

Stanley Kuenstler Oral History Interview

DR. JAMES LINDLEY: This is Dr. James Lindley. This is 18 September, 2010. This is an oral history being recorded at the Fredericksburg High School during the annual symposium. The person being interviewed is Stanley E. Kuenstler, K-U-E-N-S-T-L-E-R. The purpose of the National Museum of the Pacific War Oral History Project is to collect, preserve, and interpret the stories of World War II veterans' home front experiences, the life of Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, and the old Nimitz hotel by means of audio and video recordings. The audio and video recordings of such interviews become part of the Center for Pacific War Studies, the archives of the National Museum of the Pacific War, and the Texas Historical Commission. These recordings will be made available for historians and other academic research by scholars and members of the families of the interviewee. Thank you ever so much for taking your time to give us your story, and we want to thank you for your service to our country. Tell us your name, and tell us a little bit about yourself -- where you were born, something about your early life, how you came to serve our country during the World War II period in the Pacific.

STANLEY KUENSTLER: Thank you, doctor. I am Stanley Kuenstler, as the doctor said. I was born in San Antonio, Texas on March 31, 1924. I grew up in San Antonio. I graduated from Brackenridge High School there in 1940, and I took my first two years of college at a local -- would be now called a community college. It was called a junior college at that time, and I went into that college intending to just take two years of college and then get into the Army Air Corps Cadet Corps. I had grown up, as I say, in San Antonio, and it was full of Army aviation, and I always envied the cadets for their convertibles and their Ray Ban sunglasses and their money, and that was where I wanted to be. While I was at San Antonio Junior College, the war broke out. In the meantime, a very fine old professor named James A. [Hurry?] had convinced me that I really wanted to be an engineer, and so I took pre-engineering at San Antonio Junior College. I learned about the outbreak of the war, I think it was on a Sunday, and we had the same old Crosley radio that everybody else in those days had, and I just happened to be in the house that Sunday morning when the announcement of the war came. And of course we had no idea what all that would lead to, but it, of course, sounded -- it was very serious. I, of course, like all other young men at that time immediately started wondering

what was going to happen to me and what I was going to do about all of this and went ahead and finished my first year at junior college, and during my sophomore year, now thinking that I wanted to be an engineer, decided that a career -- or rather service in the Navy would further my engineering ambitions more than flying an airplane. And the Navy, of course, had the V-12 program, and so sometime during my sophomore year I signed up for the V-12 program. I worked that summer at a job building a barracks there in San Antonio and matriculated to the University of Texas for my junior year and finished my junior year and then was activated. As I say, I had signed up before I left San Antonio, but they didn't activate me. But in the summer of '43, they activated the V-12 unit at the University of Texas. I had one summer and the fall session '43-'44 in the V-12 unit, and then they pulled me and a number of other juniors and seniors in the engineering course out and sent us to New York City to midshipmen school. And my record shows that I went to midshipmen school at Columbia University. That's pretty far from the truth. It has some truth to it, because they put the engineers on an old hulk -- I think it was the remains -- I think it was the hull of the battleship New York. I don't know, but it had been a naval armory tied up in the East River about 100 yards

downstream from a sewage outlet, and we were there in the summer of 1944. It was very cramped, very hot, and we were very glad to get out of there even if we were going to go into combat. But in June of 1944, I graduated from midshipman school with 2,500 other midshipmen. The 2,500 - - our unit was actually the unit that was at Columbia, but there were 2,500 of us that graduated and got our commission that June and another 7,500 that came in right behind us. And I was assigned when they sent around the form asking what duty do you want, which I think was just for comic relief, because I don't think anybody got what they wanted. But I put down that I wanted submarines, because again, I felt that that would be more helpful with the engines and the propulsion systems and all that that they have. But somebody must have been looking after me, because they didn't pay any attention to that, and they assigned me to destroyer school. And I spent the rest of that summer down at Norfolk at destroyer school and was assigned in December of 1944 to the USS Murphy, joined her shortly before Christmas -- she was tied up in the Brooklyn Navy Yard there in New York City -- and was on her then for 15 months, probably, 16 maybe. And we covered a lot of territory during those 16 months. We had some north Atlantic convoy duty where we would take the convoys

