

OH02664aud Frazier, David

MICHAEL FRANKLIN: This is Michael Franklin. Today is September 20th, 2009, and I am interviewing Mr. David Frazier in Fredericksburg, Texas. This interview is in support of the Center of Pacific War Studies, archives for the National Museum of the Pacific War, Texas Historical Commission for the Preservation of Historical information related to this site. Now, Mr. Frazier, where and when were you born?

DAVID FRAZIER: May 19th, 1927, Sugar Creek Township, which is Franklin, Pennsylvania, but the hospital is outside of the city.

MF: And what were your parents' names?

DF: David and Marjorie.

MF: Did you have any siblings?

DF: I have two daughters, Deborah and Suzie.

MF: Did you have brothers or sisters?

DF: Oh, one brother, navigator with [SAC?] in a jet tanker, retired.

MF: So where did you go to high school?

DF: Franklin, Pennsylvania.

MF: And what year did you graduate?

DF: In 1945.

MF: You were telling me about a little bit about this earlier, that you volunteered for the Navy.

DF: I joined the Navy to dodge the draft.

MF: Was that the primary motivation?

DF: I'm a personality that would like to know where my bunk is, where the mess hall is, and I don't care to be digging us a foxhole.

MF: So you wanted to have a regular meal and not have to...

DF: The comforts of home, all or nothing at all.

MF: Where did you go for your basic training and boot camp?

DF: Sampson, New York, which became a college for a while, and now it's just a slab of concrete in a field.

MF: When did you do your basic training?

DF: Whenever V-J day was, June or July of '45. I was in Sullivan Tower at Sampson when they announced that the war was over, and Sullivan and the five brothers got drowned in the same ship, or killed in the same ship, preventing anybody having multiple members of family on the same ship.

MF: So you were still in boot camp?

DF: Yeah, whoopie, take off your hat, shut up, and sit down.

MF: So what was the reaction in Sampson when V-J Day was declared?

DF: Well, an after-reaction that has come up is, people asked me who was the most important person in my life, and, as a

Republican, I came up with the answer, "Harry Truman." He saved my life, which is true because I would have been on the front line invading Japan, and he stopped it all. But, I left Sampson and spent a little time in Shoemaker, California, making 600 gallons of coffee a day in mess hall #3 of the receiving station and then went on to Guam, spent a little time at Camp Dealey at the receiving station. Got an [LST?] up to Iwo, got aboard ship Christmas Eve of '45, beer and letters and fudge.

MF: Beer, letters, and fudge?

DF: Yeah. When you're in transit, you don't have any money. You don't have any communications. You're just wandering out there with a pack of orders that once you get to your station, everything will settle down, and it was a PC-1149 who had recently mounted a little pine tree on a .20-millimeter gun mount, every color of paint that was in the paint locker they painted on these 40-watt bulbs for Christmas tree bulbs, and the beer, fudge, etc.

MF: And so it was Christmas Eve of 1945. Where did you...

DF: Our mission -- I went aboard at Iwo. Our mission was to run -- there were 500 Marines stationed at Chichijima, which is 140 miles north of Iwo. We went out on a little island in the middle called Haha, and our mission was to be the USO show delivery, the mail boy, and anybody needing a

ride to the airport, we'd run them down to Iwo because Chichi was a natural harbor in the North Pacific, which we were anchored at a buoy in the middle of the harbor. My first day aboard, I got the binoculars out, and I'm searching around the hillside, and all I'm seeing is a bunch of donuts, five-inch guns pointed at us. They did not fire. There were 20,000 Japanese on Chichi, and there were 500 Marines helping them get back to Japan, and we were baby-sitting the Marines. I get in trouble if I mention that in the presence of Marines.

MF: Yes, that's a little funny.

