

A. N. Wiseman Oral History Interview

PETE JENSEN: This is Pete Jensen. Today is March 29, 2011.

I'm interviewing Mr. Al Wiseman. This interview is taking place in the Nimitz Hotel in Fredericksburg, Texas. This interview is in support of the Center for 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. Al, if you'd like to start off, just give us some information about, you know, where you were born, your family, where you went to school, that sort of things.

A. N. WISEMAN: Okay. I was born in Chesterton, Indiana, September 2, 1922. And --

PJ: Who were your parents?

ANW: My father was Leonard Wiseman and my mother was Albertina [Belloit?]. And -- you want to know my grandparents?

PJ: Yeah, if you have, that would be fine, yes.

ANW: My grandparents on my dad's side were -- the family eventually come from Prussia, Germany and on the other side, my mother's side, my mother's family was from -- Ireland and her father was from France. His parents, if I've heard, was married in Paris.

PJ: Where did you go to school?

ANW: I went to Chesterton High School. And I got out in '42.

PJ: Then how did you decide -- I guess you decided on the Navy?

ANW: Decided on the Navy.

PJ: Why did you decide the Navy?

ANW: I always wanted to, I wanted to be in the Air Force but I couldn't make it, but -- (laughs) so I had a chance to, when I was in Great Lakes they wanted people for submarine, but I changed my mind. I wanted to be right through the Navy.

PJ: Submarine's a little close?

ANW: (laughs) Yeah.

PJ: So you, you joined the service when? When did you enlist?

ANW: In '42. (cough)

PJ: Okay. And where did you have your basic training?

ANW: I went to Great Lakes. I had about three and a half weeks training. On the (inaudible) they did testing for corpsmen and I never got any other training except drill wing.

PJ: Oh, is that right?

ANW: Mm-hmm.

PJ: And then what was your first, okay -- you went from Great Lakes -- where did you go from Great Lakes?

ANW: I took the troop trains at Charleston, Charleston, South Carolina, and caught the USS *Greene* out of Charleston.

PJ: And what was your duty or -- on the USS *Greene*?

ANW: Well, at first I was a seaman.

PJ: And what were your daily tasks? I mean, what --?

ANW: First I was a deckhand, painting and all that. And -- at the battle stations I was lookout. And I also, I was a lookout, ordinary, you know.

PJ: What kind of ordinance did they have on that destroyer, the *Greene*? Guns and that sort of thing.

ANW: They had these (inaudible) -- small little guns. What do you call them? The three-inch or whatever it is. And they had the 20-millimeters and the 40-millimeters. And one time -- and (inaudible) we got some from the Army, some of those small, put them on the ship, machine guns like, you know. I can't remember what they are now. But I didn't have nothing to do with the, (laughs) the guns.

PJ: Where did you -- okay, you got on at Charleston, you got on the USS *Greene*? Where did you go from there?

ANW: Well, they were still working on the ship, because repairs and that and we had a trial run to Bermuda. Do you want to know where we went after that? After that we escorted a couple ships to Brazil, Rio de Janeiro.

PJ: Did you get any time on shore at Rio?

ANW: About a couple days. You can't believe this. In Trinidad, we stopped at Trinidad first and the vice president, admiral in there -- at 4:00 -- it was a white shorts, he had to have white shorts. I think he was making money off of it. (laughter) But we went into Rio de Janeiro with white shorts on and they wouldn't let us go -- the English could go in shorts, but we couldn't have, wear our shorts on liberty.

PJ: What, the Navy said you couldn't?

ANW: Yeah.

PJ: Huh. (laughter) How about Bermuda? Did you like Bermuda?

ANW: Bermuda was beautiful. And there was Army, Army was making trench holes in Bermuda at that time and --

PJ: They were making what?

ANW: Trench holes. They thought the Germans were going to land on Bermuda. But they never did, but -- (cough) and the soldiers were complaining about cigarettes, because they weren't having no cigarettes. We'd come on the -- we escorted the *Queen Mary* to Bermuda and I guess they had -- (inaudible) liquors and stuff for the taverns there. That was really, really (inaudible) and no cigarettes and these

guys are saying, "We never get any cigarettes," (laughter)  
and --

PJ: *Queen Mary* -- they'd taken that over, right? The *Queen Mary* made like a troop ship or supply ship or --

ANW: Supply ship, yeah. And going over there, when I say "escorted" -- escort her -- the captain told them to slow down. They were going tight, 29 -- 18 knots and we couldn't keep up. We'd fall apart.

PJ: Wow. How many ships escorted the *Queen Mary*?

ANW: I think it was only one then. There might have been another ship. I think, all I can remember is this, was that one.

PJ: You also -- you made trips to the Mediterranean?

