

Albert Jeffers Oral History Interview

ED METZLER: This is Ed Metzler. Today is the 28th of December 2010. We are in Fredericksburg, Texas, at the Nimitz Museum and we are interviewing Mr. Albert Jeffers. 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. Let me start, Albert, first by thanking you for spending your time today, when you could be out touring the museum, up here telling us stories. (laughter) We appreciate you taking the time with us. Let's just get you to introduce yourself. Give us your name, when and where you were born... I'll have a few questions as we go along to get us rolling, and we'll take it from there.

ALBERT JEFFERS: My name is Albert L. Jeffers and I was born in Duff, Indiana.

EM: What was your birth date?

AJ: 2-12-25.

EM: That is making you 86 years old. Excellent. Congratulations.

AJ: Thank you.

EM: Tell me about your parents. What did your dad do for a living?

AJ: He has done several things. He had a grocery store in Duff. And the Depression came along and a lot of people were running up big bills, so he sold the place and bought a farm in Huntingburg, Indiana, along the lake.

EM: That is on Lake Michigan?

AJ: No, that is Huntingburg Lake, about a 200-acre lake.

EM: Wrong-size lake. (laughs) Is that in Central Indiana or is that in Indiana?

AJ: It is kind of Southern Indiana. We had a lot of acreage there along the lake. I donated a nature preserve there for the city, and that has been completed and is in use right now.

EM: That's nice. So, he was a farmer?

AJ: Well, what he did there, after he sold the store, he bought a lot of peach trees and apple trees and planted them there. He raised peaches and apples, and then he also got a job on the Southern Railroad. He worked the farm and worked on the railroad.

EM: That is what you had to do to make ends meet during the Depression.

AJ: That's right.

EM: In fact, you were lucky to have two jobs. (laughter) A lot of people didn't have any. Did you have brothers and sisters?

AJ: I had two brothers, John Jeffers and Darrell Jeffers.

EM: Were they older or younger?

AJ: Older.

EM: You were the baby.

AJ: Yes, I was the baby.

EM: Were you spoiled?

AJ: I don't think so. I always worked.

EM: Yes, everybody worked back then.

AJ: Yes.

EM: Where did you go to school? Did you go to school locally there?

AJ: I went to school in Huntingburg for about 10 years. I left home when I was 16 and went to Evansville in Indiana.

EM: Down on the Ohio River.

AJ: I went to Bosse High School there. My one brother worked for the Currier Press and he got me a job there, a part-time job. I worked there at the Currier Press and went to high school. Played a little football.

EM: Were you a lineman?

AJ: Left-end.

EM: What year did you graduate from high school?

AJ: What would it be?

EM: I finally got one you couldn't answer. (laughter)

AJ: I just can't think of what year that would be.

EM: '43? The war started before you finished school? Do you remember Pearl Harbor Day when we got into this war?

AJ: I was working down at the Currier Press when I heard it on the radio.

EM: What did you think when you heard that?

AJ: I was amazed. I just couldn't believe it.

EM: That happened in '41 and you were born in '25, so you were sixteen-ish.

AJ: Yes.

EM: You were too young to go off to war, so you stayed in school; is that right?

AJ: That's right.

EM: So, you went ahead and graduated from school?

AJ: Yes, and then I enlisted in the Navy.

EM: You enlisted rather than wait until you got drafted?

AJ: That's right, yes.

EM: Why is that?

AJ: I didn't want to go in the Army. (laughter)

EM: You can't believe how many veterans tell me that. They say, "I enlisted because I didn't want to have to live in a

fox hole." Why did you pick the Navy, that is what else there was?

AJ: Yes, and then I went up to Great Lakes for boot camp. Went through those routines. Met Lawrence Welk up there one weekend in Chicago.

EM: Tell me about that.

AJ: He had a great band and played real nice music.

EM: That old kind of German polka stuff.

AJ: Yes, and he played the accordion a lot.

EM: Did you meet him personally?

AJ: Yes, I met him personally.

EM: What kind of a guy was he?

AJ: I thought he was a nice guy.

EM: You were in boot camp at that time?

AJ: Yes.

EM: They let you out every once in a while, of boot camp?

AJ: Yes, it was on a weekend.

EM: What was boot camp like? Was that tough on you?

AJ: No, I didn't think so.

EM: Did they give you a lot of tests?

AJ: Yes, we had a lot of classes, marching... We did a lot of marching.

EM: Was this winter or summer that you were up there? Was it cold?

AJ: I think it was about the springtime.

EM: That's a better time to be in Chicago, than in the middle of the winter. So, you got out of boot camp and what happened then?

