon: Well, the...the first book I wrote was Minority Cruise Plus Two...

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Skeldon: ...and...and (cough) that is out of print, so no, that's the end of that. And that's the one that I liked the most because there's a lot of humor in it. And actually, it...it was nothing but my first year...six years in the Navy, and it...and it was written actually for my grandchildren, so I did dress up a lot of...things.

Mike Zambrano: But...

Mr. Skeldon: But there's a lot of humor in it, and...I ran across a lot of guys that had that book, and I'd always tell them, I said, "If you want to sell it, let me know; I'll buy it off of you because I've had a lot of calls; people want that book." And then the second book was all about the Kadashan Bay, and the squadron. And that was nothing but stories that were written by different crew members, and I put it all into one book...each story as they gave...gave it to me. Some I

correct the grammar, but with the author's permission. Some guys wouldn't even let me correct the grammar....so much less...they get more nautical because some guys were still work...they worked downstairs and they went upstairs, so I would put "down below and above...topside; no, no, no...yeah. I think about some of them.

Mike Zambrano: Who...

Mr. Skeldon: I said, well, if I did correct it, the people that read it that know him would say, no he doesn't talk that way. So anyway, that's out of print because they were printed by a regular printer. And then the last two books, Escort Carriers in the Pacific, and Escort Carriers in the Atlantic, were printed by Trafford (sp?); Trafford is a non-demand printing company. If anybody requests one book, they print one book and ship it. If they request ten books; they print ten books and ship it...on demand. I don't know how they do it, but I'm going to figure it's...monography.

Mike Zambrano: What was the name of the company again; Trapper?

Mr. Skeldon: Trafford, T-r-a-f-f-o-r-d.com.

Mike Zambrano: Now what was the name of the...the second book; the one about the Kadashan Bay?

Mr. Skeldon: Well that's...that's out of print. That was stories written by individual sailors. Now there was a lot of good stories in there...like one of the pilots wrote about...a raid that the squadron pulled on that castle – some place in Okina; I can't remember the name of it now. And they breached the wall with their bombs; they had a bomb that dropped five hundred pounders on it...in the

same spot, then they finally breached the wall, and...then the Marines could get in there.

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: And...and then another pilot (cough) would write about...how...upon returning from a...a raid...how they would find the ship; the sequence that they went through. That was interesting because it's...different things that us guys that didn't fly could read and learn. Now me, I wrote about how Arresting Gear operates; what purpose of the piston; how big the piston is and what it does; what kind of fuel did we use in there and what the valves did, and what kind of cables we had and...and then I wrote about how to pour sockets, and a lot of guys on the ship they knew we had Arresting Gear, but they didn't know how it worked. But I wrote it...plain language and...and the principle is still the same today, but the gear...the engines are *very much* bigger; they are humongous in comparison to what we had. Well, for example, the barricade...they don't call it barrier anymore; they call it barricade. The barricade, ours was four and a half foot high.

Mike Zambrano: Oh.

Mr. Skeldon: Today, it's twenty-seven foot high! So then...it's a net, nylon net. The airplane actually flies into it; it doesn't coast. A jet does not coast because it has the wings. Looked at A-4 one time and I told the guy, I said, "Why our tails are...is bigger than the wings on this thing!"

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter).

Mr. Skeldon: Yeah, they depend on speed.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Skeldon: They...and when they get them going fast enough, you know, you don't need wings! Rocket!

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Skeldon: Big wings, oh, depend on speed, so when a plane comes in for landing today, they don't coast, they fly, and they do not travel back until the plane comes to a dead stop. Whereas our planes, as soon as they got the cut...now he's ten feet in the air and maybe ten feet or fifteen aft of the first deck pennant; he pulls his throttle back; he glides in. Oh that...that's not today; he's flying. If he doesn't pick up a wire, he's flying.

Mike Zambrano: (Chuckles).

Mr. Skeldon: And see, we would lose a plane. Well, we...we had to stop because the planes are parked up there. So that book is out of print, and there was five hundred and fifty of them. And they...they were gone the first year.

Mike Zambrano: Really?

Mr. Skeldon: I didn't sell them; the ship sold them. The ship...all...all I did was...well, it cost me paper and ink, but I didn't lose out on that either because some of the guys would send their story and they'd send me a dollar or two, so I...didn't cost...all it cost me was time which is a labor of love.

Mike Zambrano: That's true.

Mr. Skeldon: But you know how much you...how much you need to pay for that...nothing!

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Skeldon: Labor of love.

Mike Zambrano: So is there anything else you recall about Okinawa or was it...does it...is it pretty much like a lot of the other actions that you saw?

Mr. Skeldon: Okinawa (cough) was...(cough)...well, it...it was a lot deadlier than the others, yes, but as far as the carriers were concerned, why, it was the...the same as any other ones, except now I got a lot of fire power around me. We were subject to a kamikaze attacks and all of that. As a matter of fact, the...Enterprise was sailing in our task unit and, I can't remember, I think the [USS] Randolph was the other bigger carrier; I'm not sure. We had one battleship with us and two cruisers and, yeah, about twenty, more or less, (unintelligible) with us, and the first plane come down...we had just been called to general quarters, and that first plane come down and hit the Enterprise, and the Enterprise was, oh, mile and a half, two miles off our starboard bow. Now two miles...that's normal dis...disposition for...normal combat cruising. See, by giving two miles between each carrier, the carriers can maneuver to certain extent independently without worrying about running into another ship.

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: The bomb's coming down; the plane's coming down...you can make sharp turns, and still they're close enough where their guns will help. Two miles...two miles at sea is very close really. So battleships would be right in...they move right in with us, too, maybe...like a mile or two miles away from us or...but anyway, the Enterprise was two miles forward of us a little bit, so it was on our starboard bow, right hand, forward. And I seen her get hit

and she was covered one hundred percent in black smoke where you couldn't see the Enterprise. I...and I figured to myself, "Well, that's it; she's gone!" Well, when she turned into the wind, to...to blow the...not into the wind...take the wind on the beam...then the wind would blow the smoke just over the side. Well, now I could see it's only a...more or less at amidship...that it's burning. But when I first seen it, I'd seen this here...above the black clouds...there's an object floating up, and it went on up...up they estimate two thousand feet...up into the air, and what it was...was the fourth center line elevator platform of the Enterprise. The elevator platform...that was way up to...two thousand feet in the air they claim, so that's up...that's up there a ways. Well, anyway she went stateside and...and that was the end of her combat. She was repaired and she was at Pearl Harbor when we were on our way back stateside when the war ended. So she joined our force and we went through the Panama Canal. Now that was...uh, towards the end of September because we were at Japan...well, I'm getting way ahead of myself here.

Mike Zambrano: Well, can you hold on just one second?

Mr. Skeldon: Can do.

Mike Zambrano: Sir?

Mr. Skeldon: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Can you hold on just one second; I'll be right back.

Mr. Skeldon: Can do. (Recording momentarily stopped.)

Mike Zambrano: Sorry about that.

Mr. Skeldon: That was quick.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah, it was just my mother-in-law came to pick something up, but she didn't want to make any noise and she passed me a note and I...I didn't want her to have to make another trip, so.

Mr. Skeldon: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: ...but...

Mr. Skeldon: What's that college you're working for?

Mike Zambrano: Oh, it's...it's not a college; it's the National Museum of the Pacific War out of Fredericksburg.

Mr. Skeldon: Fredericksburg?

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: That's in Texas?

Mike Zambrano: Sure is! It's the...some people call it the Nimitz Museum; it's...

Mr. Skeldon: Yeah! Well, you go in there...Nimitz Museum...

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: ...and...and...I...I'm a hundred percent certain that they have a copy of Minority Cruise Plus Two because I gave them two. I gave one to...to the guard that was at the desk and...uh, it must have been six months, eight months later I wrote a letter and I said, "Hey, nobody ever acknowledged they didn't receive it," so that guard walked off with it.

Mike Zambrano: Hmm.

Mr. Skeldon: So I mailed them another one. (Pause)

Mike Zambrano: Have you ever tried to find that book on the internet?

Mr. Skeldon: No, no, I...we went there; Kadashan Bay had a reunion and we went to the Nimitz Museum...

Mike Zambrano: Oh okay.

Mr. Skeldon: ...and presented the guard there at the desk. He...I presented him with the book to give to the...the Museum, Nimitz Museum, and I had never received any acknowledgement. Generally all...they always send you a thank you, and so I got an answer that they never...they don't have that book; they never received one; so I mailed them one. So look into it; you might get to read it.

Mike Zambrano: Okay. I'll see if...if there's a copy floating around on the internet somewhere. Sometimes people sell all sorts of books. So that's why I was asking for the name...for the name of the Kadashan Bay one.

Mr. Skeldon: Well, that's Kadashan Bay.

Mike Zambrano: It...that was just the title...Kadashan Bay?

Mr. Skeldon: Kadashan Bay, VC-20 is the name of it.

Mike Zambrano: Kadashan...VC-20.

Mr. Skeldon: You know I had the same problem; somebody walked off with my copy and it's the only one I had, so now I don't have one. It...it...somebody walked off with it.

Mike Zambrano: Oh, well, I...I'll have to see what I can find.

Mr. Skeldon: (Unintelligible).

Mike Zambrano: Ah, so...yeah, I think we were talking about the Enterprise and...

Mr. Skeldon: Enterprise?

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum, and she'd...

Mr. Skeldon: That...that elevator platform went up into the air. I don't know, it...it might have been two hundred feet and the smoke, maybe four thousand feet; I don't know, but anyway, it went up in the air one hell of a big...uh, distance, and nobody knew what it was. And...something's ringing?

Mike Zambrano: Oh, uhm, I don't hear anything here.