partway across the Atlantic, and the British would meet us and relieve us, and we would turn around and come back. Another mission that we had -- another voyage that we had was acting as plane guard to the USS Boxer. The Boxer was a brand new aircraft carrier, and we accompanied her on her shakedown cruise out of New York or Norfolk -- I forget which port we left from -- but on her shakedown cruise down into the Caribbean, and that was memorable for a couple of reasons. One of them was that we ran into what I now realize probably was a hurricane off of North Carolina and had some really nasty weather and some rolls 40 degrees where you wondered if it was ever going to roll back up. The other things that made a great impression on me were the number of F4U Corsairs that we lost on that trip. The Corsairs were very bad. If a pilot got down low and slow on his approach and then put too much power on too suddenly, instead of the prop picking up and going, the airplane would roll over and into the ocean. And I think just on that one cruise, we picked up three or four. I think we lost one or two, but -- just from that. We did some other duties. I don't even remember what they all were. I guess probably the two most memorable, most significant, were number one, we've had a lot of mention in the program that we've done this weekend here about the

Yalta Conference. Well, President Roosevelt had to get to Yalta somehow, and of course he called on the Navy to handle that. And the plan was that he boarded the USS Quincy off of -- or at Norfolk, and we were the escort that made a high-speed run across the Atlantic with President Roosevelt aboard the Quincy to land him at Malta in the Mediterranean from whence he proceeded to Yalta and had the meeting with Churchill and Stalin. That was not the end of the mission for us or the Quincy, because the next part of the trip was that a meeting was planned between President Roosevelt and King ibn Saud of Saudi Arabia, and they were to meet on board the Quincy in Great Bitter Lake, which Great Bitter Lake is a large lake in the middle of the Suez Canal. So we proceeded down through the Mediterranean, through the Suez, down through the Red Sea to Jeddah Arabia to pick up the king. I've talked to -- matter of fact, this weekend I talked to some people who have served in various capacities in Saudi Arabia in more recent years, and I can hardly believe what they tell me about what a large, modern city it is, because at the time we were there to pick up the king you could look up -- from down in the harbor you could look up the main, the only street, right on up there -- in my memory it seemed like maybe 10 buildings on one side and six on the other side, and then

the desert began out there, and the buildings were very modest. But at any rate, we picked up the king there, and that was quite a sensation in itself. Apparently, the king does not like to sleep indoors. He likes the feeling of a tent, so before we got there we had rigged a tent on the focsle of the ship so that he would have familiar surroundings in which to sleep and do his business. The other thing was that he brought a bodyguard of about two dozen of the toughest looking, meanest looking characters that you have ever seen. They were all bandoliered with bullets, and all of them had little hook daggers that they kept at their belt, and they all scowled all the time, and nobody messed with those fellows. The other -- another unusual aspect of it was that of course he was not going to eat any of our food. He wasn't going to eat in the mess hall, so he brought several dozen sheep with him, and those had to be accommodated, and so we wound up building a Texas-style corral on the fantail of the destroyer back there between the depth charge racks and herded the sheep back there, and that's where they stayed for the voyage -- that is the ones that didn't get butchered. We also had to rig a hoist for them so they could hang the sheep up by the hind legs and cut their throats and let them bleed out all over our deck and kill them in the approved manner. So it

