

*National Museum of the Pacific War*

*Nimitz Education and Research Center*

*Fredericksburg, Texas*

Interview with

**Mr. Harvey Staley**

Date of Interview: March 19, 2010

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## **Fredericksburg, Texas**

### **Interview with Mr. Harvey Staley**

Interview in progress.

Norma Christian: March the 19<sup>th</sup>, 2010. I am Norma Christian and I will be interviewing Mr. Harvey Staley in Raymondville, Texas. Okay, where were you born?

Mr. Staley: In Ekoshcano (sp?), Missouri; the youngest of fourteen children – seven boys and seven girls. On a little farm.

Norma Christian: Okay, which child were you? I mean...

Mr. Staley: I was the fourteenth.

Norma Christian: You were the...you were...

Mr. Staley: Last one.

Norma Christian: You were the baby.

Mr. Staley: That's right.

Norma Christian: Alright, so you run a small farm?

Mr. Staley: A hundred and eighty acres.

Norma Christian: Uh hum. So where were you when...when World War II broke out?

Mr. Staley: I was there on the farm then.

Norma Christian: Do you remember that day?

Mr. Staley: No, I don't remember that day.

Norma Christian: Okay, you probably didn't have a radio or...

Mr. Staley: No, we didn't. We...probably out in the field working and we didn't have any television; no radio; nothing, and our radio was very...just (unintelligible) a battery and we'd hook a battery up until it run down and then hook another one up and take that and get it charged and...we didn't depend too much on a radio.

Norma Christian: And how long after that did you find out about...Pearl Harbor.

Mr. Staley: Well, I imagine it was about a week.

Norma Christian: Well, so...so did you automatically volunteer or...or did you wait awhile?

Mr. Staley: Well, I waited till...till I graduated from high school.

Norma Christian: Okay.

Mr. Staley: I graduated from high school in 1944; that was my seventeenth birthday. I graduated on my birthday, June 6<sup>th</sup>, 1944. And I had two brothers that was in the Navy, and I decided I wanted to go to the Navy because I didn't want to go to the Army and be out in a foxhole and...have to eat and sleep and everything in a foxhole, and so I...thinking about going in the Navy if I...get knocked out, I'd be dead; I wouldn't come back a cripple. And I had two brothers in the Navy and so that's the reason I went to the Navy.

Norma Christian: Okay. Where did you get your basic training?

Mr. Staley: In Great Lakes, Camp Porter, Great Lakes, Illinois.

Norma Christian: And where did you go after that?

Mr. Staley: Well, from there I went to Shumaker, California to the Out Going Unit, OGU, where I was assigned to a ship, and I was shipped directly overseas.

Norma Christian: Alright, you were shipped immediately over or did it take a week or so before they...got you on a ship?

Mr. Staley: Well, I...I was there, I think, a week.

Norma Christian: And you missed your first boat?

Mr. Staley: I missed my first ship, right.

Norma Christian: (Laughter).

Mr. Staley: So they put me on an Army transport and...I went to New Guinea, 'cause I thought...they thought I...our ship would be there when I got there, but by the time I got there, it had left there, too. So I spent two weeks there...on what they call Pancake Hill in New Guinea, Hollandia, New Guinea. So my ship never came back in so they finally put me on an LST and sent me to Leyte in the Philippines and that's where I caught up with my ship.

Norma Christian: Hmm.

Mr. Staley: And got on my ship at Leyte in the Philippines.

Norma Christian: Okay. Did you stay in Leyte quite awhile or...

Mr. Staley: No, I got right aboard ship and...we shipped out right away, but I can't tell you just to 'cause we was on the go pretty much all the time.

Norma Christian: (Unintelligible). Did you see quite a bit of action during that time?

Mr. Staley: Just Okinawa...was only one I was in.

Norma Christian: I see. So, you were there...I guess you were out, of course, you were out...you weren't onshore; you weren't in a foxhole (chuckles).

Mr. Staley: No, we wasn't in a foxhole; we was out on top of the water.

Norma Christian: So you saw the battle from a...from a distance, in a way; were there other ships out there shooting at you or...or...

Mr. Staley: On Okinawa.

Norma Christian: On Okinawa?

Mr. Staley: We had a lot of...flak around there; suicide planes over us and...dropping bombs and diving into the ships, and our sister ship caught a suicide plane. They killed eleven men...get right in there...had...where the cafeteria was.

Norma Christian: Uhm!

Mr. Staley: But it killed eleven men aboard that ship.

Norma Christian: I see.

Mr. Staley: So...

Norma Christian: So how long were you in that area?

Mr. Staley: We...and that was...basically our...port to come in and out of; we was in and out of Leyte pretty regular.

Norma Christian: I see.

Mr. Staley: 'Cause every time we'd come into Leyte, I'd go up on the bridge and check the ships that was in to see if my brothers was in there. One day I went up there and...my brother, one brother's ship was in there, the AD-21 destroyer tender. So I contacted the Captain and asked him if there was any way I could see him. So he brought his...had his...jig came up and picked me up and took me over to the (unintelligible words) to see my brother. I was over there about two hours and then...the boat stayed out there in the harbor ready to pick me up. When we got ready to come back,

the Quartermaster hailed him in and he came in and picked me up and took me back to my ship.