ANW: Well, first time we went overseas we went to Casablanca, right, so they -- the troops took over Casablanca and they were thinking there was Germans around there yet, you know. I don't know. But later on in the Mediterranean, I went to Oran -- spent a lot of time in Oran and -- next we --

PJ: Where's Oran?

ANW: Oran's in Africa. It's in Morocco. And then another little place -- I can't think of it now. A little town where the French got there, French Legions got their fort

and everything. Can't think of it now, but that's where we did some of our training, [the end?] in Southern France.

PJ: Same place as the Foreign Legion.

ANW: Yeah, in that area. Yep. Then we went to, went to Palermo, Sicily, and then we --

PJ: What did you do in Sicily? Or what were you --?

ANW: At one time we didn't do much of anything, but the second time we come in there, we had to get -- [we had three fares?] but -- our [azu?], what we traded the -- with rubber boats, traded the troops for invasion of Southern France. We had, right, the sailboats, we were training there. We didn't take them; somebody else probably did. And we went to [Santa Mia?], Italy and this special (inaudible) horses were there. And the night before we left there, we had a smoker there, the box and that. And they got rid of everything. The next day -- (cough) I guess it's about one o'clock at -- eleven o'clock at night we went into France and these islands there. We left our -- left those guys off in rubber boats. You pull the ship -- you cut the rubber plant out and boats off and they paddle them in, you know.

PJ: That was for the invasion of France.

ANW: Yeah. We were there [the day?] before D-Day. (laughs) And we were the first ships in there. (laughs)

PJ: Okay. Wow. So did you stay in that area? Or you just left the people off in the rubber boats, and?

ANW: Well, when we was going out, we was going out and -- there was a -- an extra ship in the (inaudible) -- extra ship that wasn't supposed to be with us, you know. And USS, I think it was USS *Somers* cited, that he was the -- it was the only one that was supposed to fire. Be we didn't, we didn't want to fire our guns because the Germans would hear us, you know. So -- they hit this ship and I, (laughs) I asked the officer of the ship, I says, "Who was that?" he saw probably the Greek ship, just saw it was with us. And about an hour later he came and told me, "I can see it," the guys in the water flailing around and fire, and he told me it was a German torpedo boat. It was pretty close to our ship.

PJ: It sunk another ship there.

ANW: Yes, sunk the -- torpedoed ship. And as we went out at daylight, the task force is coming in and all our planes are up above. I looked up, I said, god, it looked like a thousand planes up there and I was going, I hope it's not the Germans. (laughs)

PJ: Hope it's our planes, right?

ANW: Yeah, yeah, so --

PJ: Did you help rescue those men from that ship, or?

ANW: Somebody else did, we didn't. But then we went to Corsica and picked up more ships, two more ships, there's more men to take back to -- we drop them off someplace, I don't know. After that we went to this island and they had white flags up and -- and they told me afterwards that they had stovepipes there. They thought they had guns there, but they had stovepipes hooking up, to fool us, you know.

PJ: Hah! This was the Germans or the Ital--?

ANW: The Germans, the Germans had these stovepipes on this island. And so they captured them all and at about two o'clock in the morning they went in and captured them all. You know, at that time they said, (laughs) they said, we'll kill everybody but two. They didn't kill anybody. They took them all prisoner. But you see, in the Navy, when you land on an island or someplace, you've got those lights that go to sea and on shore they don't see, so that's how you know where to land the troops. Because the Seabees come in and check the water for mines and everything and he wanted, be sure you go in in the right place, you know.

PJ: The Seabees do that.



ANW: No, not the Seabees. The -- what is it? The Navy Special  
--

PJ: Like frogmen?

ANW: Frogmen and that, yeah, yeah.

PJ: They swam in, right?

ANW: They swim in the day before, hide, and then they turn the  
lights on at night. And they're hiding all the time.  
(laughs) They's hoping that it gets (inaudible) nobody  
finds them, you know.

PJ: And they, the lights, they shine out?

ANW: At sea, but out on the shore you can't tell it.

PJ: Okay. Wow. Hmm. Where did you go -- did you go other  
places in the Mediterranean area or?

ANW: Oh, we went twice to Corsica and I -- this isn't about the  
military, but I went in a house that Napoleon lived in, at  
one time. (laughs)

PJ: How did you get to see that?

ANW: Well, we went ashore there at liberty, you know. I can't  
believe, it was an English-style home with what was wooden  
siding and that, you know. Europe has everything stone in  
it. This was an English-style home. I don't know how it  
happened, but lack of modern -- around our area, the  
[warts?] and all that, you know, [designs?]. I was

surprised to see that house, it was so modern looking.

(laughs) It's little, though.

PJ: Yeah. Huh. Well, after you left the Mediterranean, you came back to the States then?

ANW: Yeah, we come back to the States and we got -- they worked on a ship and all that and -- then we went to Panama and go through the Panama Canal. In Pacific.