was quite an adventure. I have a picture -- at one point the king had a reception, I suppose you'd call it -- well, actually it was a dinner up there in his quarters on the focsle, and he had all the ship's officers there. His people in the meantime had spread rugs all over the deck so that his feet never had to touch the steel of our deck, and we sat on those rugs and ate rice and sheep and I'm not sure what else. And there was not much conversation back and forth with the king, because -- well, number one, I was way down in the ranks, and he wouldn't have been talking to me, but none of our officers -- I think there was an interpreter, but there wasn't much interplay as I remember it. However, the king was generous enough that he gave each officer a gift, and the gift related to your pecking order on the ship. I really coveted the gift that he gave the captain, because it was a beautiful, beautiful one of the hooked daggers that they all wore, all inset with jewels and gold, and I wonder where that is now. But at any rate, that's what the captain got. But the gifts kind of deteriorated as you got down to my level, and what the JGs and the ensigns got were wristwatches, and mine worked for probably six months. They had an Arabic inscription on the back which nobody ever interpreted for us. We finally decided that what it said was, "I'd walk a mile for a



camel." But we delivered the king. Probably shouldn't memorialize this part of the incident, but Captain Smith was not the best ship handler in the world, and the plan was for us to come up on the starboard side of the Quincy, which was anchor there in Great Bri-- Great Bitter Lake, come up on the starboard side of the Quincy, our port side, too, of course, and tie up and then transfer the king. Well, cruisers of that class had a sea -- a float plane -- sea plane hanging off of the fantail on each -- hanging off the stern on each side. Well, Captain Smith misjudged, and as he approached he came too close, and he wiped their starboard sea plane off into the sea, and so we had to do an emergency stern and back off and make another try, which thank goodness the second try worked, and we tied up and transferred the king. The story -- I'm told that that's where the king and President Roosevelt worked out the arrangements for us to develop the oil resources of Saudi Arabia, so that's how that all started. The story got lots and lots of publicity in Life Magazine, had page after page of photo coverage. We had PR people running over us on the ship, because everybody who was in that kind of department or anybody that had any rank wanted to be part of this thing, so they crowded us all out and had, of course, pushed everybody out of their bunks according to rank, and

I didn't have to sleep with the sheep, but it wasn't much better than that by the time it all got sorted out. But at any rate, we came back from that. I've always wondered how President Roosevelt got back to Washington, D.C. We didn't take him, maybe the Quincy. But anyway, that's neither here nor there. We came back and were put into the Boston Navy Yard to be refitted for duty in the upcoming invasion of Japan, and what that basically amounted to was that they took off our torpedo tubes and replaced -- used that space and some other space to fit us out with 20-millimeter and 40-millimeter antiaircraft, and of course we, like all the other destroyers, were going to be kamikaze bait during the invasion, and so that was the plan for the USS Murphy. We finished fitting out and proceeded through the Panama Canal around up to San Diego and then left San Diego and headed west for whatever was to come. The surrender was on August 14. We were between San Diego and Pearl Harbor, and we got the news -- got the news and, of course, we immediately started sweating out the message from higher headquarters to turn around and come back to San Diego, because the war was over. Well, that message never came, so we proceeded on to Pearl and Guam, Saipan, Okinawa, and while at Okinawa, we received orders to proceed to Nagasaki to do escort duty for the hospital ship, Sanctuary. They had

gathered a great number of -- well, they gathered about a thousand sick and wounded coalition Allied POWs there at Nagasaki, and the Sanctuary was there to pick them up. It was a small hitch, though, and we found out that while we had been en route from Okinawa to Nagasaki that we had officially been converted from a destroyer to a mine sweeper, the reason being that to get into Nagasaki harbor you have to go up a very narrow channel for four or five miles long, and they were highly concerned that the Sanctuary would set off the type of mine that we had been sowing all over Japan that only responded to large, heavy ships with either a large magnetic field or that created much more pressure disruptions on the floor of the channel than the smaller vessel that had been going in and out. So somebody had to see whether a large vessel was going to set those off or not, and we were -- we won. We were elected. Of course, there was a lot of apprehension over that. What we did in the event was that we put everybody at quarters -- that is, standing along the rails, everybody who was not involved in operating the ship -- and we proceeded very slowly up the channel, fingers crossed. I imagine there was quite a bit of praying going on. Very -- probably the longest hour of my life. We all -- I'm sure I did, and I think all of us had the feeling that we'd come through the