AJ: I had a choice of schools and I went to Diesel School.

EM: Which school?

AJ: Diesel. That was on Navy Pier.

EM: So that was right there, still.

AJ: Yes. I did very well in Diesel School and I got a choice of going to Submarine School, and a lot of them couldn't make it.

EM: We all know that there is a diesel or two on every submarine, so that was a good connection, wasn't it?

AJ: There were four, at least on the ones I rode, plus an auxiliary. I went to Submarine School first and then they put me in a special school up there on diesel engines and then we went to Connecticut.

EM: The submarine school, is that the one in Connecticut?

AJ: Yes. New London.

EM: Tell me about Submarine School, was that an adventure for you?

AJ: It wasn't tough, I didn't think. The toughest thing was in the diving tank. We would go up a hundred feet and go down

a hundred feet and then come back up. That was about the hardest thing.

EM: You did okay on the dive?

AJ: They had an instructor there and he was good and when I wanted to stop, all I had to do is hold my hand up and I could stop for a few minutes and then go back on it.

EM: Did they put you in a diving outfit or how did that work?

AJ: We had a Momsen Lung, so we had to go in that.

EM: A Momsen Lung, is that what they called them?

AJ: That's what they -- yes.

EM: Tell me what that is.

AJ: You put it on your face and you breathe through it.

EM: But you didn't have a complete --

AJ: No, diving suit.

EM: No, diving suit, per se.

AJ: You're going back a long time.

EM: So are you. You were there. I wasn't.

AJ: That was a long time ago.

EM: Yes, sir, it was a long time ago. How long roughly were you in Submarine School, do you remember?

AJ: No, I don't, but it seems to me like about six months.

EM: So, a fairly long period of time.

AJ: I also had my Diesel School.

EM: That's right. How was that Diesel School different from the one in Chicago?

AJ: We worked on bigger engines. In Chicago, we had smaller engines. They were, I am thinking 500, if I remember correctly and these were 1600 horse power.

EM: That's a big engine. Were there different kinds of diesel engines on the submarine?

AJ: Fairbanks-Morse and Wynnnum.

EM: I don't know that one.

AJ: Fairbanks-Morse (inaudible) Wynnnum (inaudible) like that.

EM: Are you being trained as a mechanic or an operator of diesel engines?

AJ: A little of both.

EM: You were the expert then. You not only had to know how to operate them, you knew how to fix them, how to maintain them, is that right?

AJ: Yes, and we had to clean them for inspection.

EM: That doesn't sound like fun. (laughter)

AJ: You had to have it spotless.

EM: Spotless diesel engine, that almost seems like an oxymoron, doesn't it? After you completed your Submarine Diesel School, what happened then?

AJ: I forgot the name of the sub tender or -- I think it was something, we went down through the canal and out to Pearl

Harbor. We went down through the canal to San Diego and San Diego to Pearl Harbor.

EM: Now I am going to play the date game here with you. If you went in, in '43, then this must be in '44.

AJ: '44, yes.

EM: This is sometime in '44, and does anybody in the room remember the name of the sub tender that he went --

F: Pelias.

EM: Describe to me what a sub tender does.

AJ: A lot of the times, the submarine would pull alongside of it and we would give it a minor overhaul because they would go back out to run again.

EM: It's mostly maintenance?

AJ: Yes.

EM: Does it fuel the submarines also?

AJ: Yes, they could get fuel too.

EM: And supplies?

AJ: Yes.

EM: It's really the lifeline for the submarine.

AJ: Yes.

EM: Were you disappointed being put on a submarine tender rather than a submarine?

AJ: Yes, I guess I was. You would go from the tender onto the submarine.

EM: You kind of work your way up the ladder, or down the ladder, I guess you should say.

AJ: I was on Midway and I hurt my knee. I went to Sick Bay and they treated it. I didn't like to sit around really. I went to my Chief and he got me a job being a chauffeur for the Captain and the Officers from the tender to the Officers' Club. I'd drive them down there and that was a Mercury station wagon, I remember that.

EM: Is that right? What year?

AJ: I don't know what year that was.

EM: They didn't make Mercuries until 1939, so it must have been a '39 or a '40 or a '41.

AJ: All the Officers, that's what they had to transport them from the ship to the Officers' Club.

EM: Those Officers had it easy, didn't they?

AJ: They sure did. They were all nice.

EM: Were they?

AJ: I thought so.

EM: They treated you guys with respect?

AJ: Oh, yes.

EM: Because I've heard so many stories about the young whippersnapper, conceited Officers. How did you hurt your knee?