Mr. Skeldon: Okay. Uh, anyway then...within a minute, there was a...another kamikaze came down and probably a minute later...another one! Anyway, there was a total of six of them came down. The...the first one hit the Enterprise and the next five...the ship's guns. Monterey got credit for two and a half planes shot down, and then the other ship's around us...got the other two and a half. And the reason we got so much is because the Monterey...every time they got rid of...of an airplane, they'd push it over the side for some reason or another...

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: ...it would strip the camera, gun cameras off, and then they'd put them gun cameras on...every one of our forty-millimeters...had them gun cameras. So we got credit for two and a half out of five. And when them planes start coming down (pause) one after another, I jumped into a hole and...and there was other guys in that hole, and boy, them guys were...*scared*, I mean they were shaking. Well, I was scared, too, but no more...ever did I go into a hole where there was other guys around because that...when you're scared, that's contagious; I was just as scared as they were.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Skeldon: From then...from then on...well, before that I was...always alone; from then on, I...whenever we were under any kind of attacks, whether it was kamikaze or...or other ships or whatever, nope I always stayed in my spot where I always stayed alone...then I wasn't half as scared (chuckle).

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter).

Mr. Skeldon: But that fever...is contagious, so never show fear! And I believe in that.

Mike Zambrano: No, I agree, I agree.

Mr. Skeldon: Boy, I was scared, then I...I swore I would *never* go into hole with somebody else again, *never!* I was...and...and to this day, I still remember that.

Mike Zambrano: Hmm.

Mr. Skeldon: It's getting louder. Here it? No?

Mike Zambrano: No, not on this end.

Mr. Skeldon: Then I'd say it's on this end. Wait a...wait a minute; hold on.

Mike Zambrano: Sure, I can hold on. (Pause while Mr. Skeldon is fixing things on his end of the line.) We back on? Alright, uhm...

Mr. Skeldon: Fear is contagious, so...

Mike Zambrano: Yeah, I will agree. Uhm, anything else that comes to mind about Okinawa?

Mr. Skeldon: Well, I can't think of anything else at Okinawa, no. Uh, they secured Okinawa towards the end of...June, no, May...May. And we, our task unit, was assigned rest period, so we went to Leyte Gulf and spent the whole month of June at anchor in Leyte Gulf...

Mike Zambrano: Really?!

Mr. Skeldon: ...except for three days...like around the middle of the month, third week of the month...

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: ...three days...fleet was coming in and before they came in, we had target practice for three days just outside of Leyte. And then we...the whole fleet went in except one task unit; she stayed out, see, now, so in case anything happens, why, there's, you know, not everybody's caught at anchor. So now the...there's three task units of the Third Fleet, and we spent the whole month of...of June at anchor except for them three days...target practice. And then...it was *hot* there...I mean to tell you! And the Skipper on the Monterey secured all unnecessary ship's work in the day time. If we had to take any cargo aboard – fuel, oil, ammo, anything like that...if you could put it off for the night, then we'd handle it at night, but if it was something that couldn't be put off, well then it had to be done, but...otherwise, why, we just...the crews just melted during the day time. It was all over; wherever that were was the least little shade, why,...and aboard ship there isn't too much on a flight deck that's shade.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Skeldon: And anyway, the guys would be sleeping wherever they could...just laying down melting. And water was rationed; fresh water was rationed. On the Monterey you couldn't take a shower all day long.

Mike Zambrano: Hmm.

Mr. Skeldon: I swore then that I would never complain about the heat again, and I haven't. It's kind of hot here in Florida during the summer, but we could have air conditioning; we didn't have that onboard ship in the '40s. And anyway, we were praying to get underway, so the 1st of July...we did; the whole fleet cleared...harbor there and they...yep, we got underway and I guess that task unit that was out on duty while we were in...they probably went in...I...and I couldn't say but I would imagine they did. It would...get a chance to...day off, too, you know? So we went underway and we...got underway and we...we started hitting the southern end of Japan and every day we'd raid another place...like three hundred, four hundred miles further north as the...ship...ship was cruising north and then keep going north until we ran out of Japanese islands. We get up towards the Kurile, K-u-r-i-l-e, Kurile, and then we'd turn around and come back south again. And every...every day or every other day we're hitting them once in awhile...and...like maybe one day a...a week, we'd retire two hundred miles out from...Japan and refuel; re-arm; underway; even bring ammo aboard; thousand pounders or whatever...

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: ...and (unintelligible words); strike them below; we done all that at sea.

Mike Zambrano: (Cough).

Mr. Skeldon: And then on the 14th of August, we got a flight over...Japan and we recalled them because Japan sued...for peace. So the planes were ordered to dump their, if they hadn't dumped them already, to dump them off...dump their bombs in the ocean and return to the ships. So we gathered up our planes and

we still kept our combat air patrol up and our anti-submarine patrols out...just the same as normal. The only thing is we didn't fly any combat missions, but the planes were ready, and...we had...over fifteen hundred airplanes in the air and they flew over Japan on September 1 when they were signing the armistice...

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: ...it flew over the...we were still at sea; we stayed out there. Halsey, although he passed the word on August 14 that Japan sued for peace and technically we were not at war but we were going to stand by because there were some die-hard Japs and he said, "We're going to stick around here and help them die." So they were under...Japanese planes were under order not to...not to fly off because they were getting so many planes in the air, we'd shoot them down and that's what we did...or up until September...and we'd still patrol for another week...after the armistice. And there was...it must have been around September 6th or the 8th...somewhere around in there...when we finally went into Tokyo Bay. Mount Fujiyama is right there and...could see the town there and...but just as soon as that anchor of ours hit the water, stages were over the side; the guys were out there painting the side of the ship – Monterey and other ships, but...it was a kind of a race always to see who can get their stage over the side first, so anchor hits the water and the stage goes over the side. We were in there about five or six hours; they hauled the stages back to port; we picked our anchor up and we left...at first light...back to the States. So we got into Pearl Harbor; I guess we spent two days there and we shoved off;

Enterprise was now in our...in our group and we headed for Panama Canal. There was a couple of other carriers, too, that went through the Canal, so we had liberty (phone ringing) on the Atlantic side, and then we were anchored there, and I guess it took us two days for our force to get through. We had the Canal...we used it both ways, both directions.

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: We used it, at least, technically we were heading west, but...if you look at the Panal...uh, Canal Zone on a map you'll see that you'll have to head west to go east. And...we went to...to New York City...the Enterprise and the Enterprise.

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: The 'Prise and the Monterey went to New York City; other carriers went to Mobile, Alabama and Jacksonville, or...Mayport, Florida...all...all up and down the coast of...some...a ship or two from the Pacific went...and that's where we celebrated Navy Day in October. We spent...at anchor in Hudson River and President Truman reviewed the fleet of the...that was at anchor on the river and then we went into Brooklyn Navy Yard. But before that, around, uh, around the first part of October, second week in October...something in there, we pulled into New York City and we pulled into the pier there and we had visitors come aboard. And one of the...some of the visitors was my mother and father and my brother; he was in uniform. He was a bombardier on a B-24 flying out of England with the Eighth Air Force and came in uniform because he was still in...and the two of us were standing in front of the island...of the Monterey looking at the scoreboard, and my brother says,

“My golly,” he said, “a scoreboard like that...that deserves a drink!”

(Laughter).

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter).

Mr. Skeldon: And he...pulls a pint bottle out from his uniform; inside pocket. I said, “Put that away ‘cause I’m (unintelligible); we’re on the flight deck!” You know and...

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter).

Mr. Skeldon: ...bunch of people around us and that, so I took him down below and then I show him my bunk where I slept. I was in the compartment just below the flight deck aft...all the way aft on the Monterey. There was a, I’m going to say, a hundred and fifty bunks in that compartment, so that’s what we called “togetherness,” a hundred and fifty guys sleeping in one room.

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter).

Mr. Skeldon: So while he’s checking out my locker and...and bunk, why, I...put a little dink in that bottle of his. First booze I had in I don’t know how long; probably since Panama Canal.

Mike Zambrano: Really, wow!

Mr. Skeldon: Well, before that it was months and months. Although, there was one guy...he wasn’t in the Arresting Gear, but his buddy was in Arresting Gear and this guy, his father, from Brooklyn he knew a baker down in (beep sound) (unintelligible) street...baker there...he...a personal of his, so he’d tell him to bake a special rye bread for...and when he got the...would have an excessively hard crust, and he’d get that home and cut it lengthwise; clean out the dough;

put a bottle in there and ship it with...it would take anywhere's from one...month to two months before it would reach us; depends on where we were running...all the time. So anyway when a...when a bottle would come in you'd know it because he'd bring it into the Arresting Gear shack although he wasn't an Arresting Gear man. But everybody in Arresting Gear shack and then...including his buddy would have a drink out of that bottle and I...I remember getting one...when it counted and when we were out in the...near Okinawa. So anyway we were at the...New York and we marched down Sixth Avenue and they (beep sound)...well, not just the Monterey; the Army was there; the Marines; the...all kinds of ships. It was a...quite an involved parade. Uh, (unintelligible)...La Guardia, the mayor...was there...

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Skeldon: ...in the reviewing stand and...and we marched past them. And they'd the name of the Sixth Avenue to Avenue of the Americas. And...and we'd had liberty that night my folks took me to Dempsey's, Jack Dempsey's restaurant...night club. All the famous people had either restaurants or night clubs and we went to quite a few of them...and then we went into Brooklyn Navy Yard...after Navy Day, we went into Brooklyn Navy Yard. And then in two weeks they trans...transferred us...or transformed us from an aircraft carrier to a passenger carrier (beep sound). They took up the elevator...fit...put plumbing in there and lowered the elevator all the way down to the hangar deck level then and they put salt water showers, commodes and sinks in...for our...passenger troops. We would...and then they'd put the

bunks five high on the hangar deck; welded them to the deck...five high and on the...over the top of the fifth bunk, they...welded a permanent decking there. You couldn't walk there, but it was for the Army troops to store their luggage.