war, and none of us appreciated the irony of being killed after having come through the war and the war being over and now being killed. Nobody likes to be the last man killed in the war. But our luck held out once more -- our Irish luck -- and there were no loud noises, and we made the trip, and we came through and dropped anchor, and the Sanctuary proceeded up the channel safely. We were just there 24 hours. Sanctuary, of course, loaded the POWs and the wounded and the injured. Somebody arranged for us to get some trucks and drive around in the -- at Nagasaki. We could see from way out in the harbor the extent of the damage. As far as you could see in all quadrants, it was just leveled. But as we got over and got -- set foot on the ground and did some walking around, it really made you believe in the atom bomb. It was just a sea of rubble anywhere from three feet deep to ten feet deep, nothing but broken concrete and masonry and reinforcing steel. Anything that was at all flammable, of course, was completely consumed, no sign of anything like that. Some of my shipmates told me later that they had seen signs in concrete where there was an imprint of a body that had been blown against the concrete and impressed into the concrete. I didn't see that, but seeing the other things that I did see, I can believe it. There were two exceptions to the

leveled field, things sticking up out of the rubble, that made a big impression on me. One of them was drill presses and machine tool arbors from their production facilities there. Those withstood the blast and were still sticking up out of the rubble. The unique thing about the machine tools was that very many of them, maybe half of them, had -- were American brands. They had [Warren Sweazy?] or [Giddings?] or Cincinnati or some American brand embossed on the arbors. The other thing -- and I still don't understand it -- that stood were tall, industrial, round concrete or masonry chimneys. They stick up. They look like they're a perfect target to get pushed over, but they survi-- seemed to survive very well. Another impression from being there was there were a few -- not many, but a few locals picking around in the garbage -- in the rubble. I guess they were scavenging. I'm not sure what they were doing, but they -- it -- their reactions and their behavior showed a great deal of the benefit of shock and awe when you are fighting an enemy, because they were most respectful at any distance as you approached them. They were bowing and saluting. It didn't make a difference whether you were an admiral or a mess cook, they were saluting and showing a tremendous amount of respect, not about to give us any trouble. We spent several hours doing

that. Nobody told us that we might be cooking vital organs or changing our future life, but I think some of that is catching up with me now, maybe, but it didn't seem to bother us at the time. And the next day, 24 hours later, again, because some of the mines were set so that they only exploded when the second major ship came over or the third major ship came over, so we weren't home free yet. So we came to quarters again and came back down the channel and again lucked out, and the Sanctuary loaded up there, 1,000 people, and followed us down the channel. Following that, we put in at several Japanese ports. Not sure what we were doing. We really weren't doing much, but we put in and then after a week or 10 days of that, we proceeded back to Okinawa and were there in time to participate in the infamous October typhoon. It was called Typhoon Louise. I happened to have the anchor watch the night that the orders came in -- the midnight anchor watch the night that the orders came in for us to leave the harbor and hold station on the battleship -- I think it was New York, I'm not sure. So I had to wake up the captain and tell him what the orders were and that we had to get under way, and of course he got up, and we got things going and followed the battleship out of the harbor. Keeping station on them during the typhoon was a laugh, because if you're down in