DF: Well, we ran back and forth between Iwo to Chichi doing various services. Progressively, I got frustrated that there wasn't a dairy aisle anywhere, and I like ice cream. I checked with the cook, and sure enough, there was a recipe in the Navy cookbook for ice cream, 2 cups of dehydrated powdered -- dehydrated milk -- 2 cups of sugar, 2 or 3 teaspoons of cream of tartar or something that made it get hard, and liquid of choice -- flavor of choice for the balance of the gallon of ice cream. We happened to have an ice cream mixer aboard. I took a bucket of water and stuck it in the meat freezer for a couple of days, had a bucket of ice, went ashore, found some rock salt that the Japanese left behind, and came back to ship -- oh, it

called for 20 minutes of double-boiling. A live steam hose in a bucket provided a double boiler. So, the first batch of ice cream was coffee, and we hand-cranked it. If you've ever hand-cranked ice cream, you don't do it much more than once without a big crowd to help you. It isn't much fun. Everybody buys an electric hand-cranker.

Anyway, I found a ringer assembly ashore that the Marines had left which had a gear reduction of 90-to-1. We had a big old half-inch hand drill, so I was able to put the input power with this hand drill, output power on the ringer axle, took the handle off of the ice cream maker, and had a -- we put a rubber hose on it with some wire clamps, and, believe it or not, everybody aboard that ship could hear that rubber slip when the ice cream was hard, and they would charge down the engine room with cup and spoon in hand, flavors of choice. Coffee was the best. Vanilla tablets, we made vanilla -- not vanilla -- maple syrup tablets, which you made maple syrup for pancakes, was probably second best. Vanilla pills didn't work worth a dang. Canned peaches were pretty good. Fruit cocktail was the worst. Anyways, we made ice cream on a regular basis aboard the PC-1149, and, as I said, it was amazing how

everyone aboard ship could hear that rubber hose slip on the shaft.

MF: So you said, how many people were on?

DF: The PC, there were 264 PCs built in '41 and '42, which turned the Germans' U-boats [slaughter?] around. Here's somebody with depth charges and a three-inch gun and .40s and .20s that can at least scare them. The ship was originally stationed in New York, Staten Island, to prevent the buzz bomb attacks on New York. Then its trip to the Pacific -- I've talked to some of the other crew members that were on board when we went to the Pacific. The biggest thrill of going to the Panama Canal? Fresh water showers, meaning the showers got their seawater -- well, the Suez is fresh. When all the Japs were gone from Chichi, the Marines left, and we took the ship to Guam for decommissions. It ultimately went to Portland and ended up being for coastal patrol in some South American country.

MF: How big of a ship was this?

DF: Oh, 163 feet, 11-, 12-foot draft. The only thing rougher was an SC, which is a wooden 110-foot version in World War I, which was -- throughout the world, immediately, the SCs, because they had been used in World War I, were redesigned between World War I and World War II, and any private shipyard could build SCs because they knew how to work with

wood. Nobody knew how to build a steel ship, and the PCs were built in 10 or 15 shipyards throughout the nation. Defoe shipyards of (inaudible) Michigan devised a method of building them upside down. You can get welders who can weld down. It's tough to find a welder that can weld up. So with this fancy jig, they just welded it together, keel-side up, rolled it over and finished it in the river and took it down to Mississippi and equipped it in New Orleans.

MF: So instead of being riveted like a regular ship's hull...

DF: It was 5/8-inch steel, and from being in storms, you could see all the ribs. The waves had hit the steel and expanded the metal so that you could count the ribs, like a very skinny person.

MF: So how fast could it...

DF: It's a PC. The PT people are awfully snotty, patrol craft, sub-chasers. I think flank speed might have been 18; cruising speed was 12 knots. I had a good enough chemistry and physics teacher in high school, Mrs. [Rankin?], that when everybody was going home on points, you had to have a replacement for your position, and the electrician was ready to go home for points. I was able to take the electricians' third class petty officer's test, passed it with no training other than my high school physics teacher,

and I became chief electrician aboard the PC-1149 for a month or two.

MF: For only a month or two?

DF: Well, we decommissioned in Guam. The war was over, and it's unreal how fast they were able to -- how good the occupation went and how fast it went.