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: And...and then they put standing tables and steam tables in on the hangar deck. So there would be like to thousand troops on the hangar deck and that was their washing facilities (beep sound) there and their chow and their sleeping. And then they were allowed to go up on the flight deck, too, if they wanted. But we carried, oh, and then they...we transferred as many of the crew as we could...those that were being discharged?

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: We got...transferred as many of those as we could but made sure that we had enough to operate the ship, so we ended up with, I don't know, maybe...ten or fifteen guys left in the air department. Didn't need a catapult or arresting gear anymore, so I was in arresting gear and I moved out of my bunk and made one...one more bunk for a soldier. So we carried a little over two thousand troops.

(end of tape 3, side A)

Mike Zambrano: What...there we go. Uh, and you were saying?

Mr. Skeldon: So I...I moved into the catapult room which freed up one bunk for another soldier. Anyway, we carried a little over two thousand; I think it was two thousand two hundred...add in prisoners of war going to Italy. There were

prisoners in the States and then we dropped them off at Naples...Naples, Italy, and in return, we picked up American troops and brought them back. So now we come back to...to the States and drop them off in Norfolk and...and as we dropped them off, we'd bring Italian prisoners aboard again, ex-prisoners. Most of them didn't want to go back; they wanted to stay in the States.

Mike Zambrano: Oh really?

Mr. Skeldon: Prisoners in this country were treated a lot different than they were over in their country, so that's why they didn't...well, they...they used to have privileges; they'd go into town and they'd (unintelligible)...Saturday night dance with the girls!

Mike Zambrano: Is this...when the war was over?

Mr. Skeldon: No! The war was on!

Mike Zambrano: Really?!

Mr. Skeldon: Yeah, out west there was a lot of caps like that; not all of them, but the majority of them. They...they worked on the farms; they done jobs that, well, some guys didn't want. Well, most of the guys that were working were...women and men...they were working in...in defense industries, so there were very few farm workers. Really, they worked these guys out on the farms and...and they were good, reputable...and...like Italian, well, they...they let them work in town even...go to town; anyway, that's their story.

Mike Zambrano: So...

Mr. Skeldon: (Unintelligible).

Mike Zambrano: ...I'm curious, but when you're transporting these prisoners, these Italian prisoners, back to Italy, uhm, I...I guess they're just allowed to roam around the ship as they...as they pleased, right?

Mr. Skeldon: The prisoners.

Mike Zambrano: They're...they're...

Mr. Skeldon: The war was over.

Mike Zambrano: So they're just...

Mr. Skeldon: Yeah, they...they had the freedom of the ship. By the way, wouldn't let them down in the engine room because even today, why, they don't want the crew down in the engine room except the engineer and engineering personnel.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Skeldon: They have...how many guys been the Navy and been in the engine room? I was, but that was only because...it was my last time aboard ship in '83; I retired in '84. So I told them, uh, Chief that was down there, I says, "You know, I've been on a lot of ships, but I never really seen one; this one I want to see." So I had a guided tour wherever I went...and I went from stem to stern and keel to truck! I was down in the engine room looking up at the drive shaft. To begin with, it was none...during the war it was none of my business, and it was too hot down there.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Skeldon: And I didn't want to stay down there; it was hot enough topside, so...I...I seen the [USS] America. It was a...big carrier.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Skeldon: I *went all over* that thing, and I had a Chief, or Master Chief, as a tour guide; my own personal guide. That was my farewell present from the Navy.

Mike Zambrano: Hmm.

Mr. Skeldon: Anyway, we were in Norfolk and offloaded the Americans and loaded the Italians while I smuggled a...a bottle of...is that Southern Comfort? First time I ever drank that in my life; that was the only thing I could get I think, and I don't care for it. Anyway, I...I had that because I knew we were going to be at sea for Christmas and I was going to celebrate...have a drink with everybody, so I smuggled a quart aboard. We got to Italy and I smuggled another quart of...Italian cognac was it or...I don't know. Anyway, I...smuggled of...over there, too. That was a story. I was in charge of the flight deck, and...well, I was a senior...I think I was the senior...enlisted on that whole air department because they got rid of as many guys as they could. And...so I went down to the O.D. when we were in Naples, and I told him I had to bring the jeep aboard because I had to do some service work on it. *Wow*, he didn't want to let it go because it was the only jeep he had left, you know, and he didn't have another one for some reason or another. And...because, you know, probably assigned to the Captain...they keep it for him. But I said, "No, no; it won't take long," so he gave me permission. So we hoisted it...the jeep aboard; I put two cartons of cigarettes under the seat there and ten minutes later hoisted it back off the ship. And the driver's in my outfit, so...we let him down; I sold him cigarettes and it didn't cost me anything to be in...in Italy now. And...I...got a bottle of booze and brought that aboard, so we had a party for

Christmas. The ship gave the crew members a half a gallon of hard cider. So we mixed that with all these drinks and torpedo juice, and the whole crew was...what was on there was drunk. And the Army that we were taking aboard...uh, across, they were seasick, so what a...what a time...

Mike Zambrano: (Chuckle).

Mr. Skeldon: ...celebrating Christmas!

Mike Zambrano: Gosh.

Mr. Skeldon: We made two trips over to Italy; took Italians over and Americans back.

Mike Zambrano: Did you have...ever have the opportunity of talking to any of these prisoners?

Mr. Skeldon: Well, they were Italian and I didn't understand Italian, but I could have, I suppose, but we were...too busy. We had a...a hickory corridor that was wired that...all that tape goes...all that planking...whatever goes on the...wire...

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: ...you didn't wire (unintelligible)?

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, what did you...

Mr. Skeldon: Well anyway, one guy would read...a chapter or reading out of the book or the newspaper or whatever and then the next guy would take the mic and...cut sections out and dub something else in...and to...to see how much we could change that recording. And you're tape...taping over the same wire all the time and...and we'd wipe out something that was taped and dub something else in and then listen to it, and we'd have a barrel of fun day after day with that...and then...to occupy ourselves. Then...and then I would...do something, either...if not wire splicing...rope splicing. Some of the guys wanted to

(unintelligible), and...and me, I just ...and an awful lot of cards...usually Acey-Deucey and Cribbage. I never did learn that Acey-Deucey, but Cribbage I...got, yeah, familiar with that. And then there was...(pause)...books to read...catch up on. Oh, I took an...an old, not an old, I'd bought a new Navy neckerchief, a Navy neckerchief...

Mike Zambrano: Ah!

Mr. Skeldon: ...hope you're familiar with them...the black neckerchief they wear. If you open it up, it's about, I'm going to say four foot square; it's big and then...you you roll it. Well, I folded it in half; not quite a half but pretty close, and then I start...weaving...uh, sewing. I had red, white and blue thread...more like a yard, and I would sew that with a heavy needle. I'd put a crow's stitch here; a cross stitch in another row and then maybe another crow's stitch, and put a...and I made an apron. I was planning on giving it to either my wife or my girlfriend. Well, I had a girlfriend and I had a wife, so I gave it to my...my mother...gave it to her (cough), excuse me and...what it was was...an apron; a dress-fancy apron. I used a hat band from a flat hat...said U.S. Navy, I used that as the draw...tie straw...tie in the back (cough) and...and two crow's for pockets; the two crow's that I wore on my sleeve because was AMM, First Class, then I changed to ABM, First Class. But when that ABM first came out they weren't sure if it was going to be right or left arm, so the crow is facing (cough) as though it was for...uh, I've got a tickle in my throat (cough)...it was facing as though it was going to be right-arm rate, so I sewed them on; the two crows are facing each other and they're pockets and I sewed them on with the

red...red, white and blue thread by using a crow's stitch. And...and I put a couple of pleats in it to take up...all of that four foot space and bring it down to where it would be the right size for an apron. And every time I took it to a reunion, and the women that are there see that, boy, they fall in love with that; they want to swipe it on me! I said, "No, tell your husband to make one. He's a sailor; he's supposed to know." Jack of all trades and master of none, but I still have that now.

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter).

Mr. Skeldon: (Unintelligible) died and I inherited it again and my wife didn't want it...so she doesn't go in too much for that fancy stuff. So that's the way I occupied my time. But I was in...I remember one time I was in the air office...at night...uh, doing some sewing on that and we're in the...middle of the Atlantic Ocean there some place, and all I have is the one light on over the desk that I'm sitting at and sewing. Well, I'm sitting in this here swivel chair and I got my feet up on top of the desk and...and the door opens up and here a Lieutenant Commander pops his head in there and he looks around; nobody around; the room is dark except for that one light where I'm sewing; he looks at me, he looks at the sewing; he looks at me; he looks around; nobody there...never said a word; turned around and walked away and he probably thought I was going...bananas.

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter).

Mr. Skeldon: Yeah, we had a different name for it.

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter).

Mr. Skeldon: So...

Mike Zambrano: Uh boy!

Mr. Skeldon: Anyway, no sailors would...would do that. You should see some of the fancy work that...that them Boatswain mates would do for the...Admiral's barge or the Captain's gig. They'd get a piece of canvas and pull out the strings...say, the horizontal strings...they'd pull them out for maybe six inches or...or better and then the ones that are...the strings that are left they start braiding them or tying different knots in them and end up with tassels...tied on with Turk's heads. And...and they'd make...like...table cloths; place mats; all different kinds of knots and weaves and...and braids. And they'd make curtains; drapes...with mats and dress up the Admiral's barge or the Captain's gig. And one ship would...would (pause) see, contest each other...with other ships...who's got the best...Admiral's barge or Captain's gig. Oh, there was a lot of competition during the war and before the war and after the war with...them gigs, and it was all made out of canvas...that they'd get right down in the canvas locker. But it's all in knowing how the heck to do it. So I went in a little bit for that, too. Like the Boatswain's pipe, he always wore it on a lanyard around his neck.