the trough of a 35-foot wave, you can't see anything but water, and even if you're not in the trough, with the rain coming down in sheets -- horizontally, vertically, sideways, every way -- the visibility is not such that you can really keep your (inaudible) in contact well enough to really do any good. But we didn't really worry about that. We were plenty occupied with just trying to keep headed into the waves, keep up power, don't do anything stupid, and try to get through this, which we did. We had a -- we got a little bit crossways to a heavy sea in one instance, and it mashed in about a half-inch thick guardrail that ran from the break in the deck back about halfway to the stern, just folded it over like it were made out of tissue paper. I had a personal experience -- and this is not going to make you as a doctor happy -- but we had a new ensign who had just come on board just the last week or so, and Jerry got just as sick as a dog -- absolutely sick. And, of course, Dr. [Case?] put him in the bunk and was trying to figure out what was wrong with him. And Dr. Case decided that he needed some oxygen, and the only oxygen on board was in the electrician shack back -- probably 100 feet back down from the break in the -- between the main deck and the upper decks, and to get back there you had to go along the main deck, which when we were sitting in the harbor was

only two or three feet above the water level, and the way we were rolling, the water was coming over there four feet deep, five feet deep, and then it would roll off and we had to go through that. So I got an electrician's mate, and he and I made our way down the deck back to the electrician shack, and of course all we could do was make -- scuttle two or three feet when we had a break, and then when the sea came over, we'd just hold on to the grab iron on the side of the deck house and hope that we could hold on tighter than the waves could push us, which we did. And we got back, and we got into the electrician's shack, and the oxygen was in the regular industrial oxygen bottles that are about four-and-a-half feet high and probably weigh 90 or 100 pounds. Well, now we got to retrace that same path with this oxygen bottle between us, and it complicated things considerably. Not only did we have the waves and being continually battered by them, we had to hold on to the oxygen bottle and hold on to the grab rail, and the oxygen bottle was beating our fingers between the bottle and grab rail. My hands didn't recover for months. But at any rate, we did that, and we got back up to -- into the ward room with the oxygen bottle, and by that time Dr. Case had changed his mind, and he didn't need oxygen after all. I remember Dr. Case very well. We survived that. We came



back in to Okinawa. It was just a scene of utter devastation, and I'm certainly not the first one that noticed that. But the entire harbor was lined almost solidly with small and medium-sized craft of all kind -- landing craft, whale boats, you name it. They had been blown ashore and beaten around on the rocks, and most of them never saw service again. And everything on the island had been just blow away. I felt sorry for myself and us, but I felt much sorrier for those poor people that had to ride it out on the island. Pretty much was over after that. We finally got those orders to come back to -- come back home, and we proceeded back pretty much by the route that we had come out on and back to San Di-- back to Pearl, San Diego, back through the Panama Canal and up to Charleston, South Carolina where we came into the Navy yard and were told that we were going to decommission the ship there. But before we could do that, it had to be preserved -- preserved for use in future conflicts, whatever. And basically what that consisted of was that everything had to be more or less waterproofed and moisture-proofed, and we started that at some point -- pardon me -- at some point early on in that process I was transferred from the Murphy to the naval station and served probably five months as an inspector to go aboard the destroyers that were doing this

preservation work and inspect the work that they had done and see if it was satisfactory. And with that, that pretty much ended my active duty. We never did get a thank you note from the Sanctuary. (laughs)

JL: Let me ask a couple of questions. On the ship, you were an ensign, or what was your -- ?

SK: Well, I went aboard as a brand new ensign, and during the period that I was on the ship, I was promoted to Lieutenant Junior Grade, so I left as a JG.

JL: What were the kinds of duties -- what were the areas of the ship -- departments were you -- ?

SK: Well, I was an engineering officer, and I was the -- the ship had an engineering officer and two assistant engineering officers of which I was one of them. And they divided it up that one assistant was in charge of the two fire rooms and one assistant was in charge of the two engine rooms, and I was the fire room assistant.

JL: And was that your kind of station or duty during the entire time you were aboard ship?

SK: Pretty much. At one point they tried to make a deck officer out of me, and they had me do some duty up in the radar room and up in the -- on the bridge. But I guess I got in the way, because they gave up on that, and I spent most of my time with engineering department duties. There

was a lot of paperwork, of course. There was standing watches and, of course, when we were tied up or anchored, everybody, all the officers, had to do their officer of the deck duties.