AJ: As I remember it, that's been a long time ago, we were on the tender and I was up, kind of the eye and we were watching a movie and we got an air raid warning and instead of going down the steps, I jumped from the top deck, down about three decks and I hit my knee down there on the floor.

EM: You decided to see if you could fly?

AJ: Yes.

EM: And you couldn't. (laughs)

AJ: I hurt my knee.

EM: When that happened, was that after the sub tender had already gone to the Pacific?

AJ: Oh, yes, everybody was on Midway.

EM: Where did you get on the sub tender, was that in New York or where, or was that in Connecticut?

AJ: New London.

EM: Did she go alone down through the Panama Canal or was she with submarines?

AJ: I don't remember any submarines. I think she just went straight down through the canal to San Diego and San Diego to Pearl Harbor.

EM: So that was your first time on the open sea then.

AJ: Yes.

EM: Did you get sea sick?

AJ: No.

EM: You were lucky.

AJ: Yes.

EM: Because some did. (laughter) You were a born sailor, even though you were born in Indiana.

AJ: Yes, that's right.

EM: What was your station on the sub tender? You were down in the engine room?

AJ: We didn't have any duties because they had a lot of people on there.

EM: Is the sub tender armed with any aircraft guns or surface guns, do you remember?

AJ: I don't remember any.

EM: I guess they just hoped nobody caught up with them.

AJ: I guess so.

EM: What was the Panama Canal like?

AJ: The only thing I can remember about that really, is we got to go ashore one night down there and we had a big party, (laughs) on land.

EM: This is your first visit to the Tropics?

AJ: I guess it was.

EM: So, was a good time had by all?

AJ: We had a good time.

EM: (laughs) This is where it comes in handy it's just one-on-one because we can't tell too many stories here with the ladies present. (laughter) Were you a single man at this time?

AJ: Yes.

EM: You hadn't been married. You didn't have any girlfriends.

AJ: That's right. I didn't meet her until after the war.

EM: You went on through the canal and up, did you say to San Diego?

AJ: I think that is where we took all of our supplies.

EM: Did you have any shore leave while you were in San Diego?

AJ: I'm sure we did, but I don't remember.

EM: You weren't there too long, I assume.

AJ: No, we weren't there very long, just long enough to load up the ship.

EM: Then what?

AJ: Then to Pearl Harbor.

EM: Were you alone again or was she with a fleet.

AJ: She was alone and we would zigzag.

EM: Just in case?

AJ: Yes.

EM: It took a while to get to Pearl Harbor when you zigzag. Tell me about Pearl Harbor. What did you see?

AJ: (laughs) I spent a lot of time there at different times. We pulled into Pearl Harbor and we went to work on the submarines that pulled up alongside of us. We would give them kind of an overhaul before they would go back out. We did that for months. Then we got orders to go to Midway. (inaudible) Tokyo Rose. After we pulled out from Pearl Harbor, we picked her up on the radio. She played music and stuff. She said that we were going to Midway and we'd be sunk.

EM: Did she mention your ship specifically?

AJ: Yes, sir, she mentioned our ship. She said, "you are leaving Pearl Harbor," and she knew the destination.

EM: She knew you had left; she knew where you were going.

AJ: She said they would be waiting for us and sink us.

EM: How did that make you feel?

AJ: Not very good. (laughter)

EM: Isn't that amazing the things that she could find out.

AJ: Yes. Japan had good intelligence.

EM: She sounded just like an American from what I understand, because she lived in the United States and was educated in the United States.

AJ: Yes, she was educated here, but we got into Midway okay. No, problem.

EM: What was your mission at Midway?

AJ: As the submarines would come off patrol, we would give them an overhaul so they could go back out.

EM: They had repair facilities and resupply facilities at Midway for the submarines?

AJ: Yes, torpedoes.

EM: Does the submarine tender take torpedoes to the ships?

AJ: Yes.

EM: You had the torpedoes, you had everything, one-stop shopping for a submarine.

AJ: Yes, that's my recollection.

EM: Is a sub tender a small ship or a medium size?

AJ: It is pretty big. I don't know how long they were. The submarines would pull up alongside of them and they would smother a submarine. They had a lot of spare parts and supplies and stuff. You could even buy clothes on there. You could buy food or anything else, along with other stuff.

EM: I'm sure cigarettes and candy and all of those other things too.

AJ: Yes.

EM: Did you have any buddies that you had gotten kind of close to either through all of your training in boot camp and school or on the ship?

AJ: Yes, a lot of them and a lot of them we kept in contact with for a long time, but I am out of contact now.