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: Now he had to make that and...and they would make them...light...with white thread and with dark thread; dark for work and white for dress and they took great pride in that...which I don't blame them; it looked nice, too.

Mike Zambrano: I want to ask you...do you remember where...where you were or what you were doing when you heard that...about the atomic bomb...being dropped?

Mr. Skeldon: Yeah, we were just off the coast off of...Japan, and we had a little three-page...three-page or four-page; typewritten...mimeographed, well, it was typewritten and then mimeographed...copies of the...the latest news, and they said that they dropped a...a bomb over Japan. If I'm not mistaken, they didn't say where and they didn't mention atomic. All they said...they dropped a bomb...twenty...equivalent to twenty thousand ton, and when I read that, why, I...I knew there was a typographical error; it was...twenty thousand *pound* bomb...now they had twenty thousand ton. Uh, twenty...twenty thousand pound, so everybody agreed that had to be twenty thousand pound, so we paid no attention to it. We...we knew the English had a twelve *ton* bomb, but here...twenty, twenty ton...so now that's bigger, quite a bit bigger. There was only one airplane, and our airplanes wouldn't carry that twelve ton bomb, but the British, I think, I believe it was at Lancaster, they would carry it. So that's what we thought....it was only twenty thousand ton...the rest...zero...zeroes nothing, you know, so they just added zeroes on. Little did we know. Yeah, but every time they dropped a bomb, we must have been out...refueling, so we'd be...like two hundred miles away.

Mike Zambrano: Do you remember what you were doing when you heard that the war was actually over or that the Japanese had surrendered?

Mr. Skeldon: It would...we were refueling all of the time and re...re-provisioning. When...when the Japanese surrendered in August, yeah, August 14th, uh, the

ships, the supply ships...instead of...well, instead of re-provisioning us, they went in to Japan and they offloaded their cargo there where American prisoners, Allied prisoners I should say, they fed them all. So we were eating the bottom of...of our bins. So...what do they call them...maggots?

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Skeldon: Anyway, I think there's a different name for them and they're...they are in flour, so they were in our bins, flour bins, and we were using the bottom of them, so you'd hold a slice of bread up to the light; you'd see...little specks in there...weevils? No.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah, it might be.

Mr. Skeldon: Anyway, they were small, so the first...I would say two days, the guys would be pulling them...them out of the bread and they...they'd end up...they had something that looked more holy than Swiss cheese!

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter).

Mr. Skeldon: So the third day, why, eh! They went, too, anybody ate them; no problem; nobody died; nobody complained because we knew...we were told...the food went in to the beach for the prisoners, Allied prisoners.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Skeldon: Nobody complained. So we'd even fly...some...take some of our planes and if they knew of a prison camp nearby, they'd fly over and drop whatever they could, yeah, to the prisoners.

Mike Zambrano: Did you ever have the occasion to talk to any Allied prisoner?

Mr. Skeldon: We didn't take any onboard because we left early...

Mike Zambrano: Hmm.

Mr. Skeldon: ...and those that left like...say a month...why, I'd say October or November, yeah, they took...prisoners back. They brought them onboard; they...but you got to remember now, most all of them prisoners were...they had to be (unintelligible) on a beach...to bring them up to a certain standard to be able to cross the ocean...

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Skeldon: ...whether it was the Atlantic or the Pacific. They were...some of them were so...run down that they would have never survived a trip across.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Skeldon: So they...they were strictly nourished by the Corpsmen anyway...certain amount because if they'd have fed them too much, they'd get sick and die, too...from overeating.

Mike Zambrano: Hmm.

Mr. Skeldon: So...yeah, we didn't...we...we did have some...were walking wounded we called them; we did take some of them and we dropped them off at Pearl Harbor; we didn't take them through the Canal, so Pearl Harbor and then they could fly them if they wanted them...over in the States, but generally they hospitalized them there...maybe a week or two, build them up a little more and then put them on another ship again and...and ship them to California. No, we didn't get too much chance with...talking to the prisoners.

Mike Zambrano: Hmm, let's see, uhm (pause)...so, so we at...we're at least to the point where the war is already over; you've...you've transferred some foreign prisoners

back to their country; you've brought troops back to the States; uhm, at what point did you make your decision to stay in service?

Mr. Skeldon: Well I was obligated service; I was regular Navy.

Mike Zambrano: Right, but...uhm,...

Mr. Skeldon: I had no choice; I had to fill my obligated time. My enlistment wasn't up until 24 July, 1947.

Mike Zambrano: '47, okay, alright. But when your enlistment did come up, why did you chose to re-enlist?

Mr. Skeldon: Uh, I re-enlisted in July...of '45; the war was still on; everybody figured it was going to be at least another year and a half, two years...invasion of Japan, and they were starting to build up. Those...a lot of those troops that were in Europe were in training for...Jap...Japan and they were going to invade in November of '45; that would have been D-Day for Japan, so I figured, "Well, I might just as well extend my enlistment two years," so I did; the war ended. But even if I...even if I didn't extend, I...I was going to...stay in the Navy so I would have signed up for...I don't know why I didn't sign up for four to begin with...only extended for two. But then I got married in '46, so was still in remember...I got...had another year to go or...or close to it. I got married, and my new Admiral...she changed my orders from Navy to civilian, so I got out.

Mike Zambrano: Uh...

Mr. Skeldon: (Unintelligible)...Admiral.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, what did you do...between the end of World War II and Korea?

Mr. Skeldon: I worked on the railroad...was an apprentice. The...hired me as an apprentice; got eighty...eighty cents an hour, and the government would add to it and bring us up to what a mechanic was getting; that was...GI Bill. So I got paid eighty cents an hour and then I would get a monthly check to make up the difference between a mechanic's pay. Then after (cough), I think it was year later (cough) the government decided that the railroad was underpaying us, so we had to...the railroad had to give us a...what the Nav...what the government said was our pay, so we got a half a penny hour raise; half a penny an hour. Well anyway, in my back pay, I...I don't remember how much it was but it was...it was about three or four dollars...a month's pay.

Mike Zambrano: Wow! So half a penny an hour?!

Mr. Skeldon: Half a penny an hour raise, yeah, it should have been eighty and a half cents an hour; we got eighty cents an hour...

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Skeldon: ...total. But anyway, we got a...the tools that we required on a job then they...the military, not...no, the government paid for that, and like I said I was hoping that the railroad would not give us a raise...as (unintelligible) six months we got a raise...'cause every time we got a raise, the government cut our money. The money we got from the government was tax free, so we were losing money at the time we got a raise. No, nothing...take that raise the railroad gave us. So anyway, after four years...which nobody ever made...that was out of New York Central Railroad. It was layoffs, layoffs, layoffs; it took me five years to put four years in, so I finally graduated; got my papers;

(unintelligible) papers; mechanic papers and I went to Nickel Plate Railroad; never had a layoff there.

Mike Zambrano: Nickel Plate Railroad?

Mr. Skeldon: Yeah, they merged later with Norfolk Railroad...Norfolk...

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: ...(unintelligible) Norfolk merged with Western and (unintelligible) with Western, and then they merged with Southern, so Norfolk Southern is who I retired with...Norfolk Southern. Southern railroads used to be separate; Norfolk and Western were separate, but (unintelligible) Norfolk Southern, and...and they're still in business – Norfolk Southern. They have the biggest loading cold docks in the world...Southern.

Mike Zambrano: Really?! Uhm, let's see, you re...re-enlisted...in the...in the reserves in '47?

Mr. Skeldon: Yeah, when...when I was dis...discharged from the regular Navy, I enlisted in the reserves, inactive reserves, what they call it.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, okay.

Mr. Skeldon: I was in the Navy; they had my name and address, and that's all. I did not attend drills; I was not paid. Now active reserves...they...because they went to drills, and they had to go for two weeks (unintelligible) and there. So I was inactive reserve; I got...I received no money; I received...I went to no drills; I didn't have any obligation; well, I had four year's obligated because I signed up for four, but I could have dropped out any time I wanted to because my obligated service...was in.

Mike Zambrano: Right. So you got recalled for Korea?

Mr. Skeldon: So Korea, they recalled me, yeah. Now, if I'd of quit and say a week before I would have been finished, but I didn't know they were going to call me. Besides that I...I liked the Navy, but I had two small children at home and I had to stay...I figured I had to stay with them; somebody had to take care of them; they were too young for the wife. One guy was only five months old, it was...a hardship on her; not on me. She...it's a good thing my...my folks lived right downstairs...apartment above them. But my wife figured it was easier...better for her and the kids being with her folks in Scranton, so she packed the kids up...Scranton. And her mother and father and sisters and brothers...were all that...than here with my folks. All she had was my father and mother and both of them were working, so...(unintelligible) home...for everybody.

Mike Zambrano: Okay, so you were recalled to Korea and where did...where did you go? Where'd...where'd the Navy send you?

Mr. Skeldon: Well, when the...oh, I'll just...I'll just start off a little bit with...the Monterey again...(unintelligible)...

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Skeldon: ...(unintelligible) going into moth balls, so we got that...the crew down to fifty men and five officers on the Monterey. Now there were two other CVLs in Philadelphia going into moth balls, but they were pretty well preserved already, so they had no crews onboard. So I was responsible for them...those two, plus the Monterey; three CVLs. Now I had a Second Class with me and I had two Third Class, non-rated men. I had a Second Class, one Second Class,

and...three non-rated men. No, no, no Third Class, so five of us...for the whole air department on all three ships. Of course, we had next to nothing to do; just make sure that the...civilian workers performed the jobs.