JL: During the time that you were aboard the Murphy and you were -- had the king aboard, what kind of activities did you have during that? Were there any special duties that you had relative to having such a dignitary aboard the ship?

SK: Well, mainly it was don't cause any trouble. Don't mess around with the bodyguard. I don't recall whether I mentioned that once they got the sheep butchered, they didn't eat them raw -- which wouldn't have surprised me -- but they had these little braziers, kind of an open flame thing, that they cooked on, and it seemed like each one of the bodyguard had his own brazier, and so we had open flames all over the ship, and that was driving the damage control officer crazy. But, you know, you didn't, of course, approach the king's territory up there unless you had business there, and you just -- we were all on our very good behavior.

JL: During that time, what was the uniform of the day?

SK: Pretty much regular. Surprisingly they didn't say we had to stay in dress blues all the time. Pretty much uniform

of the day. Of course, when we went to the king's reception that I mentioned a while ago, we dressed up in our dress blues, but other than that they were pretty reasonable about that.

JL: Was there a protocol officer that was aboard to -- ?

SK: Oh, man. Yes. Yes, yes, yes. The commodore of our squadron of course jumped on the opportunity. They sent a marine colonel who claimed some kind of personal relationship with the king. There was an interpreter. There were several just PR people -- captains and people of that rank -- aboard for the occasion. And I'm sorry, I can't recall whether they came back with us. I suspect they probably transferred onto the Quincy and came back on the Quincy. But yes, they filled up the ship with special people.

JL: Were you given any kind of instructions from the protocol officer about how to behave at this unique opportunity of dinner with the king?

SK: I guess that was passed down through our own people who probably had gotten it from the protocol officers, but again, it was just don't mess with them, no contact, you know, don't even exchange glances, because you don't know what that might mean in their culture or something. So it was pretty much just to be careful, behave yourself, do

your job, and stay out of the way. There wasn't any lollygagging around the decks or --

JL: Do you still have your watch?

SK: Well, no. I don't. I kept it for a long time, and my son wanted it, and he had a burglary at his house, and we lost it in the burglary.

JL: Oh, that's too bad.

SK: It wasn't a very good watch. (laughter)

JL: But it has a unique story.

SK: It did, yes.

JL: When -- shifting gears to the Pacific -- during the time that you were -- the short period of time that you were at Nagasaki, did you become an engineer? I guess that's my next question. Did --

SK: Well --

JL: I'm curious to know --

SK: Yes and no. I got my degree in engineering, but Professor [V.L. Dowdy?] and his mechanical design course taught me that I did not want to be an engineer. But I always liked nuts and bolts and that kind of thing, so actually what I wound up doing was in the you might call it engineering sales or technical sales. I was in the construction equipment business in one way or another all my life. So the engineering background, I wouldn't have taken anything

for it, but I didn't want to be sitting at the drafting table figuring out what size of thread to use or how many bolts it was going to take to hold these two pieces together.

JL: I was curious because of the comment you made about the smokestacks that remained standing despite all the other rubble and what from an engineering point of view you might have about how these might have been constructed that would have withstood the effects of such a unique bomb.

SK: The only thing I could ever come up with, and I don't think it fully explains it, is that, of course, they don't just pile a bunch of bricks on top of each other. They're masonry, and they've got all kinds of reinforcing steel in them, and they must have just been built strong enough to take it, just like the arbors were.

JL: Now, how many days following the detonation of the device were you there?

SK: Probably 30, maybe 40.

JL: And were the roadways still pretty well clogged with debris, or had that been bulldozed out to the sides?

SK: I don't know, we didn't get out to the runways.

JL: No, I meant the roadways.

SK: Oh, the roadways. Oh, just certainly not to any extent. There were pathways bulldozed through it, but, you know, no

grid of roads or path or anything, just where people had to go for some reason they had it cleared out and -- but no side paths --

JL: There was no organized --

SK: No organized. That's right. That's right. Yeah.