EM: Like you said, it was a long time ago.

AJ: Yes.

EM: Did you go yourself, onto the submarines and do repair work?

AJ: Yes.

EM: You got to see the inside of a lot of different submarines, didn't you?

AJ: Yes. Then later, I got to be the chauffeur.

EM: Tell me about the chauffeur thing.

AJ: When I hurt my knee, they put me in Sick Bay and I got bored with that, so I asked one of the Chief Petty Officers to see if he could get me a job. He got me a job as a chauffeur driving the Officers back and forth.

EM: Now, this was on Midway?

AJ: Yes.

EM: My image of Midway is it's a tiny little island.

AJ: It only has three miles.

EM: That was too far to make an Officer walk to go get his Scotch Whiskey, wasn't it?

AJ: (laughs) Yes. (laughter)

EM: That sounds like a good job.

AJ: It was a good job. It was kind of boring.

EM: Probably most people back then, unless you were well off, you hadn't driven cars much. That was kind of a new experience for you, driving a Mercury around?

AJ: No, I had driven. When I worked for the newspaper I drove a car. That was a nice job to be able to drive.

EM: What was your rank at that point? Were you a Seaman 1st Class or what were you?

AJ: Fireman 1st Class.

EM: How long did the chauffeur gig last?

AJ: About two months. I kept asking the Captain if he couldn't put me on one of the submarines. He said, "which one do you want?" They had two of them in there we were working on. What was that sub, Snook?

___: Snook.

EM: So, it was our choice, the Snook or the Threadfin? You chose?

AJ: The Threadfin.

EM: Why?

AJ: Because I thought about it. The Threadfin had only made one run out there and then it would be out there for a while. The Snook had made four or five and was going back to the States after the next run.

EM: To be refitted and refurbished?

AJ: Yes. About the time that they did that, the war would be just about over and they would be coming back out.

EM: You'd miss the action.

AJ: Yes, so I took the Threadfin.

EM: Was she a nice ship?

AJ: Beautiful.

EM: Tell me about her.

AJ: As I recall, (inaudible).

EM: I guess she was the SS-410.

AJ: That's right. I think eventually she was sold to Turkey, I think.

EM: After the war?

AJ: Yes.

EM: Now, tell me about the Snook. What happened to her?

AJ: She got sunk.

EM: How did that happen? do you know?

AJ: I don't know. The only thing that happened was she sunk. The whole crew went down. Some of them with my money, playing poker.

EM: They got your money.

AJ: (laughs) They got a chunk of it.

EM: You were a big poker player?

AJ: Yes, we played poker.

EM: That was one thing to do with your wages?

AJ: Oh, yes. (laughter)

EM: You were a lucky man then. You had a 50/50 chance of going on a ship that never came back.

AJ: Yes.

EM: How do you feel about that?

AJ: I think the good Lord was with me.

EM: You went on the Threadfin and were you in the engine room then?

AJ: Yes. I had different jobs on there, but my main job was on the diesels and of course, I operated the bow planes and the stern planes.

EM: You did?

AJ: Yes. I served at times to the steering wheel and the diving motor and when the Officer would say dive, (inaudible).

EM: How were the planes operated, was it hydraulic?

AJ: Yes, it was hydraulic.

EM: You had some sort of a big lever to pull or something?

AJ: Pulled a lever. On the wheel, there was a signal for those.

EM: Did you have good Officers on board the Threadfin?

AJ: Excellent. Captain Foote was great.

EM: You felt good about him as your leader?

AJ: Yes.

EM: He was experienced, is that right?

AJ: Yes. In fact, we had all good Officers.

EM: They treated you guys well?

AJ: Yes.

EM: I've heard stories about how tight it is and no room at all on a submarine. What was it like being on a submarine?

AJ: I didn't think it was that bad. I can tell you a little story.

EM: I'm all into stories. Tell me one.

AJ: The Officers always had a Steward that served coffee and stuff like that.

EM: A lot of times they were black men during the war.

AJ: Yes. This one was a black man. I guess one of his people he waited on was kind of rough with him. One day, the Officer pulled him aside and said, "you know, I'm not going to bother you anymore. I'm going to be real nice and kind to you." The black boy said, "you know, I'll be real kind to you, I'll no longer urinate in your coffee." (laughter)

EM: What was the Officer's reaction to that? Did you hear that yourself, or did you get that secondhand?

AJ: I got that secondhand. (laughter)

EM: What happened then?

AJ: I don't know. That's the end of the story.

EM: You don't want to know what happened to that boy. I guess you had this tiny little bunk that you slept in and they were stacked up high in a small little room?