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: We would more or less sign...sign for them. Well, anyway, this year...a division officer of mine would give me “shipping over” talk...to re-enlist in the Navy, and there was a Lieutenant, Mustang; I don’t know if you know what a Mustang is. A Mustang is an officer that comes up through the ranks whether it’s Army or Navy or Marines...

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: ...come up through the ranks and then they’d...accept a commission for officers...they’re Mustangs. The only way you can tell them...when they had their uniform on, they wear the ribbons. A Mustang will always wear a Good Conduct rib...ribbon, always because no way are they going to promote him if he’s not...good, period!

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Skeldon: So, matter of fact, I was talking to one Mustang...and at West Point one time; he says, “How’d you know I was a Mustang?” I said, “Because you’re...wearing a Good Conduct ribbon.” See, officers don’t have that ribbon.

Mike Zambrano: That’s right.

Mr. Skeldon: They take your ribbons with you when you go...wherever you go. You take your pay with you wherever you go because during a war and shortly after the

war, a lot of enlisted men would not take a commission because it would...it meant a cut in pay for them to go from enlisted to an...an officer; it was a cut in pay. So must have been about 1958 or later, they changed it. You take your pay with you. So anyway, this Mustang...he was a Lieutenant, he was an Engineering Officer and I'm an Airdale, so he would call me up to his stateroom, too, once in awhile and give me a "shipping over" talk; give me all the advantages and this and that and the other thing, then tell me, you know, "You carry your paycheck...pay records with you wherever you go and you're off the records," and this and that. Anyway...so I told him "No," I said, "I got six years in the armed...four more...fourteen more and I could pension out, but," I said, "the wife wants me out; peace in the family; I'm going out." Well, he couldn't argue with that. So okay now we're recalled and it's September when I was recalled...1950. Now it's...it's three...almost three and a half years that I left the Monterey and I'm sitting on the edge of a desk talking to the Yeoman and I'm (unintelligible), and I can see, oh, about...about twenty-five feet away...the wall and the door there and I see a guy walk by, and whoop he...he came back...because he walked by completely; he came back and come through that door right over to me and he said, "God damn, Ske!," he said, "I told you don't get out of the Navy until this...with Russia is settled!" It was that Mustang. Now he hadn't seen me in three and a half years, and...and I never worked for him except for when we were going in moth balls; very seldom did I ever see him then, but how did he remember me? Well, I was the only Airdale there. They had to call a guy in from the

fleet when I got out, a First Class from the fleet that could take over. They say, "Why, I didn't have anything to do except...make sure that (unintelligible) was done (chuckle).

Mike Zambrano: (Chuckle).

Mr. Skeldon: How did I...how did I affect him that he remembered that much; I don't know.

Mike Zambrano: I guess you just stood out.

Mr. Skeldon: Nice guy, that's my...

Mike Zambrano: So how long did it take to moth ball the Monterey?

Mr. Skeldon: Well, we went out of commission in...sometime in January of '46, and I left it in...May, yeah, I left in sometime early May of '47; discharged in July. I had forty-five days coming to me, so they had to bring somebody in from...what they do is they...they...the twenty millimeter guns...they take them off. Well, the yard workers do all of that. They...they hoist them off and they preserve them and...and put them in the building some place. And the forty millimeters, they...they built cocoons over them; they take masking tape; stick it to the deck; run it over the top of the gun some place; stick it there, and then down on deck and in...the other side. And then they would do the same thing until they had a web there...like with...no more than six inch openings in between that tape. And...and then they had this special paint...come out like a...like a mist, and then dry up real quick so that filled in those big six inch holes and then they just kept putting coat...coat after coat until they had a solid coat on there. And the girls used to like to stand on top of that mount because it would bounce like a trampoline.

Mike Zambrano: (Chuckle).

Mr. Skeldon: But they had to take their shoes off because any kind of a spike in their shoe, high heel spike or whatever...would punch right through that. And then they'd put silicone...cut a little hole out so they could crawl in; put the silicone...pellets in there in bags and put that piece they cut out; put that back in there; tape it with masking tape and then paint over the top of it again with that special paint. Now that would have been good for...I don't know, is it three months or six months, and they'd cut a hole; take them silicones out...out and put new one in and...re-tape the hole again where he crawled in. But they use silicone in a warm oven; dries the moisture out; it's ready for the next time. And then...make shifts for the arresting gear...why, they would...cover them over with tin plate and seal it down; paint...paint over it; waterproof it. Everything up on the flight deck, the (unintelligible) elements were covered over and painted over for sealing and...so there was nothing up topside...just a deck that would weather. But smaller carriers...smaller carriers...although they did...moth ball a lot of big carriers, too, but the smaller ones...a couple of years, and they would sell them for scrap. So what your (unintelligible) didn't sink one way, they sunk in another; cut them up; Germany the same way.

Mike Zambrano: What finally happened to the Kadashan Bay; I'm sorry, not the Kadashan Bay...the Monterey

Mr. Skeldon: Oh, probably ended up in razor blades.

Mike Zambrano: Hmm.

Mr. Skeldon: Cut them up and sell them to the steel mills. When you make steel, you know, you got to use some old...yeah, steel is better if you have some old and some new in there; depends on what kind of steel you're going to make; what percentage of different types of metal they put in there.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah, hmm.

Mr. Skeldon: I worked in a steel plant one time...I got laid off from the railroad, and the railroad really never did...I got...I got laid off from the railroad because the steel plant went on strike. The steel plant never went on strike because President Truman took them over; he...he took control of the steel plants, so the steel plant...kept working, but I was off from the railroad because of the steel plant strike.

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: So that, now that...(unintelligible) went on for six weeks. So I worked in a steel plant for that six weeks. Finally they called me back to the...to the railroad...they opened it up, so I worked on the railroad...then I worked on the railroad. I worked on the railroad and I worked in a steel plant for one week, so that...that was a total of seven weeks I worked in steel plant. That's where I learned a little bit about steel; it's hot.

Mike Zambrano: (Chuckle).

Mr. Skeldon: Oh, if they pour molten metal into the ladle after sending water in that...in that ladle...rain water gets in there or whatever...

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: ...any water in there...when they pour that molten metal in there, you'll get an *explosion sound*; heavy explosion. Yeah, if that water...it's being compressed, heated; turned to steam and then it *blows* with all that weight on it, and...

Mike Zambrano: Is it a...like a big explosion or a little one or...?

Mr. Skeldon: It sounds like a big explosion, and it...pretty good sound, so if you're recently from the military, why, you'll jump a...a good jump, too, shell shock. Uh, I just thought I'd add that in.

Mike Zambrano: Uh...

Mr. Skeldon: I'd go work in a steel plant, yeah.

Mike Zambrano: I...I notice on the...the sheet that you...you emailed me...it says that in 1958 you...you changed your name.

Mr. Skeldon: A convenience. I had...what year was that?

Mike Zambrano: Uh, 1958.

Mr. Skeldon: Yeah, I...I think I had four or five kids then already, and I figured it was going to be easier for them.

Mike Zambrano: (Chuckles).

Mr. Skeldon: To go through life than to go through with a...a name that's very hard to pronounce and harder to spell. So...and my brother had changed his name two years previous to that. So when I talked to my father, he says, "Well, if...if you're going to change; change it the same as the brother." I said, "Okay." So...and my brother picked Skeldon because of...of a lack of them in the telephone book. There was a lot of Skeltons and Sheldons and you name it...

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: ...but we...way we have it spelled, there was...a very, very few of them, so...

Mike Zambrano: Interesting! Well how do you pronounce your name; your original name?

Mr. Skeldon: Skrezynski (sp?)

Mike Zambrano: Skrezynski, okay.

Mr. Skeldon: That's the way I spell...I pronounce it in English, but in Polish it's
(unintelligible).

Mike Zambrano: Hmm.

Mr. Skeldon: (Unintelligible).

Mike Zambrano: (Unintelligible), huh.

Mr. Skeldon: It kind of wears on you after awhile, so I still go by Ske because in the Navy
knows me by Ske.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Skeldon: Well, some of them probably don't know...that...what my name was, but they
know that it was a "Ske."

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Skeldon: If they ask me, I tell them and...but you'd be surprised how many guys I
worked with on the railroad...now...and I had changed my name and, ah, say
twenty years later, they would still know and how to pronounce and spell my
original name. Some of the guys are good that way. Me, I was very poor with
names. I could...I had trouble remembering names but not faces or
character...other characteristics of some kind. I...I met this one guy at a
reunion one time and I told him I didn't remember the name because I
don't...I said but I remembered his voice, and we started comparing notes -

different ships that I was aboard and he was aboard...no, and different air stations; no squadrons...no; it all boiled down to I went to Arresting Gear School and he went to Catapult School in 1943. Now this is forty years later; I didn't know his name then and I didn't know his name now and...but I remembered the sound of his voice – very rough sound; the only one I ever heard like that's...that was in 1943. Well, you got to remember now, ever since 1943 I was in charge because I...I was in charge of Arresting Gear. I went aboard the Kadashan Bay; I was the senior P.O. there for awhile...on the flight deck. And then I was the leading P.O., senior P.O., in Arresting Gear. We had nobody over the top of me. There was supposed to be a Chief, but we didn't have enough Chiefs in the Navy. We'd verify that there was suppose to be a Chief in charge; we didn't have one. I was it. So, I'm standing in front and I have to look at of these here people. Like one guy said, "You should remember me," he says, "I was always in front of you." I said, "Yeah, I remember one thing now." There was aboard the [USS] Salisbury Sound, Korean War, I said, "There was seventeen, no, twenty-seven guys in front of me; I had three-seven faces; you only had this one to look at." I had twenty-seven of them (chuckle).