PJ: South Pacific then. So --

ANW: Uh-huh. And we, we stopped, going low on fuel, we stopped at -- I don't think this is -- [Minaso?] or something like -- it begins with M. It's a place where they pump the oil out of the grounds, they've got those things up there and they have a couple of seamen and a chief or something over there -- just enough for fuel a ship. So they fueled our ship. We was lucky to get to San Diego. So sick that I was down below decks and had to clean these burners all the time. And we got to San Diego -- we couldn't go anyplace then. And we were supposed to go to -- where the Marines and all that was coming (inaudible) -- what's that Japanese island where everybody got killed?

PJ: Iwo Jima?

ANW: Iwo Jima. We were supposed -- we didn't know that. They didn't tell us that. But after the war, we were supposed

to go there, so as soon as they got us going we went to --  
Guam and Saipan and we went to the -- Okinawa --

PJ: What did you do in -- what was your mission there on those  
islands? Move troops around? Or what was the?

ANW: When we went to those islands, we -- we escorted ships up  
to Okinawa. Then we was there where there's about four  
aircraft carriers and we was -- and our ships were supposed  
to -- each aircraft carriers have Marine pilots on it,  
waiting to, for the Seabees to get the landings on the  
beach, you know. And so they did that, after they did that  
but a Betty bomber come in close to our ship and the Navy  
planes just [chased?] it and so one of the pilots, the head  
pilot said something on the speaker and he caught ahead and  
he shot the Betty bomber. That's a light bomber, you know.  
And he was going to try to get that aircraft carrier next  
to us. He landed in the water about four or five hundred  
miles, four or five yards from us. But the --

PJ: It was a Japanese bomber?

ANW: Yeah, a Japanese bomber, yeah.

PJ: Trying to get to the aircraft. Probably kamikaze?

ANW: Yeah. But I, I was surprised at the aircraft carriers  
firing at it, and Navy fire went right through the stuff  
and shot at the Japanese, but I'm sure that the pilot had

bullets (inaudible) on the plane. Because everybody was firing, you know. So then I -- after the invasion there, we spent time there for a while and then we'd go back and get supplies and stuff. One time we went and got this [ammunition ship?] and they parked someplace else, and it was blown up that night. But as soon as dawn comes, the Japanese planes would come in and bomb my ships.

PJ: Bomb them?

ANW: Yeah. The fleet would hit them, you know. And -- the --

PJ: How close did they come to your ship?

ANW: Pretty far. But one particular time -- all those, everybody in the ship was shooting at this -- all kinds of -- for the ship -- the Japanese come in and he hit the hospital ship right where the (inaudible) -- that last one was sort of lit up, you know, where the cross is? He hit the plane there. There was all wounded men and stuff on there.

PJ: So -- did you ever get to the Philippines?

ANW: Yeah. We went to, heading for the Philippines and we didn't know it at that time, but it wasn't too far from the Indianapolis when it got shot. We didn't know that. But our escort was, it was probably -- I don't know any of the details, but we was looking for submarines, we was probably

looking for that submarine. We were around the side there and -- we sailed a couple different places and I seen one of my buddies out in the jungle there. He was taking care of the wounded. He was taking tags off the wounded guys and taking care of them. He was my classmate and we went to Manila. And pretty soon all the ships were getting into Manila for the invasion. We was on the beach that day and we heard that the Japanese were going to surrender. I didn't know nothing about the atomic bomb at that time. (laughs) Maybe somebody did, but I didn't. But --

PJ: Where were you, you say, when you heard about the atomic bomb?

ANW: Later on. But see then, after that, (cough) they sent us and as soon as MacArthur signed the peace treaty, they sent us into Nagasaki to get our prisoners of war out. And you know -- they were from -- some of them were working the steel mills and the roads and everything and they were from every country -- Indonesia, from the Navy, Army, what have you. And they have ships in Okinawa -- I think it was three ships in Okinawa and we'd go, when we -- you know, they had to take their clothes off and di--deli--

PJ: De-lice?

ANW: De-lice them and all that. (inaudible), take a shower and everything and all that and then they -- after they're all set and they send them down, give them a -- feed them, you know. There's only -- get a few slices of bread because they said he, the guy had a half a loaf of bread or something it would kill him.

PJ: They hadn't eaten for so long, I guess or so little that -- wouldn't let them eat --

ANW: The lice in there, yeah. So I -- I walked all over -- an Army truck, it was an Army truck. Our Army was a -- anyway, the ship -- I don't know if it was any Army ship or -- it might have come from the cruiser, but we all had a chance to go see the diver off to Nagasaki and look at it all.

PJ: What did it look like?

ANW: Nothing left. But, whether it was steel mills or where the submarine base was, and all them things, they missed that. That was the slums and that, where they -- and all the best part of Nagasaki was destroyed.