JL: So during that 24 hours and the very short period of time that you had actually in the city, how many people do you think -- Japanese individuals -- did you see? Very few?

SK: Very few. A dozen, probably. You know, everybody that was in that area when the bomb went off was dead, and I always surmised that the people that we saw there were people from outside who had just come in to scavenge and pick up whatever they could. There weren't that many of them, and all men. I don't think we saw any women at all. All adults. We didn't see any children at all. You know, just a scattering here and there around there.

JL: When you returned to Okinawa and then had to ride out this horrible storm, which we all know from the history was devastating to all the supplies that were there on Okinawa and everything else, in your capacity as an engineering officer, was there any concern for the boilers when you were making these 40-degree rolls?

SK: Oh, you bet. You bet. Yes, you hold your breath on those, because in a marine boiler of those days, you have two long

tanks fore and aft at the top in the firebox, and you've got two long tanks at the bottom in the firebox, and then those two -- each pair of tanks on each side are connected by vertical tubes so as to give as much area of contact by the flames to the water in there, and if you roll over too far, the water sloshes out of the tubes, and those flames are so hot they can melt the tube just in an instant. So you have to really be sure that you don't let the water level get low so that it -- those rolls don't uncover any tubes internally the water. Yes, very much, very much, and we put our best firemen and water tenders on watch and watched them very closely and monitored that very closely, which may not have been necessary because they understood what I just told you as well as we did, and nobody wants to burn out a boiler tube, particularly in a typhoon. But that -- that and the other thing similarly in the fuel tanks -- you know, you have the tank and it has the oil in it, and you have a suction, a fuel -- an inlet down toward the bottom of the fuel tank which works fine in normal situations. But under those conditions it's similar to the boiler situation. If you let the fuel level in the tank get low and then you roll that tank over on its side, it may uncover the suction, and all of a sudden you lose suction on your fuel pumps, and that's no fun. So you



wanted to be sure that you kept a good head of fuel in the tank for that same reason. Yes, there were a lot of little things like that that you ordinarily didn't give a whole lot of attention to that you had to think about. And you hoped very much that the deck crew up there kept that thing headed in through the waves, which wasn't always that easy or even possible, because in a storm like that the waves don't just come nicely rolling in at you from one direction like they do down at Port Aransas. They're coming from mainly one direction, probably, but they're also slamming at you from the side. And so it's -- it takes some seamanship to come through it. And over the period of the war, a number of destroyers were lost in typhoons.

JL: I've heard stories, but now validity that some destroyers, or at least maybe one destroyer, made a complete roll. Do you -- were you aware of any destroyers that rolled completely over?

SK: You'd have a hard time convincing me. No. Once you went over. No. No. I can roll a kayak, and I can tell you that it's not a matter of momentum that will carry you on around, it takes a lot of doing once you get upside down to come back up right side up. I wouldn't give that much credence.

JL: Now the destroyer was twin screws?

SK: Yes, it was. Two -- I think they were two 50,000 horsepower General Electric turbines driving through a reduction gear big as a Toyota driving a screw on each side, and the forward engine room drove one screw, and the after engine room drove the other.

JL: What kind of speed could you get out of that destroyer?

SK: Well, pedal to the metal, we could get up -- in flat water, we could get up 30, 35 knots. We couldn't go very far at that speed, because we were burning fuel like it was going out of style, but we could do it and, you know, sustain it for a while. If there's any chop you're really beating yourself up, but we could do that.

JL: The convoy duty that you did -- was there any concern for submarines?

SK: Well, it was late in the war, and we felt pretty secure, but you never know. I know that at one point -- and I can't tell you that I remember it on the convoy -- but at one point our sonar picked up a contact, and we actually made depth charge runs on it. We never could confirm a kill. I don't know whether we killed some poor whale or a sunken log or what that returned the echo to our sonar gear, but we did do depth charge runs that were done. Actually this convoy was in mid-winter in the north

Atlantic, and we were much more concerned, probably, about the weather and all of that than submarines at that time.