Mike Zambrano: (Chuckles).

Mr. Skeldon: But the last unit that I was with and I was also leading Chief then, I had three...up to three hundred in my outfit. Now those three hundred, well, there was never three hundred there at one time, but there would be two hundred there because there was a bunch of them always shipped out on...cruising

some place or...or they drilled other days or that, but I'd have two hundred guys in front of me so I got two hundred faces to look at; they only look at one!

Mike Zambrano: (Chuckle).

Mr. Skeldon: The one thing they can never say is that they did not hear what I said. I have a...a way of projecting my voice; everybody always heard me and right up to the end; now the voice is starting to go. Well, no practice I guess that was it.

Mike Zambrano: (Chuckle). So, uhm, what did you...you mentioned a little earlier what it was you did and retired from. I mean, I guess I should say...other than, uh, being a Navy...Navy reservist, what did you work as?

Mr. Skeldon: Worked on the railroad...always.

Mike Zambrano: Oh, that's right, the...what'd you call it?

Mr. Skeldon: But I always had at least two jobs. With six kids you had to do something...either get out of the house or feed them...one or the other.

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter).

Mr. Skeldon: So, I...I worked on a railroad...that was my primary job, and then everything else was extra. I helped an electrician rewire homes, buildings; one church one time; one hotel, and I picked up a little bit about electricity there. Now whenever he needed help, he'd call me, and then, that was quite steady because he always worked alone and it's always better to have somebody, so I worked with him for a couple of years. And then I worked in a lumber yard for awhile; I built pallets, and wooden platforms that they use to put material on and then a fork truck and pick it up; I worked that with another...one other

guy...two...two guys together. Well, it was only the two of us that worked there and we built them pallets and that was piece work and we made good money on that. Well, within pennies of what I got paid on the railroad and I got paid good money on the railroad. And (cough) and then, I done that for (cough) three years. Excuse me a second. (Pause) I built them pallets for three years and then...another I...went to Delavan Welding. We welded...I was welding on the railroad, arc welding, electric weld...and Delavan Welding built these automobile transports, you know, where they had five, six cars on...on a trailer?

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Skeldon: (Unintelligible), so I...welded there for three years; nine months a year. The summertime I'd building my house, so nine months a year I worked in a...a (beep sound) yard...well, when I quit the lumber yard then I worked Delavan Welding. So...so I welded...on the railroad...nine hour days because we had a special project going. So I welded nine hours, then five hours each night at Delavan building trailers. Now the trailer would be all put together; jigsaw puzzle wize...like on...with a day crew. They would tack weld everything in place so when I...when I...with those four...sometimes five of us there welding, and the boss picked me to lead them guys. He'd tell me what he...which trailers he wanted done and what and I would...when them guys would run out a job...they would ask me which is next so I'd tell them...what the boss told me, and so I done welding there; that was fourteen hours a day welding. So that only gave me enough time to get home and...eat (beep

sound), wash and go to sleep and get up in the morning and go to work...work again. So I...and another job that fascinated me when I was aboard the Salisbury Sound...I was in charge of the seaplane deck. There was a Chief and that was the only time I ever had a Chief that was over me, but he was never there. He told me right off the bat, he says, "I'll be in the Chiefs Quarters if you need me," he said, "but you better be danged sure that you need me otherwise I want to know why you got them stripes!" I said, "That's all I wanted to hear, Chief; the seaplane deck is mine. That's it." So, okay, the Chief is gone; whatever I said was it. So when I...wanted to take a little break, I would go into the next compartment forward of the hangar deck; we had a small hangar deck; we couldn't put a plane in there, but we could fit the tail in. But anyway (beep sound) in that compartment was a Mexican, and he enlisted in the Navy so that after four years he gets his citizenship...

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: ...but on...well, they still do it today, too, from any country. Anyway, he was a watch repairman on the outside and he was repairing watches in the Navy for shipmates. He had a small desk in a corner; he was an Electrician Striker by trade in the Navy and...and Instrument man, too, so he...he'd be working on these wrist watches in the corner of the Electric Shop and if I didn't have nothing to do, I'd go in there and I'd sit there and I'd watch him, and it fascinated me and I got to talking to him. So, here's a Mexican citizen but working on his citizenship papers, so that interested me. When I got discharged from the Korean War, I took up a correspondence school; the

school was in Chicago (beep sound), and I lived in Orchard Park at that time; that's suburb of Buffalo, New York, and I studied watch repair. So I've worked these...any one of these side jobs that I had and then on the days off, I would work on watches. So even when I was home, I was working; I built my own watch repair desk, and you know, some of them drawers are only like three quarters of an inch deep.

Mike Zambrano: Oh!

Mr. Skeldon: I made a desk; I copied a regular watch maker's desk, and...it was very handy. So I done that for twenty-five years.

Mike Zambrano: Wow, well before you go on, let me...let me flip the tape over again. I'll just be a second.

Mr. Skeldon: Well, I going to get a...

(end of tape 3, side B)

Mike Zambrano: There we go. So how many years did you serve in the Navy altogether?

Mr. Skeldon: Well, (cough) my original enlistment was...five years, eleven months and twenty days; in other words, I was ten days short of six years, so figure six years – round figure. And then I went into that in active reserve; they called me up for Korea, and I had...about fourteen months of active duty there. Uh...

Mike Zambrano: It looks...

Mr. Skeldon: ...and I...then I put in...uh, reserve...twenty years, so all told I had...like...six years active of the regular Navy, and a year...well, twenty-one years reserve. A year, two months in active, so about seven and...seven years and two months active duty and twenty reserve.

Mike Zambrano: Wow, that's a long time.

Mr. Skeldon: Well, when they called me back for the Korean War, they...they were...they had me scheduled for the USS Boxer. Now the Boxer was a...an Essex-class aircraft carrier, so that was okay because that would be right in with my Arresting Gear rate. So now by the time I got to California Navy...well, the Navy gives you orders to go and that's it, you go. If you need the money, they'll give you the money, but otherwise, you pay and then they...they give you...on the other end they give you what...what they figure it's worth.

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: You...you...in other words, they give...they give...you, well, they gave me at that time nine days to go from...Brooklyn to...San Francisco; nine days. Now, you can make it on...on the train in five, so...I go...I went...home...spent a little time with the wife and in-laws, and then the wife came with me...no, that was later she came, but then I flew from Buffalo to California. See, you're on your own; the Navy always...unless there's a big draft going, then you might go in a group, but ordinarily they let you travel on your own. They'll give you ten days generally to get across country. So I...I'd fly, and when I got to California then I laid there for...I...I can't remember how long, but the word came out that the Boxer was on her way in for an extended yard period. Now they couldn't justify calling up a reserve and not utilizing them, so they changed my orders; then they flew me up to Japan and down to Okinawa, Buckner Bay, and I picked up the...Salisbury Sound. Now the Salisbury Sound is a seaplane tender; what in the world do you do with an Arresting

Gear man on a seaplane tender? They don't have any arresting gear! So I had to learn a completely new rate. And me...I...I'm a...when it comes to the Navy, I'm a fast learner. So I just...there was a First Class there and he was regular Navy; now you got to remember, I'm reserve and he's regular, but I was senior to him, so that made his day because...he wasn't much of a man...so much less a sailor. He...he just got lost. It took me two weeks and I knew everything I had to know about that ship. See, now...an Airdale, you know what an Airdale is?

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Skeldon: It...he...tied in with aviation; that's an Airdale.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Skeldon: Now that job...on the seaplane deck...that should have been regular Boatswain's Mate job, so I...I learned the trade. I had gangway which on a carrier an Airdale doesn't have. I had seaplane deck training which on an aircraft carrier they have a...maybe a...side crane that hangs over the side some place whether it's on the flight deck or...or off the hangar deck or off a sponson (sp?) of their own, but it's...it's generally run by a Boatswain's Mate, ship's company, black-shoe Navy. And so...now these are all different things. Now I had two aviation re-arming boats, thirty-five foot boats; Airdales don't run boats, but they do on a seaplane tender. Now I had to supply a...Coxswain to run the boat; they...generally an Engineer to...to run the engine because engine is separate from what the Coxswain runs; Coxswain just steers it really; Engineer takes care of the engine. Anyway, if anything goes wrong

with it, well, then the Engineer, but otherwise I had to supply an Airdale there. And if there it was a...a gas boat, I had two gas boats, I had to put three men in that gas boat because then you needed to have a bow hook man on there. And I had to supply a Boatswain's Mate to watch; he had to know how to use a Boatswain pipe. Now Airdales don't have nothing to do with that on aircraft carriers...or even on cruisers; they just standing watches or whatever. But this is all things that are different. Refuel an airplane from the side of the...while he's in the water; bring him up to the...end of the fantail there and...refuel him over the stern or bring him to the side and refuel him from the side or send a gas boat out and fuel him out there. And...what else did I do then...besides aviation work? Now these are all, you know, jobs I had to learn on the side. So...so they sent me on a seaplane tender and...that was...that was a mistake. If they would have...sent me on a carrier, why, it would have been okay, but...but then again, like I said...meet...meet...well, I would have met some more on the Boxer, too. I'm sure there was a lot of other carriers.

Mike Zambrano: So aft...after the Salisbury Sound you went to...it says here USNH San Dieg, oh, you went to San Diego?

Mr. Skeldon: Well yeah...the San Diego. The ship came in for minor repair jobs of some kind, you know. Once in awhile, I don't know, once a year or...or every other year the ships come back in. They have families here. So we went to San Diego and...and that Boatswain's Mate that I said that I relieved...