AJ: I had the third one up.

EM: How many up could you go?

AJ: One more.

EM: How was the food on the submarine?

AJ: Excellent.

EM: The Threadfin headed out from Midway. That's where you became a crew member.

AJ: Yes.

EM: What happened? She went out on a shorty of some sort?

AJ: We were South off the coast of Japan, and we could see the cars driving on Japan. The night before we would have an air raid, we would be told what time the air raid was. We would be on service at nighttime and daytime we would be submerged. If the air raid was at 11 o'clock, we would surface and pick up any fliers that got shot down. All a flier had to do, he had to get out over the ocean and then as close to us as he could. Had to parachute down and then we would pick him up.

EM: How many crews were you able to pick up? Do you remember?

AJ: I think we picked up two.

EM: I bet they were thankful to see you.

AJ: Yes.

EM: Did you get to talk to any of the crew members from the airplanes?

AJ: Yes, we got to talk to them. Of course, they got off the boats at the end of the run.

EM: Would a seaplane come in and pick them up and fly them off?

AJ: I think it was only a week or two before we went back in.

EM: When you went back into port, they could get off?

AJ: Yes.

EM: Did the Threadfin have any close calls during combat or anything like that, that you remember.

AJ: I don't know.

EM: Did you ever get depth charged? Tell me what that sounds like.

AJ: I don't know how to explain it. You'd be in the submarine. It would shake the whole boat sometimes. Sometimes you could see the dust fly off the pipes.

EM: It must really have a jarring impact. You'd wonder if you still had your teeth after that.

AJ: Yes.

EM: They never got close enough to damage her.

AJ: I told you a story and I can't think of it now. Can you remind me of it?

FS: You were ordered to the Inland Sea. You were supposed to be tracking the Japanese fleet.

EM: Tell me about that.

AJ: I think the Japanese fleet was going down to Okinawa. So, we got the message at noon. We had to surface and follow them and report in every 15 minutes.

EM: I think the Yamato, a big old battleship, was part of that fleet.

AJ: You're right.

EM: That was her last voyage, down to Okinawa.

AJ: Yes. At midnight, we got orders to abandon our tracking and they hit them, I think it was the 58th Air Force that hit them.

EM: Did you get a chance to see the amount of it all?

AJ: No, I didn't see her, but whether anybody else on our ship saw her, I don't know. Another story then. You know the Japanese learned our torpedoes had to be about at least three feet deep, so they started building these sand pans. Our torpedoes would go right underneath them.

EM: We had a lot of trouble with torpedoes during the war.

AJ: If I remember right, they sank or at least hit one of our ships one time when they arrived.

EM: I guess I have read that towards the end of the war, it was hard to find a sizeable Japanese ship to torpedo. Most of

them had already been sunk. Most of the freighters and the oilers and what have you. Did the Threadfin find any targets to torpedo that you can remember?

AJ: I think we got a Jap destroyer one time. I just can't remember right now. I know one thing, we got five of those sand pans one night with a five-inch gun. What I did at that time through that battle, I had the shells to load into the five-inch guns.

EM: You were handling the shells and passing them up.

AJ: We had a lot of us on deck. We had a line.

EM: Are they very heavy?

AJ: No. I could handle them.

EM: When the Threadfin was in combat like that, was she operating solo or were there other submarines?

AJ: We were solo on that trip.

EM: The Threadfin, she was operating out of Midway. When you went back to port, did you go all the way back to Midway?

AJ: I think we went all the way back to Pearl Harbor. That's my recollection.

EM: Did you stay on the Threadfin? Didn't you go to another submarine after your experience on the Threadfin?

AJ: That was getting towards the end of the war. If you remember, you had to have points coming back. A man who had a wife with two kids bumped me off in Pearl Harbor, so

I stayed there, which I don't mind. (inaudible) That's when I got transferred to the.

EM: Yes, SS-377.

AJ: I brought that back to the States.

EM: Was she the same class of ship as the Threadfin or was she different.

AJ: She was some different. She had the (inaudible) where the Threadfin had Fairbanks parts. There wasn't that much difference in them.

EM: Did you like one ship over the other?

AJ: I liked the Threadfin. Probably because I like the four engines, diesels.

EM: What about the Officers on the (inaudible)? Were they as good as the ones on the Threadfin?

AJ: They were real nice. I never ran into a bad Officer.

EM: That's good. Did you know anybody on the, or were you the only guy from the Threadfin that went over to her?

AJ: I just don't remember.

EM: That's fine. The went out on combat patrol, as well, before he war was over?