JL: And that was fairly late in the war.

SK: It was, yes. Probably early in 1945, I imagine.

JL: During the trip to Malta, when you were escorting the Quincy, was that a fairly high speed run?

SK: Yes, yes, yes. When you asked the question a while ago, I was trying to -- I wished I could tell you that I knew what the speed was, but I do know that it was fairly high speed and probably 20 knots, which is pretty fast.

JL: Burning fuel pretty rapidly.

SK: You bet, yes.

JL: Well, you certainly have had -- had a very interesting experience during the war, and we certainly want to thank you for all of the effort that you made on behalf of our country, and we thank you for coming today and sharing your story with us. Are there any other little things that you can think of that you might want to think of? Any humorous stories that you can think of in any of the -- your experiences that add to this?

SK: Well, I don't know how humorous this is, but I mentioned that after Nagasaki for some reason we went around poking our nose into several Japanese points -- Yokohama, Yokosuka, probably Nagoya -- and at Yokosuka, we were

anchored off of the Japanese naval base there. And I was over on the base with a whale boat crew, and I wish I could tell you why we were there. I don't remember why we were sent or why I was there, but at any rate we were poking around. There was no Japanese around, it was all deserted. And we were looking around, looking in buildings and just - - whatever we were sent for, what we did amounted to not much more than sightseeing. But at any rate we stuck our head in one building, and it was just filled with Japanese rifles, you know, wall to wall and floor to ceiling. I don't know, thousands of them. And we noted that, and after we got through looking we motored back out and told what we done and mentioned that we seen the rifles. Somebody -- I don't know whether the skipper or the exec, but the exec said, "Well, let's get some. Let's get one for each member of the crew." So being the USS Murphy, that's what we did. We -- as I recall it took probably three trips. They gave me the whale boat and the crew again, and we went over, and we were fighting time, because we were supposed to depart at a certain time that was coming up. But yet the captain or whoever it was wanted 250 rifles, and so we were putting as many of them as we could in the whale boat. And in the meantime, a pretty good chop had come up out in the bay, and we were going

through that chop with probably six inches of free board, and the water splashing over, and we're loaded up with whatever it was -- 1,000 pounds of Japanese rifle -- and it was probably one of the stupider things that we did during the war. But we got enough rifles -- looted enough rifles -- for one for everybody in the crew. And there were two kind of subsequent stories that were a little bit amusing -- mine, not so much. My cabin, the bulkhead was sheet metal that was about eight inches flat, and then it had a two-inch indentation and then it came back out and was two inches flat, kind of like corrugated iron. And I took my rifle -- they were pretty sorry specimens, they were not very good -- but I took my rifle, and I leaned the muzzle in one of the grooves in the bulkhead and put the butt on the deck, of course. And it drove me crazy, because every time the ship would roll it would go clank, clank, clank. And some new guy that had come aboard too late to get a rifle wanted -- he was just sick that he had missed all that, so I told him he could have my rifle, and he took it. The other story -- and I just learned this years later -- my machinist made -- a guy named [Van Eisern?], machinist mate first-class, really a sharp guy -- but he kept his rifle, took it home with him. And he became a pilot -- private pilot. And he flew many years for the head of CBS

news and at some point told him the story, and this guy is a gun collector. So Van, being the politician that he was, turned his rifle over to the head of CBS news, and the head of CBS news sent the rifle to his gun smith to be all cleaned up and prettied up and fixed up, which he did, and reported back that when he opened it up and looked at it it had some stamp or something in there that told him it was made in China. (laughs)

JL: That's amazing.

SK: That is amazing. But I think that's about it.

JL: Well, thank you ever so much for sharing your stories with us. We certainly appreciate the time that you served our country, and we appreciate the opportunity to give us the story this evening.

SK: Good, it's a pleasure.

END OF AUDIO FILE