PJ: Wow. What did you think about them dropping the A-bomb after you heard it?

ANW: I was surprised, real surprised.

PJ: Saved a lot of lives though, I guess.

ANW: Oh, yeah. Yeah, it sure did, but it was sort of cruel, but we would have lost probably a million men if we landed in Japan, if they would have decided to fight to the end. When we went into Nagasaki, they had the fight -- the white flags up and they had a little channel we went by and we went by where all these ships were being built, the hulls -- they didn't have enough fuel or something -- even to operate again, you know. Things were, you know.

PJ: How did the Japanese treat you? When you went in there.

ANW: Well, I was on assignment to have the -- tie up the ship of the, Army ship coming in with the Army troops, the replacement. And we was wandering around the submarine place and we was going in these offices and that, this and that. Japanese police come, "You boys can't do that. Get out of here." And he gave us a baseball and bat, said, "Just go out and play baseball."

PJ: (laughter) The Japanese officer did, a cop --

ANW: A policeman, yeah. They could all speak English.

PJ: Yeah. Hmm. So after -- so you were taking troops -- prisoners of war out of Japan.

ANW: Took two times. And the third time it was going to go -- the typhoon got us.

PJ: Okay. Where were you at when the typhoon hit you?

ANW: We were tied to this ship for repairs and everything. I can't think of the name of it now. But (cough) we had one -- both boilers had tied down, we was working on them. So they got rid of one of them, and this guy, this [tender?] and I can't think of the tender now. But any -- the officer -- the captain on there says, "If you don't leave in a half hour or hour we're going to cut those," so sailors had their -- they cut their lines on us if we didn't. So we got a [Thai/tie?] boat to haul us out because we didn't have no power. So we had one boilermaker -- (inaudible) we could make lights, but we couldn't go anyplace. So we went out in the harbor and we dropped our anchors. And when that hit, believe it or not, we lost one of our anchors. (laughs) Can you believe that? We lost one of our anchors. Then we -- I guess about five o'clock at night, we didn't know it, but that's when we hit this little island.

Eventually we were going to abandon ship. We had an SOS and they told us we were better off than some of the other people and they couldn't get to us then. And the captain decided on -- if we would have abandoned ship, we'd have all been gone. It was still that bad. So two o'clock in



the morning we got blankets and stuff. Toward two o'clock in the morning, I could see a dark thing in front of the ship there and pretty soon we realized we were on this island, drifted on this island. And about 2:30 or something, two guys, two sailors yelling from the island -- they lost their ship. We told them to stay on the island; we'd pick them up in the morning. And they couldn't trust us. They walked all night on (inaudible) -- it was nothing, you know. And so --

They swam through that oil, because our ship had oil and everything -- oil and water and everything. And they were cut up from the (inaudible) on that and they had to clean those two sailors, clean them all off and get all that oil off of them. The next morning they asked permission to go on the shore because they were looking for their buddy. Their buddy couldn't swim. They were tied to -- they were all on this little raft, the three of them. And they tied him to this island and believe it or not, the next morning they found him. A raft flew him on the shore and he couldn't swim at all. They picked him up and they come to -- they went back to our ship and I think the next day or

that day they got a boat together, took them over to Okinawa so as they could take care of them.

PJ: So your ship was -- it went aground and it was just of no -- they couldn't salvage it then.

ANW: Underneath -- like I said, the first water about two foot of water and after deck, all the water and oil and everything is coming out. It was shot. You know, it was a pretty old ship anyway. It wasn't worth anything then.

(laughs)

PJ: When was this? What year? Must have been '45, right?

ANW: Forty-five. But we were shipwrecked October 9th, '45.

PJ: Wow. And how were you rescued then?

ANW: We lived on that island. We had four amphibious boats. They got one of them together and an officer come with a few men -- went and opened Okinawa and we went to different Army and Navy -- anything to try to get some food. So the first day they get some steaks and Army gave us, Army -- gave us K-rations. So the first day on the island we all had a steak and some French fries. And from then on we had two Army K-rations a day; one in the morning, one at night.

PJ: What was in the K-rations?

ANW: Army -- they had --

PJ: What was?

ANW: They had different ones. But I liked the dinner one. It had cheese and it had a little piece of -- coffee, to make coffee and -- the cheese and -- whatever, the dinner was real good. I didn't like (inaudible). Always took a dinner if I could get a hold of it. And --

PJ: Had cigarettes in there. Right?

ANW: One cigarette, yeah.

PJ: One cig --

ANW: Two little cigarettes, I think in the thing. And -- at nighttime, after we got [a rope going?] back and forth to the (inaudible) -- we'd get two cans of beer every night. And we were there for four or five weeks. And one day the -- what Army chaplains, Navy chaplains, (inaudible) a bunch of them come ashore and they said, "We've got to get you off this island." (laughter)

PJ: The beer was probably warm though, right? You didn't have cold beer, did you?