AJ: I can't remember.

EM: You don't remember sailing on her like you did on the Threadfin?

AJ: No. I think we operated on Pearl Harbor. In fact, some of the things we did, we would go to the various islands and the submarine would pull in there and we would open it up to the public for maybe two hours and they could take tours through the submarine.

EM: That was while the war was still going on?

AJ: No, that was after the war.

EM: That was back in the States then?

AJ: No, that was in Pearl Harbor before we came back.

EM: Now, during the time you were in the Pacific during the war, did you write letters back to your family at home and did you get letters back from them? Were you in good contact, or how did that work?

AJ: Yes. Of course, we had a censor. They would read our letters.

EM: I heard they cut them up. Cut out words and sentences.

AJ: Yes. I can tell you one little story on that. This was down at Midway. The Gooney birds that they had there. I wrote my parents a letter. There was an article on them in some magazine. There was the same article in this magazine and he came back and said he had already read it.

(laughter)

EM: It's hard to stay up with the magazines when you're out there in the middle of the Pacific anyhow.

FS: His efforts to let his parents know where he was failed, because Midway was the only place where Gooney birds were. I've got a couple other things that he could tell you about, some of his adventures when he was on R and R at Pearl.

EM: Okay, tell me about that.

AJ: They had a nice (inaudible) over there and we would go there and they had some nice girls there too.

EM: I see.

AJ: One evening I walked this girl home and it was after curfew. Coming back, I saw a Jeep coming, so I jumped on her porch and the closer it got, about a half a block away or so, I noticed it wasn't a patrol. It was just a regular Jeep. So, I got out and came out there and walked around and I said. "hey Mac, would you drop me back to the Royal Hawaii Hotel?" I was on two weeks of R and R.

EM: So, they put you in the hotel.

AJ: Yes. He said, "sure." He dropped me. He was a Full Colonel. He was nice.

EM: So, you've got Officers driving you now. That's a good switch.

AJ: Not only that, he said, "now I'm going to drive about one block past the hotel and I'm going to turn left. You go down to the beach, you walk up the beach and come in the

back of the hotel and nobody will know the difference," and so we did.

EM: Now that's the kind of Officer you really like.

AJ: He was a Full Colonel. Big wheel.

EM: That's a great story.

FS: That was the main one that I was thinking of. Didn't you also have some picnics on the beach?

AJ: That was on Midway. I buried a case of beer down there because we had more than we could drink. I never got drunk. Never been drunk in my life.

EM: I bet some of the other guys did.

AJ: Oh, yes. I buried this case of beer down there and I guess it's still there.

EM: You ought to go back and see. It's probably got an apartment built on top of it or something now.

EM: Tell me about these poker games that you were in where you lost money. Did you ever win?

AJ: Oh, yes, I'd win some.

EM: Do you enjoy playing poker?

AJ: Yes.

EM: What did you play, Blackjack or what?

AJ: No.

EM: Draw poker?

AJ: Draw poker. We played a lot of that in the Navy.

EM: Yes, that's what I've heard.

AJ: I didn't lose much. I came back to the States with enough money to buy a new car. I ordered a new car. It was a '39, maybe, '40.

EM: If you ordered a new car, it would have to be a '46, after the war.

AJ: Yes.

FS: I think maybe it was a '40 something.

AJ: I think it was a '49.

EM: Yes, that could be.

AJ: As soon as I got back, I ordered it. You couldn't buy a new car.

EM: That's right.

AJ: I ordered a new Ford convertible. Paid cash for it. Then I was going to college. Then I bought a used '42 Chevy and I drove that until I got that new convertible.

EM: Let's go back to the. That was the ship that Admiral Nimitz visited when he relinquished his command of the Pacific fleet and went back to Washington.

AJ: Yes.

EM: I know that you were there, so why don't you tell me what you remember about that.

AJ: About the day before he came on the ship, we got word. Of course, everybody had to clean ship. We had that thing

spotless. I was a non-officer. I think I was the only one. I don't remember any others. Anyway, I met him at the walkway and welcomed him aboard.

EM: So, you were there face to face with the man. Did you get to talk to him at all?

AJ: Not very long. I spoke to him, of course. Saluted him.

EM: What was he like?

AJ: What little bit I saw him, I thought he was okay.

EM: How did that make you feel?

AJ: I felt honored.

EM: That's interesting. He relinquished his command there. Were there photographers? Was there press coverage?

AJ: Oh, yes, all over.

EM: Was this in Pearl?

AJ: Yes.

EM: This is after the war was over.

AJ: Yes.