MF: So basically, for your time that you spent, about as soon as you got to the Pacific, you were (inaudible) done.

DF: Yeah, ready to come home. Everybody else was more than ready to come home. They'd been on duty there for a while.

MF: So when did you actually -- when were you discharged from the Navy?

DF: I got discharged in Bainbridge, Maryland, I think it was 17 months after I went in, and I stayed in the active reserves, went to places like Bermuda, the Virgin Islands, Chicago, on cruises. Korea came along. I married to a New York City canteen hostess for 58 years now. Towards the 15th to the 25th, you're out of money, and you'd (inaudible) to New York. I was stationed in the Brooklyn Army Base, running back and forth to [Bremerhaven?], Germany once a month, three days, open gangway -- but that's another war. You're only covering the Pacific and World War II, primarily.

MF: Primarily.



DF: Well, anyway, I can say I attended two wars, saw fit to stay out of active duty where they shot people.

MF: So what did you do during Korea then?

DF: I went through the Brooklyn Receiving station as an electrician. I was a movie operator. The movie operator becomes the mailman, too, the movie exchange and the mail collections, and ultimately went to canteen, met my wife of 57 years, and her father is the commercial artist that designed the Marine Corps emblem, as a commercial artist, they're still using. James Harley Nash.

MF: James Harley Nash?

DF: Anyway, I got engaged to Gloria, my wife, and for some strange reason, I don't know if he had enough clout, they sent me to Thule, Greenland, for the summer. Now, that is the father protecting his daughter.

MF: So you were in Greenland.

DF: We were there for the building of the Thule base, and I was a movie operator and mailman for that, but, again that's Korea.

MF: So where did you meet your wife at, in New York?

DF: In Hell's Kitchen, New York City, Manhattan, at the canteen. We walked out of the canteen together, which is much against the rules and regulations, went over to Ninth Avenue and 60th Street, Hell's Kitchen. We went back to

51st Street and First Avenue, to the Mayflower Bar and Grill, and had a couple of beers. I asked her if she would like to go to a live production of *What's My Line*, and she thought that would be nice, but, "I'll have to show you where I live," and I wasn't too sure what that meant. Anyway, we left the Mayflower, walked a couple of blocks, went past a doorman, "Good Evening, Miss Nash," went over to the elevator, punched the penthouse -- things are looking better -- walked across the lobby of the penthouse, up the fire escape to the roof, over to the water tower. I got a little peck kiss good night. That's where her father had the studio, his art studio.

I picked her up Thursday to go to *What's My Line* with my '39 Chevy in New York, and we dated once -- I really only knew her four or five weeks. I only had dealings with her four or five weeks, because I was gone most of the month going to Germany and back. Somebody asked, "How long did you date your wife?" Well, six or eight months, or eight or eight weeks, take your choice.

MF: So you were going back and forth between Germany and...

DF: Until we went we summered in Thule, Greenland.

MF: So on your date, who was the contestant on *What's My Line*?

DF: Haven't got any idea.

MF: It didn't even matter.

DF: I was holding hands.

MF: Now, you had mentioned also that you were on Iwo Jima. You landed there on the anniversary of the landing? Is that correct?

DF: No. Well, there were no Marines left on Iwo a year after the original landing date in April or May, but there were 500 Marines at Chichi. We took the 16 of them down to Iwo and shot off the rifles and, "Whoopie, we won a year ago." Big party, started drinking beer. I got tired of drinking beer, went out, started hitch-hiking on the roads of Iwo, a couple of guys from Pittsburgh picked me up in their jeep and drove me up to the top of Mount Suribachi and a tour of the island, all eight miles of it or whatever. It was two years later or three years later that the last three Japanese surrendered from the east end. I just can't believe they could hide that long in a cave on such a small piece of rock, or sand, I guess. Anyway, between making ice cream and taking the Marines down to Chichi or down to Iwo were some of the feature events in my short stay in the North Pacific.

MF: Your short stint. Well, thank you very much for taking the time to do this interview, and I appreciate it.

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