ANW: I think it was probably warm. I can't remember.

(laughter) But some of the guys would take their beer and hide it, until they had two or three nights and then drink it all at one time. Oh, jeez. I always drank my two right away. (laughter) Because there was a little string on that island -- when the Army landed on that little island, it

was a little island -- a mile and a half by a block or so, that's a little island that was. The Japanese had took all those people off that island, but we didn't know that and the Army went through there and checked the whole thing out and the Army must have stayed there a few days and there was a spring on that island and so they had 40 (inaudible) -- they could take a shower and everything. They had put something on there. So while they was there we could go get, take a shower and wash our clothes and stuff. We had to walk to it, you know, through the jungle and them and -- we'd wash our dungarees and stuff in one of the (inaudible). It was October and everything dried so nice.

PJ: You had a pretty good life on that island then, huh?

ANW: I wanted to stay there a while because (laughter) the paycheck would go on and I didn't do nothing. (laughs) I used to stand one watch with the officer on the deck. I don't know if they changed it after ours, but you're supposed to always have somebody on the deck. I don't know what the conditions are, but I know I stood the one hour -- one of the 45 -- I don't know why but -- I did run into a guy when I was by myself, going through the island. I was going to the spring by myself. I run into this guy, he was an Okinawan, I guess; he didn't have anything and I didn't

have anything and I just looked at him. I walked that way, he went that way. He was probably looking for some of the stuff he hid on the island. I don't know what he was doing. But you can't tell them from the Japs either, you know, (laughs) they all -- they look a little different, but how do you know, though? He didn't have nothing, though. He was harmless.

PJ: When you -- after they got you off the island, then what did you do?

ANW: They put me on a hotel, a floating hotel for a couple of days and then they put me on the beach and I was on the beach maybe a week or so. Every day we'd sign up; we wanted to get out, you know. So they sent me on a -- I can't remember the aircraft carrier. I got on this aircraft carrier -- (inaudible) the guys who were shipwrecked who were on the island, too, we all went to Shanghai. And I missed all my buddies. They went somewhere else. But afterwards I found out this one boy -- at least one or two of the guys that I was -- went on other ships on Shanghai because he told me after he was in Shanghai. I spent, oh I must have spent close to a year or something on that ship, on the island, on Shanghai, but -- after that things were getting a little bad. We took, we

took some military stuff to Korea and they took it off and they launched it off. I didn't get into Korea. We took the stuff, the Army stuff, into Korea and left. Evidently they were preparing for the war, you know, at that time, you know. And it's a good thing I didn't join the Reserves because (laughs) I would have been back. (laughs)

PJ: What ship did you go on after the *Greene*?

ANW: It was the, I went on the *Carter Hall* in Shanghai.

PJ: That's *Carter Hall*. H-A-L-L?

ANW: C-A-R -- Carter Hall. C-A-R-T-E-R, I think is, Hall, H-A-L-L. [Cert?] number three.

PJ: And that was --

ANW: It's a ship that repair amphibiouses. It's like a swimming pool on the back. They (inaudible) -- there's a big (inaudible) door in the wall, and amphibious and ships go in to get repaired, and they [run?] the door off and they got big pumps that pumped all that water out and so they can work on these ships.

PJ: So it was like a dry dock.

ANW: Dry dock, yeah. Dry dock, that's what it was.

PJ: And how long were you on the *Carter Hall*?

ANW: Well, of course, it must have been close to -- I went back to the States on it after that, you know. And I was taking

care of the -- we was putting in the moth balls and -- and I was doing the typing. Nobody could type and I wasn't a very good typer and I was supposed to take care of the engine rooms, if all the stuff -- the clock -- put it down -- maybe they come from Bethlehem Steel or -- (inaudible) everything but we had to put down in the east room apartment, you know. And so I was having trouble keeping up and they got a young kid -- he didn't know how to -- how to operate either and he'd do it like that. And funny, nobody on the ship could type or they didn't want to.

(laughs)

PJ: Wouldn't admit it.

ANW: Yeah, (laughs) yeah. And I was an amateur. But I -- but then what happened is this one guy on the ship, a second class -- he was a problem. He went on liberty and somehow they must have sent either another second hand water tender and so they decided to send me. And I had my sea bag and stuff waiting for the Navy to take me over to the -- Columbus and the captain come off and he says, "I'm sorry about it. I'd have liked to have you stay, but somebody had to go and the other guy on leave. (laughs) I never talked to the sergeant -- I never talked to him and then he

didn't know who he was and he was the captain and he talked to me a little bit then.

PJ: So that's how you got on the *Columbus*?

ANW: Yeah, I was on the *Columbus*.