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: ...okay, now an ord...order came up through one of the carriers...they needed a...an Arresting Gear guy, so he passed the word out that he's going to stick it to me...that transfer, and somehow or other somebody told me about it. I said, "Well, there's one guy that...he's not going to stick," oh, I would have loved to go but...because of him, and it got so that I...I got to know the guys on the...and...they...they kind of liked me on that seaplane deck, so I said, "Watch," so I just turned into the sick bay and they sent me over to the hospital. So now I...and I'm not on a ship and he's the only First Class; they needed First Class, so he's gone. When I got...come back from the hospital, you know, a week later...why, he's gone; he's history (chuckles).

Mike Zambrano: (Chuckle).

Mr. Skeldon: So I stuck it to him instead of him to me. And (unintelligible) the reserves.

Mike Zambrano: Okay, so...uhm, looks like you stayed in the States your entire time...during the Korean War?

Mr. Skeldon: I...no, no. We were at Buckner Bay when I went aboard and we went to the Pescadores.

Mike Zambrano: Oh okay.

Mr. Skeldon: We went to the...Hong Kong and...we...oh, we went to Japan...Iwo Kuti (sp?), and...and we just went to San Diego for, I don't know, I'm going to say a month (cough), and that was for some...something that they couldn't repair out there I guess. So yeah, we moved around.

Mike Zambrano: So then...

Mr. Skeldon: Besides that...why, you know, then seaplane tenders they swing on a...a hook because a...flying boats...really not a seaplane; it's a flying boat because it lands on its hull and the hull is the boat...of...of...a seaplane is an airplane with a float; it lands on the float. You get that difference there?

Mike Zambrano: Yes.

Mr. Skeldon: Seaplane and a flying boat. Well, a flying boat...when he lands, he taxies out to a...a mooring and ties up to that buoy...now that's where he spends his time...unless he's flying. If he's got some kind of engine trouble, they repair that right while they're at the beach. Now it's my job to supply them with a boat and a...relieve their crews; bringing them lunches. And if they need...any parts or any kind of a...a different...Mechanic or whatever, we bring it out them. If it's something that cannot be done while they're swinging on a hook, then we'll bring him onboard especially, you know, like if it's a hull damage...a hole or something...in a hull we'll bring him aboard and then they'll...do the work. But the ship, with a lot of maneuvering on the part of the...seaplane deck crew they can...we could bring two of those airplanes aboard; put the tail of one inside the hangar deck and get him in as close as it can; the wings won't fit in and they don't fold and then bring another one in...very carefully aboard. We did have two of them, and now that was my job to bring them aboard. The Chief...he would take the two re-arming boats of ours with our crews and tie up one boat on each side of the seaplane, flying boat. One...one of our ship's boats on each side of the seaplane and he would bring them up to the ship and just as soon as I got one of the ship's hooks onto

the airplane, the ship...the Chief...would cut himself...his mouth...up; he'd have nothing else to say because it's mine; I do all of the hollering...what we're going to do; this and that and the other thing, and...bend off; fall in; pay out; whatever. But I didn't holler at...to the guy to operate the crane because it annoys between him and I...the engine noise of the crane engine noise...he...he wouldn't hear me, so that was hand signals. But to the guys that were on the seaplane deck handling the lines...then I would have the whole air department out, hundred men, even the guy from the office would be out there...handling lines. And we'd bring that plane aboard and I never cracked up one, so that air boss...liked me an awful lot. I was always there; not lost, and I knew my job.

Mike Zambrano: Wow!

Mr. Skeldon: (Unintelligible); I spliced cables; I pour sockets; you name it.

Mike Zambrano: Sounds like...sounds like you did it all.

Mr. Skeldon: I did; I did. Well, I was Navy; I knew I was Navy when I was fifteen years old. So when you're doing something that you like, that's not work...that's love, yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Well, let's see, I think you've just about answered all the questions on my list.

Mr. Skeldon: Well, you need another list!

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter).

Mr. Skeldon: I went to San Anton...San Antonio last week, Wednesday.

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: Well, I had a center seat; there was a guy in the aisle seat and I had the center seat and the window seat. Window seat was on my left, so...did I tell you about that guy?

Mike Zambrano: No, you didn't. And now this is going to the San Antonio re...reunion for the Monterey?

Mr. Skeldon: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Okay, so...what happened?

Mr. Skeldon: (Cough), are you taking this down?

Mike Zambrano: Oh, I just...

Mr. Skeldon: And I'm not going to mention a name. There's a guy sitting next to me.

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: Had a scraggly beard; it looked like maybe two days he didn't shave.

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: And...he...does have a tan on him and a dark t-shirt and dark pants; I can't remember the color of the pants, but they were dark and his t-shirt it looked like it was black, but...and...and he must have been, ah, I'm going to say forty years old...in that area. So he's...to me...the first impression...the way he was dressed and the beard and that...that...he's got a half way decent paying job but not too good. Yeah, so I...I don't know how the heck, oh, I know. He started working on this here little four by four box and it was a little computer; it was only about a quarter of an inch thick. So I said, I asked him if he could get the web on there and he said, "Yeah, I think you can." So he punched it in, yeah, he got it. I said punch in Traffic.com; he punched it in and I told

him, I said, “Now get into the Bookstore and then punch in my name...or escort carriers in the Pacific;” he did and that all come up on that little...little box. So we go ahead...started talking and he was in the Army and I in the...in the...Navy and we got to talking and...and then...I was doing most of the talking, but then finally I...I finally asked him I said, “Well...well, what’d you do in the Army?” He says, “I was a Medic.” I figured he was a Medic; yeah, he was a doctor! (Chuckle).

Mike Zambrano: (Chuckle).

Mr. Skeldon: So, never would I think...figure that he was a doctor. Then...not only that, but he was a Colonel, wow!

Mike Zambrano: Oh he was?

Mr. Skeldon: Yeah! I...I...I couldn’t get it into my head that he was a doctor to begin with, you know?

Mike Zambrano: (Chuckles).

Mr. Skeldon: It was...it was his scraggly beard really...that’s what threw me off, and a Colonel on top of that...well, then...now...now that’s not right. He’s got a half of...two days growth of beard, a Colonel, and a doc...and a doctor; why, they’re always clean...fresh...smart! So, “No,” he says, “he wasn’t always a doctor.” When he joined the Army he said he joined right at the bottom; he was a...a...below a Private? I said, “Infantry.” “Well,” he said, “yeah, just about.” So he says, “About six, eight years later,” he says, “I decided that I wanted to go to school.” So the Army sent him to college. He graduated from college; he graduated from medical school; he’s a medical doctor in the Army,

a specialist on hand wounds! So he was going to...a convention of some kind which the Army Medics wanted him to...attend and so that's where he was going. So he...he give me his card, and like I said, three and a half hour trip...I think I talked for two and a half hours; he talked for one.

Mike Zambrano: (Chuckle).

Mr. Skeldon: So he...enjoyed it so much he couldn't thank me enough. He said, "Thanks for your service," and then...I said, "Well, thank you for your service!" And this that and the other thing, and then...he...walked through the concourse with me and...in San Antonio, and...and thanked me again and he said that I taught him an awful lot about the Navy and about the reserves; a lot of things he didn't know...about the reserves – when you pension out and what you get...whatever. And all the questions that he asked, I had the right answers...he had...only because he had the right questions...because some guys when they ask questions, they're...they're the wrong ones and...should never ask or...or...you don't talk about things like that or...whatever. So...and he used the right language which was nothing in Jewish or...or Latin...or...swear...

Mike Zambrano: (Chuckle).

Mr. Skeldon: ...that's the right language; you don't need to swear to...to get understood.
Okay, what do you got?

Mike Zambrano: Uh, gosh I...guess that's pretty much...about it...except for just one question.
Uhm...

Mr. Skeldon: What am I doing tomorrow night?

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter).

Mr. Skeldon: Trying to get the college (unintelligible words) straightened out and what else?

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter), uhm, did you feel that...that World War II...did it leave any, I don't know, did...did you have any bad dreams when you got home; did you have any...did anything about it bother you...your experiences in the Pacific?

Mr. Skeldon: One...one time I got home during the war...I got home, but the whole problem was...travelling by air. See, if you travel by train from the west coast to the east coast...now you got five days to re-acclimate.

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: So I got home, I flew home, so that I'm home the same day I left the ship, but of course about fifteen hours later though...because it...it took an awful long time to fly across country. But I got home and I'm sitting at the kitchen table, and my mother's sitting at the other end of the table...then all of a sudden she looks at me and she says, "What'd you say?" Well, here I'm swearing; talking and swearing not even realizing it. Now if I'd come home on a train, I would have had five days to get used to...the...hey, you're not on a ship now!

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Skeldon: So that was one thing. So I had to watch...what I said. And then...another thing, about...two, three o'clock in the morning...we had a...my father had a mantle clock, and, uh, maybe about fifteen inches long, eight inches high and six inches thick so it was a pretty good sized clock and it...we used to...it used to chime the hours – *bong, bong*. Well, when that darned thing started ringing

– *bong, bong*, I'm running through the house in my underwear and hollering,
“Abandon ship, abandon ship, all hands, abandon ship!”

Mike Zambrano: Did you really?!

Mr. Skeldon: (Chuckle), Mother said she didn't know what the heck was going on,
and...and I didn't know anything about it. And I woke up the next day, she's
telling me about it. So from then on whenever I came home, my father would
take his winter coat...and them winter coats up in Buffalo are pretty
thick!...then he'd put it over the top of that clock because it was an eight-day
clock, you know, you didn't have to wind it for eight days.