Norma Christian: Yeah.

Mr. Staley: So I had quite a good visit with him.

Norma Christian: Did...did both of your brothers come back alright?

Mr. Staley: Yes, uh hum.

Norma Christian: All three of you made it?

Mr. Staley: All three of us made it.

Norma Christian: Wow.

Mr. Staley: And I came in one other time and the other brother was in there, so I went through the same procedure and I went...I got to go see him.

Norma Christian: Uhm!

Mr. Staley: So I seen both of my brothers over in...Leyte.

Norma Christian: Well, that was nice!

Mr. Staley: That was!

Norma Christian: So how long were in the service?

Mr. Staley: Duration...in six months.

Norma Christian: Duration in six months...that was after 1945 then.

Mr. Staley: Right! (chuckle) When I went in in '44, I signed up for duration in six months.

Norma Christian: I see.

Mr. Staley: And '46 when I got out.

Norma Christian: So you came directly back to the States after that?

Mr. Staley: Yes, uh hum.

Norma Christian: Where did you muster out?

Mr. Staley: St...St. Louis, Missouri.

Norma Christian: Okay. Is there anything that really impressed you while you were in the service?

Mr. Staley: Oh yeah, a few things did!

Norma Christian: Well, would you like to tell us about some of them?

Mr. Staley: Well, one thing that really impressed me...was when we pulled into Honolulu...that the ships was...that were sunk there in the harbor; that really impressed me. And one thing that impressed me...when we...after the war was over and we were heading to Australia and we run up on a reef; we was on that reef for about two weeks trying to get off of it. So...

Norma Christian: (Chuckles), I imagine that would be impressionable (laughter).

Mr. Staley: It was; out there in the middle of the ocean sitting up on a rock pile.

Norma Christian: (Laughter).

Mr. Staley: Well, you'd could look over the side and see the fish swimming down in the rocks and stuff and it was real interesting. (Unintelligible) a flying fish...I don't know what you call it...there *are* flying fish; they come up and sail just like a bird and hit back...and hit the water and back up again, and we sat there and watched them. And...

Norma Christian: Was that your television in those days?

Mr. Staley: That was our enjoyment, right.

Norma Christian: (Laughter). I don't...I don't know of anything else to ask you. Can you think of anything else you want to add?

Mr. Staley: Well, when...pulled into Manila, and the ships that we seen there and then we pulled into the Philippine...Manila in the Philippines...the walls, the buildings were still smoking and everything. And we went on leave in liberty there; walked around a little bit and you could still smell the bodies.

Norma Christian: Uhm!

Mr. Staley: It was...gruesome. The one place there was called Walled City where there was many...they were digging it out and there was a lot of bodies in those buildings. So...

Norma Christian: Well, did you have any casualties on your ship?

Mr. Staley: No, we didn't. The one...we went on the invasion; after the invasion, we pulled out in the ocean a ways and held off to pick up casualties from the...the invasion. So the...and the casualties we picked up, we picked...dropped them off at...a hospital ships or whatever was...really hospitalized in the different islands...we stopped where there was medical assistance to drop the ones off that was the worst. And aboard our ship, the officers, troop officers' mess hall, was our hospital that was set up to take care of the people...in. So we didn't have the accommodations to really set them up, so we set them up and took them...any place we came close to to drop them off that had the facilities...we dropped the worst ones off.



Norma Christian: Uhm. You took the rest of them back to the U.S. later or...

Mr. Staley: Yes, uh hum. We...we kept going back and dropping a few off now and then, and what was left over, we brought back to the United States.

Norma Christian: So you had quite a few more people on your ship by the time you came back, is that correct?

Mr. Staley: Well, we had...we was full of troops when we went so...

Norma Christian: So it was better than full then? (laughter)

Mr. Staley: It was better than full, right (laughter).

Norma Christian: Well...

Mr. Staley: (Slam sound), she's getting ready to go; we're leaving Monday.

Norma Christian: I see. (recording momentarily stopped.) What duties did you have when you were (recording interference).

Mr. Staley: I started out...as a Radio man, but my ears weren't good enough to pick up the Morse Code; I couldn't pick out the letters in the Morse Code, so then I went and transferred to Storekeeper and was a Storekeeper then all the rest of the time I was in the service. Fact, I (recording interference)...sold out (unintelligible) pop or candy or...anything anybody wanted that was...get in a little store, so I worked in that the rest...all the time I was in the service.

Norma Christian: But you didn't have any desire to go into merchandising or...storekeeping?

Mr. Staley: No, uh uh, no.

Norma Christian: (Recording interference)...occupation in the Navy?

Mr. Staley: No, I didn't.

Norma Christian: Is...stop...(recording stopped).

Mr. Staley:

Norma Christian:

Mr. Staley:

(end of interview)

**FINAL** copy  
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