PJ: Why did they send you over there? You said somebody had to go.

ANW: They sent me -- they needed some guys on the *Columbus*. So I was in charge of (inaudible) -- motor room, you know. And I had about 12 or 13 guys ahead of me. [You handled your staff?] -- I'm from a little ship and I'm on a big, big ship and big stuff, you know. And I had 12 or 13 -- I was supposed to get those guys do my work for me in that. They were nice kids, nice guys, were younger than me, but -- then they needed a guy from the *Astoria*; he was just released from there. They said they needed another one. When I got on there they had enough, they had enough second classes anyhow, but they sent me on there and went to Guam. When we come back we trained the -- we come back we trained the Navy Reserves. Every weekend we would take them out to fire the guns or whatnot, out of San Diego.

PJ: Huh. That was on the *Astoria*?

ANW: Yeah.

PJ: So how long were you on that?



ANW: The rest of my term of service.

PJ: Well, when did you get out? Or when did, when were you discharged?

ANW: I got out in '48.

PJ: Oh, '48.

ANW: I got out a couple months before I was (inaudible) -- I got out a little bit early. But I had six years.

PJ: So you just, you weren't too far from the Korean War, '48.

ANW: Well, we dropped the [slice?] -- (laughs) we dropped the [splice?] -- one flies off before we come back to the States. And I probably, if they would have, they would have probably -- if I would have signed for the Reserves they would have probably got me.

PJ: What about -- tell us about the bell from the USS *Greene*.

ANW: (laughs) Well -- Joseph Roosevelt, what was his first name? Joseph Roosevelt -- at the end, when he retired, they decided on giving him the bell, because he was the captain. And so he lived in Long Beach, New York, and he had it in his yard, and somewhere along the line somebody stole the bell and it ended up in a pawnshop or whatever it was. Sometime along, mind you, this woman sees it and she starts -- they wanted to see some ships and that stuff and they were picking up all kinds of stuff like that. So she seen

that bell and she looked at it and I don't know if she had enough money at that time or not, but when she went back about Christmastime she bought it for her husband. And they took it back and shined it up beautiful -- made a wooden frame for it and everything. And then they looked up -- they wanted to find out about the USS *Greene* and eventually they find a guy that's in charge of our -- ship reunions and eventually, eventually they walked the bell to us. And every meeting, you know, real nice young people from Connecticut I guess they were from. And -- at Christmastime they sent me a Christmas card.

PJ: Oh, that's nice.

ANW: A real nice, real nice people. And --

PJ: So who has the bell now?

ANW: They still got it.

PJ: Oh, they have it, but they let you --

ANW: I thought it was funny that the captain seen that they own that and he and his family and all that and they didn't say nothing. And maybe they thought the -- maybe they thought he had getting those guys that would give him the bell back. They were so nice and that -- he wouldn't -- they didn't want to give that bell off. (laughs)

PJ: And -- I was reading an article -- we talked earlier about the fact that that was the only USS *Greene*, but I understand that's not correct.

ANW: No, that's a US -- *Eugene Greene*, I don't know if it was commissioned or not in late years, because the only way I knew it, my daughter got me a plaque with the *Greene* on it and I says, "That's the wrong one. That's not the right *Greene*," (laughs) so that was maybe five, six years ago or so maybe. He got it and she got it over in Alaska. I don't know where -- I don't know how she got it, but (laughs) it's a little thing.

PJ: Wow. But it's a different ship.

ANW: Yeah. A modern ship. (laughs) So -- So I kept it anyway.

PJ: Did you -- you have any other stories or anything -- that happened while you were on ship, or?

ANW: Well -- what about I tell you about our (inaudible) Newfoundland; we went up there from New York and they took all the (inaudible) everything off the ship and they put these wires, big cable wires around the ship. They demagnetized -- demagnetized our ship so that the magnetic -- [magnites?] torpedoes wouldn't hit us.

PJ: Oh, they demagnetized it?

ANW: Yeah.

PJ: Did they -- torpedoes were -- they were based on --

ANW: It's out of the German ones that were torpedoes -- magnetized, you know. So I don't know if that helped or not, but -- after that we were going after the submarines and -- one time we went past Iceland and all those ships were [rolling in two?] there. Cut right into the merchant ships and all cutting, one here, one here and -- (laughs) and I didn't know that there were still German submarines around there. I don't know how we missed them all.

PJ: So how did you -- the group you were in sank several submarines. What, did they just drop depth charges over the side or how -- you didn't have torpedoes, did you?

ANW: We dropped depth charges, and there was a trick to one. We must have dropped down two or three days before that, maybe the other destroyers, too, but that, early that morning when it was getting light, after the ship I could see the submarine on the surface. (cough) Right away I reported it and probably they knew about it before I did, maybe, I don't know, but the Navy bombed it then. I think it was 50 -- I don't think it's still (inaudible) -- but 52 men or I can't remember. But some of them are injured and I think they all lived.