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: So they called it a seven-day clock. So I...so then I wouldn't have to hear that
chime because that *bong, bong* sounded like...just like aboard ship. So I'm
running up and down; my mother was scared; she didn't know what the heck
was going on...if I was going bananas or what; I didn't remember. And
then...walking down the city streets, the sidewalk, if a car would backfire,
why, ready to run, yeah, but that only lasted...for me...maybe the first year.
And after that...pretty well settled down because I was, you know, in the
military for two years aft...almost two full years after the war, so that settled
me down, too, (unintelligible).

Mike Zambrano: Right, well...well, I'm glad you didn't go out with any real lasting effects. I
mean I've talked to some gentlemen that...every now and then they'll have a
dream of some sort.

Mr. Skeldon: Well I missed that. Well, I have wild dreams but not about the war...

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter).

Mr. Skeldon: Just...just wild dreams at the begin...but very seldom do they ever bother me or the wife, but I did have one two weeks ago; I remember it very well. It was a...nothing to do with the war, but...there was a bad guy coming after me and his claws were nothing but stainless steel spikes and he was...just about ready to lay hands on me and...and I'm hollering, "Help." But the first three times I hollered wasn't loud enough; third time, why, it woke me up; woke the wife up and she sleeps in a different room and she come in and said, "What's the matter?" And I said, "Ah, nothing, go to sleep." So she must have thought I had...more dreams, too, but no, I don't have war dreams. But...but actually...the first time that I'd had that in...forty years.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah. Hmm, well...

Mr. Skeldon: I don't dream, but one of these pills I take I know it says one of the side effects is that it will affect your dreaming, and I take it for the heart. But one of the side effects is...on it says...(unintelligible) weird dreams.

Mike Zambrano: (Chuckle).

Mr. Skeldon: If they're too bad, well then you tell the doctor and he changes the pills. Mine aren't that bad but I get them now and then.

Mike Zambrano: Well, I think that wraps up all my questions.

Mr. Skeldon: Well, if you have any other questions, you know you got my number.

Mike Zambrano: Alright, well, I just want to say thank you for making the time you did...with me; I think we put in about five and a half hours altogether.

Mr. Skeldon: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah! (Chuckles).

Mr. Skeldon: Well, let's see now...at eighty-two and a quarter an hour...

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter).

Mr. Skeldon: You owe me how much now?

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter).

Mr. Skeldon: At least four thank yous!

Mike Zambrano: Take...

Mr. Skeldon: Okay, how can I get a copy of this?

Mike Zambrano: Well, let me do this; let me just sign off on the tape here and if you stay on the line, we...we'll talk about that.

Mr. Skeldon: Well I mean...if...is there anything on...computer that I can punch in and...get on that ad or something?

Mike Zambrano: Uhm...

Mr. Skeldon: How can I get into this history that you're putting out or...or is it all telephone interviews and...and you can't...read them or anything on a TV...a computer?

Mike Zambrano: Oh no, the way it works is...uh, for example, I've interviewed you; I will...I will transcribe this tape, and I send a computerized copy to the Museum. And what they will do is they'll look over the transcript and if they feel it needs any editing they will send you a copy that you'll...you'll read through and...and, you know, if there's something that you don't want in it, you could take it out or if there's something that you want to add...you've thought, "Oh wow, this is a really good story to have...I'd like to add this," then you can do that; you send it back to the Museum and the Museum, I believe, in the end

they send you a...a final copy. As for the tape, it goes to the Museum archives and there's a form that I'm going to need to send you in regards to...allowing any researchers, scholars, teachers, whatever...if they're...let...let's say they're doing some research in escort carriers or...

Mr. Skeldon: Yeah that's...I'm familiar with that because I've got a couple of them out already because I've been interviewed by...by a few other people and if I'm not mistaken I think it's the University of Carolinas or something like that?

Mike Zambrano: Hmm...

Mr. Skeldon: There's a college...I don't know...North, South Carolina, someplace in that area...I don't have their address right handy but I sent them books because they have a...a special World War II library...

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: ...they try to stack, so I send my books to them and they're the same; they use it for research. And I have sent it to, oh, to Annapolis...I send them two – I figured one for the library for them and one for...loaning out for them, and they sent me a nice thank you letter for that...Minority Crews because they said they really don't have too much on escort carriers or their living conditions and (unintelligible), and I wrote in there, you know, I wrote about the chow and eating and sleeping and...working and whatever.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Skeldon: Yeah, they said cadets in the future will get a lot of good out of them...what I wrote, but there's a lot of humor in there because I'm...half crazy anyway, but...

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter).

Mr. Skeldon: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Well, let me (unintelligible)...

Mr. Skeldon: I (unintelligible words)...and I always figure that a smile on a guy's face...like when I'm in a VA hospital...

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Skeldon: ...volunteer there...if I can get the patient to smile, that's two pain pills I...I took away from him. And if I get to leave him in a happy mood all day, now there's a bottle of pain pills...if I can get him to smile, and I do, so...and the only way to do that is be a half a nut.

Mike Zambrano: Well, that's good!

Mr. Skeldon: The first thing I ask them, you know, "What branch of the military were you in"? And if he says anything except Navy...if he says Army, Air Force or Marines I'll...first thing I'll say...I'll lean over to them a little bit and I'll say, "On our side?"

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter).

Mr. Skeldon: They'll look at..., "Of course on our side!"

Mike Zambrano: Oh...

Mr. Skeldon: (Unintelligible). Then nine out of ten times, they'll say, "You know, sometimes I've wondered!" (Chuckles).

Mike Zambrano: (Chuckles).

Mr. Skeldon: So...okay?

Mike Zambrano: Alright.

Mr. Skeldon: So then...the Museum will send me a copy of it to edit?

Mike Zambrano: Yeah, it...it may be a month or two; I'm a little bit backlogged...

Mr. Skeldon: Yeah, I'll be...be here...

Mike Zambrano: ...on some of my tapes, but...

Mr. Skeldon: ...I know...a month or two.

Mike Zambrano: But let me just click off the recorder here and...and I just want to get your...your address. So I'm going to click it off first.

Mr. Skeldon: Address?

Mike Zambrano: Yeah, I...I'm just going to click the tape off first though. (Pause) Okay, here we are; we're on again.

Mr. Skeldon: Then you ask, okay?

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Skeldon: We were on our way to...the Invasion of Lingayen Gulf, Luzon.

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: January 1st, 1945 we had a PC; it's a gun boat. It's a little smaller than a DE...come along our starboard quarter, that's the fantail, along the starboard side of the fantail to transfer some dark (?) mail and the Skipper of that PC wasn't too good of a seaman; he kept...almost...what you might say...zig zagging. The only thing is every time he zigged he came in so close to the ship we could have stepped off onto his fo'c'sle from our fantail and made our Captain awful nervous because he thought he was going to get rammed. So, he chewed his butt out over the phone so that guy started (unintelligible) then; he stayed away from us. So his zag was...little higher than his zig and...and

high line that go...because he went...a little bit too far and so then the messenger lines that were hooked to the...to the breacher's wood...we used them to ferry stuff across from ship to ship, that started paying out and all our hands that were on the fantail at that time they scattered. And I was standing up on a half round...on the stern of the flight deck looking down on all these...proceedings on the fantail and one seaman...named Brown, he...inadvertently put his foot into what is known as an...a loop (sp?), they call that an asshole; it's not connected to anything, but it's a bite in the line; he got his foot in there; that tightened up around his ankle; dragged him over the life line but he...he straddled the life line and his crouch...and...he went over the in the drink and a tin can came..came up...and now the PC...picked him up and...he died during the night of internal injuries. So the next day the PC came alongside of us again, starboard...water...and completed his mission. Now he's really shaken up that Skipper, so he's zig zagging again because he...his Quartermaster or whoever's at the helm...couldn't hold a straight, steady course, but the Skipper is responsible so our Skipper is going...skooed (sp?), that Skipper chewed his butt out.

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Skeldon: And (throat clearing)...and I imagine that Skipper was mighty happy when he broke away from us. Our Skipper said, "Yesterday you killed one of our men and today you're trying to ram me!"...and he's going on and on and everybody on both ships can hear, so...finally uh, completed his mission and he bore off...and that night he...held a funeral services for our deceased shipmate; he

buried him over the side. And one other time, uh, when we...a few days later that was...January 8th when we took the kamikaze at the water line...now part of that compartment was a storeroom, GSK storeroom, and part of it was officers' country...officers' (unintelligible) stations. And we had a storekeeper that was down that GSK storeroom and he...injured his hand; drew blood on a birdcage as he was closing the GSK storeroom after we took our hit and he got out of there pronto. And there was, in the next compartment, the officers' compartment there was a Lieutenant that had...flown an airplane aboard the day before...some say that he was the...in the squadron; he was a pilot in our squadron, so there's two versions of that. Anyway, officer was asleep on his mattress in his compartment during GQ. If he flew a plane up, replacement plane, aboard the day before then he had no GQ station; if he was in the squadron, well, maybe he had a night flight and was sleeping in. Some, that had a night watch or so,...were allowed to sleep in until eight and this happened at eight. Anyway, to make a long story short, he floated out on his mattress...right out...of the side of the ship...of that hole and never got so much as a scratch on him; went...picked up by a DE and asked what ship he was off of; he did not know but he said, "Bay something," but we were the only carrier that was hit at that time, so they knew where he was from and returned him to us the following day. And we were no longer in commission as a carrier, so...that was that story; thank you.

Mike Zambrano: You have...any other stories you'd like to add?

Mr. Skeldon: I can't think of any now...except for...after the war...the Salisbury Sound...that was during the Korean War...

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Skeldon: ...that...that we can do another day.

Mike Zambrano: Alright, well I'm just going to flip the tape off again real quick here.

(end of interview)

FINAL copy
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