EM: Do you remember when the war was over and when they dropped the atom bombs on Japan? Were you aboard ship when you heard about that?

AJ: I was in Pearl Harbor.

EM: Was there a pretty big party?

AJ: Yes.

EM: How did it feel that the war was over?

AJ: Great.

EM: Were you looking forward to getting back home at that point?

AJ: Yes, I was ready to go ahead with my career. I was going to go to college, which I did.

EM: How did you get back to the States after the war was over?

AJ: I got to San Francisco (inaudible) and I had a brother. He was in the Army, he was there.

EM: In San Francisco?

AJ: He was getting discharged to come back, so he and I rented a car and drove back to Evansville, Indiana.

EM: All the way from San Francisco. A rental car agency, did they know you were going all the way to Evansville?

AJ: Yes. It was the same agency. I think it was Hertz.

EM: Do you remember sailing in under the Golden Gate Bridge when you came in?

AJ: Yes.

EM: You weren't on the submarine at this point, were you?

AJ: For a while I was on it. I was in San Francisco a couple months.

EM: The came to San Francisco and you were aboard?

AJ: Yes.

EM: How did it feel to be back in the USA?

AJ: It felt great.

EM: I bet it did.

AJ: I thought the American people treated us nice too.

EM: Tell me about your experience there.

AJ: At New London, Connecticut, where I was going to Sub School, we would go to Hartford for the weekend because at noontime, six thousand girls would hit the street from the insurance companies. I think she picked me up. Her son was in the Marines and she had her daughter and we had about three sailors and she invited us to her home for dinner.

EM: That's nice.

AJ: We became well acquainted and anytime we were down in Hartford, we didn't have to buy a room or anything. We could just stay at her house. That's how nice they were. In fact, I took Mary Lou back there. Mary Lou even met her one time when we went back for a trip.

EM: That's neat.

AJ: Yes.

EM: I have heard that if you were in uniform during the war and you needed to get from one city to the next, you could hitchhike and almost any car would stop and pick up a guy in uniform and take them along.

AJ: Yes. I had my own car. The truck drivers would give us gas. We had a five gallon can and a tube and they would

give us five gallons of gas. I never had to worry about gas.

EM: How do you feel about the Japanese?

AJ: I don't have any ill will. I had one Japanese friend after the war. Mary, can you remember his name?

FS: [Jaro Nakanishi?]. (inaudible)

AJ: I don't have any ill will against them. There were higher ups that were responsible.

EM: Do you ever think about the war years? Do you ever have dreams about it?

AJ: Right after the war I did and while I was in college, I would maybe have a dream and I would jump a little bit and fall out of the bed.

EM: Really? What were you dreaming? Do you remember?

AJ: I don't remember. I had medical treatment for that.

EM: Did you really?

AJ: Yes.

EM: Were you able to put that behind you though?

AJ: Yes, I did. It wasn't very long, maybe about two or three years and then I got rid of it.

EM: What else can we talk about on the war years? When were you the most scared or concerned about what was getting ready to happen to you? Does an incident pop into your mind when I ask you that?

AJ: Not really. It was probably while on that patrol run.
That was probably about the worst of it.

EM: Some of those depth charges, maybe?

AJ: Yes. It might have been when you'd see those jets flying around.

EM: It's amazing.

AJ: Yes.

EM: If I asked you to tell me one of the funniest incidences that make you kind of chuckle from back in the war years, what comes to your mind, if anything?

AJ: I can't think of anything right now.

EM: I thought that it was interesting that you buried that case of beer on the beach in Midway. (laughter) That's a pretty good story.

AJ: Yes.

EM: After the war, did you have the opportunity to go to any of the reunions of the ship or the submariners?

AJ: Yes.

FS: Just the last few years. They are in McAllen. Once a month they have a get together, the sub Vets.

EM: Cool. It's nice to be back with those old submariners.

AJ: Oh, yes. They've all got stories like mine.

EM: So, you guys swap your stories.

AJ: Yes.

FS: You might tell him about your friend, the cook. You know on the submarine you made friends.

AJ: Oh, yes. When I went on duty, when there were rough seas, I went and helped the cook hold his pots on the stove.

EM: Keep them from jumping off. (laughter)

AJ: Yes. I got to be good friends with the Cook.

EM: That's a good person to be good friends with.

AJ: Yes. It was because one of the Lieutenants and I were good friends too. He got the Jeep and I got the steaks from the cook and we took a couple girls out to the beach in Hawaii and had a swimming party out there.

EM: You didn't tell me about that earlier.

AJ: I have nothing but good things to say about the Officers and the personnel on the submarine.