PJ: This article here shows -- let's see here.

ANW: Is it 52 or a little bit less?

PJ: Somewhere I read where they -- the Germans they captured -- you know, I can't find it here, but they talked about how many -- (tape skipping)

ANW: We had a doctor on our ship. You know, most ships couldn't have a doctor, but because we were always in a bad way that we had a doctor and -- they were going to send forward the Germans over to our ship because they needed medical attention and they changed their mind. I don't think they all went on the aircraft carrier; I'm not sure.

PJ: It says 24 Germans.

ANW: Twenty-four, yeah.

PJ: Were captured from that one U-boat.

ANW: I think they all lived and I think they dropped them off in San D-, Norfolk, Virginia, I don't know where the aircraft carrier went after that. And at that time they had senators and representatives from Washington, DC, on the aircraft carrier and I guess they got a thrill of their life, but when they went back and told Roosevelt how bad it was and that they gave us the unit citation. Just took (inaudible) -- you don't get it right away. About a year later or so they give it to us. When they -- when they pinned on us and that, that was only a few of us left on

the ship when that happened. They were all transferred. I think there was only 13 left. The sailors thought we were heroes. (laughter)

PJ: What was life for you like in the Navy? You enjoy it?

ANW: Yeah, most of the time. Most of the time I was. I was a seaman and then I -- it was a Spanish chief on there and he told me when we was in New York, "I'll give you liberty as long as, as long as you're on the -- you clean up the chief department," and he says, he told me -- and they had a kid that was, well, fed the chiefs. But he says, (inaudible) New York or anyplace, he says, "You can go on liberty or he can go on liberty. Somebody has to feed the --" (inaudible). We had two of us. He said, "You can take his place, feed the chiefs. You can go on liberty every night as long as we're (inaudible)" and that was pretty nice because we went to Londonderry (inaudible) after that, I could go to the beach in Londonderry every night. As long as we were there, you know.

PJ: Yeah. In London?

ANW: Yeah. Londonderry.

PJ: Where's Londonderry?

ANW: Ireland.

PJ: Oh, Ireland. Okay.

ANW: It's a little ways, not too far from Belfast.

PJ: Well, the weather was -- you were like in the Mediterranean.

ANW: Yeah, yeah. I was a lookout for a little while after that. And then I when I was a [chopper/carpet?] cleaner -- he took me off for three months and he put in me charge of the paint locker. Take care of all the paint on the ship. When you go dock you paint the ship. And then I had to get a Mexican boy to help me clean them. Like I say, I couldn't keep up by myself. (laughs) And after that I decided I don't want to be a seaman anymore. And I talked to an officer and they needed three guys, two from the engine room and one from the boiler room, I guess and I told him, "My dad works in steel mills in Gary, Indiana, and I'll probably end up there. I'd like to be -- in one of the places," "Yeah, I'll put in the boiler room," then he says. So I was -- fire went first -- then he gave me -- I mean, seaman first, they gave me (inaudible) first for transporting to down below (inaudible) -- After that I was third class and second class, but after that the war was getting towards the end, I didn't care if I had anything. (laughs) I wanted to get out.

PJ: But like you were up in Ireland. You were up by Iceland. You -- during the time in service you must have been through some real cold weather and warm weather. Right? Pacific?

ANW: Well, up there in Iceland, when you pass the ice [drifts?] you know, the -- the temperature drives --

PJ: Icebergs?

ANW: Icebergs -- they drop about 15, 20 degrees. I was out there -- south of Iceland -- we went across a ship this one time and they (inaudible) to us -- shot it over the ship and said -- and it was a [party?] (inaudible) ship and so I was supposed to go on a boarding party on the ship but I told them I couldn't -- I didn't know how to roll -- load the -- Thompson (inaudible). There was one in it, but I said, "I don't know how," he said, "I don't want you then," he got somebody else. I wanted to go, but -- the officer and if I'd would have been on [staging?] that boat with the -- boat (inaudible). The officer and a couple of sailors went on the ship and checked the cargo and stuff. They had all salt on there, salt to go to the [Grand Banks?] and Portuguese been fishing there for -- beginning of time, even before Columbus, nobody -- nobody knows that now. But they had -- the (inaudible) had so much fish -- they have a



big ship there and make the salt there. Make sure we take all the -- after he got rid of the salt, go back to Portugal with the -- so that's one reason why -- that was, that time was a little -- we also -- the beginning of the war, we weren't -- we was down there by -- and we saw the Southern Atlantic and a big ship was out there. We found out it was an Argentina ship and it wouldn't signal back to us.