EM: I was interviewing a Veteran who was on a submarine and I made a big mistake. I said tell me about the sub Mariners that were in the war, during the war and he said, "sub Mariners, we don't ever call ourselves sub Mariners, we are submariners." I had made a big mistake. You notice I didn't make that mistake with you. I learned.

AJ: At my age any more, I've forgotten a lot.

EM: You still remember a lot more than I do, because I wasn't there and you were there. That's what's important. Some of the guys that you knew in the crew of either of those

submarines, but probably most the Threadfin, did they have unusual backgrounds. Where were these guys from, all over the United States? What had they done before they got aboard the ship?

AJ: I really don't know. They're buried. I can't think of anything. Can you, Mary?

EM: Anything specific there that you wanted to bring.

FS: You were telling me on the way up here that there was something kind of unusual about the crew of the. You said that they had come from another submarine altogether.

AJ: There were some submariners running around out there and they weren't sunk by the Japanese, as I remember, but the whole crew was transferred from them to the.

EM: When you went aboard the, the bulk of the crew there had come together from another submarine that had been damaged due to grounding or run aground. That's interesting. What about dolphins? Did you ever see any dolphins swimming in the water when you guys were out there? I've heard stories about how they follow along with the ships.

AJ: Yes.

EM: Did they do that with your ships?

AJ: Along the sub tender. I never saw them along the submarine, when I was on the submarine.

EM: What was your final rank when you left the Navy?

AJ: Motor Machinist 3rd Class. I think it is like a Sergeant in the Army.

EM: You were like a Noncommissioned Officer then.

AJ: Yes.

EM: An NCO?

FS: You had your Dolphins.

EM: The Dolphins, showing that you were in the Submarine Corps.

AJ: Yes.

FS: Didn't they show that you were qualified for any position on the sub?

AJ: Yes. I took a test in Pearl Harbor one time and I aced it then, so they redid the test.

EM: You did so well on it that they decided to redo the test.
(laughs) That's interesting. That's something to be proud of too.

AJ: Yes.

EM: You had a lot of experiences. How many years were you in the Navy then?

AJ: What was it, about 37 months.

EM: When you left the Navy it was what, early '46 or was it still 1945? I know the war was over.

FS: I think it was in '46.

EM: You went back and went to school then, is that correct?

AJ: Yes.

EM: And got your degree in what?

AJ: I have several.

FS: Mechanical engineering?

AJ: Yes, Mechanical engineering. I got that at the University of Evansville in Indiana and my oldest brother had a patent attorney on his bowling team and I got talking to him, so I've got an Anderson patent. After I got my degree from the University of Evansville, I went and enrolled in George Washington University in Washington D.C., and got my Doctor's Degree in law. I wrote (inaudible) modern decisions for the commissioner of patents. I didn't particularly like living in Washington in all the hubbub, so a friend of mine in the patent office had a friend in Fort Wayne, who had contacted him and wanted to hire a patent attorney for Bowser, Inc. They made the gasoline pumps.

EM: Yes.

AJ: In England, they called the gasoline pumps Bowers. He paid my way out there to be interviewed and he hired me on the spot. So, we moved to Fort Wayne. I practiced law there. I don't how long I practiced law, and when I left, I think I had about a 15-to-20-man law firm.

EM: You had an interesting career after the war. Let's go back to the war years. Are there any other things that come to

your mind that you would like to share with us about your submariner experience and the war? We've covered a lot of territory and you remember a lot of things.

AJ: I think we've covered it pretty good.

EM: What usually happens is you'll think of something after we leave.

AJ: Do you have the book?

EM: I do. I have it right here.

AJ: Okay.

EM: We're going to donate this to the library of the museum, is that correct?

FS: It has chapters in there from other parts of Service. There are two ladies that are in there and then there are other fellows. I think there is one in there who was in Pearl Harbor the day it was bombed.

EM: So, the name of the book is *Vanishing Heroes* by Jan O'Dell Hartzog.

FS: Her dad was in the Service.

EM: Thank you for that.

FS: In Dad's chapter, it talks about the day that he thought it would be his last, where it was very exciting when they were trailing the Japanese fleet when they came up in the middle of it.

EM: Anything else.

AJ: I think you pretty well covered it.

EM: We've been going for over an hour, so it's been a good long interview and let me thank you again, Albert, for spending your time sharing your experiences with us. I'd like to close the recording by thanking you for what you did for our country. I know you guys are called the greatest generation and for good reason. We never thank you guys enough, so, I want to thank you one more time. I appreciate your time today.

AJ: Okay.

END OF AUDIO FILE