We shot over the mask -- they're sending us back -- evidently it was okay because we didn't go aboard. It was a real big ship. (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) But -- so we didn't mess around. (laughs) We wasn't going to take no chances.

PJ: In the room with us, too, is Al's daughter. Mary or Juanita. You have anything that you'd like to ask your dad or anything you've...?

F: No, all through the years we've heard some pretty good stories and it was quite a time he had.

PJ: So what did you do after you got out?

ANW: Well, I was in the same -- (laughs) San Pedro, California, a naval base when I got out, so then I -- I should go home. I got a train from Los Angeles to go home. I got about

\$300 discount or something, not very much, but. And I went home and I said, I'm going to nothing for a while. And just a few days before I got home, a storm went through, a hurricane went through part of the -- a quarter of (inaudible) Chesterton and by the time I got there things cleared up and -- (cough) I worked at this -- there's a plastic (inaudible) a half a block from our parents' home and so I went over there and I think I was going to work for a while, because I was looking for something. I wanted to, I was going to get a --

I wanted to be in the postal system, but I'm glad I didn't. But -- (laughs) I worked there a few weeks and -- not very long and me and this other guy wanted more money and they told me if -- making science, you know, basic science and stuff and they said, if you made 300, 400 (inaudible) every day we'll give you an extra day pay. And I told him, "Well, Friday give me my money. I'm going, I'm going," so Monday morning I went to US Steel and I was hired right away and I was, I asked to be on -- the maintenance on the -- repair the -- anything that broke down on the -- cranes or whatnot. So I got over to the Number 1 [oper-harden?] in [Gary?] -- and the boss in charge is on vacation and

there's another guy in charge. He says, "Well," he says, "this guy from maintenance didn't like to run the crane. He wanted to get off of it," he says, "I can't give you anything for the crane job," (laughter) so instead of starting down the line, one, two, three or whatever, they goes down, I come (inaudible) right away. I was pretty lucky, you know. (laughs) You know, not everybody's that lucky.

PJ: That's right.

ANW: (laughs) So I work the old (inaudible) -- I worked in the stockyard for a while. Then I went to the [mow?] yard and then after that I went back to stockyard because they were getting bonuses then. Then after that things were changing and they built that new -- it's not new anymore -- open hearth. It wasn't [at caster?] at that time, it is today, but I was on a brand new crane, (inaudible) the strip for these big boxes. Before, you know -- you probably knew about it -- they had the little boxes they load. The cranes there, we'd load a big box and if they -- off of a (inaudible) they call to you -- to put copper in or something. The old motors and stuff, they estimate how much copper was in that and they put it in the, you know, I

don't know what you did in the mill, but -- (laughs) You went in the mill?

PJ: Yeah. Yeah, I worked with a steel producer. I mean, I was actually in business planning, but I worked with steel producing, scheduling the open hearths and those casters and things like that, so.

ANW: (cough) My dad worked for Power & Fuel. And one time I was (inaudible) -- after that he worked at [Three Open Hearth?] and I working there at that time. I did change it around to open hearth -- kind of slow down and that. And as I see him down (inaudible) -- and I had a few minutes, so I had a few minutes off and I go out and talk to my dad. He had Mexicans and colored people working for him. He's a boss over at Power & Fuel. (cough)

F: Dad, tell him about [Lonny?] -- how he's kind of organized your ship reunions and how he's so dedicated.

ANW: Well, after the ship was -- we had to take the ammunition stuff off the ship, you know. We went -- I thought we took all the ammunition stuff out and so I was working on there and they sent me back to the after part and I'm in a daze, you know, from all them fumes and stuff. And this officer says, "You're going to have to help these guys going on the after deck." And this young kid, he's just been on the

ship a little while, he says, "I'll take your place for 15 minutes," we could alternate for 15 minutes, on account of the fumes. Because the guys die down there from the gas fumes. And -- (cough)

So they all went down there, and all of the sudden I see the guys dropping over and I tried to go down and the big guy stopped me and they all died of gas. One breath of gas and they died, just like that. And one young officer had just come on the ship. He was on the south of the steps and started to go down; it got him. So after that, the kid that lived next -- slept next to me on the bunk, he was a gunnery and he was a uncle to this fellow who helped organize -- we had this Navy, but this guy, I think he was an Army, CIA or something -- he wanted to help with the ship because his uncle got lost, lost his life. And so him and another -- pretty soon we had the -- at that time we didn't have too many guys, but pretty soon everybody got together that they could out from the ship, for all the times when we had ship -- and he helped on the ship -- he took the ship job from this other fellow, and every year he'd write us and tell us where we were going to have our ship reunion, if it's New Orleans or Florida or whatever.

Evidently he had connections, because he got permission to go to Okinawa and bring his uncle back. They buried him in Pennsylvania. So he really thought a lot of this uncle. And they were I think pretty well -- he had to have some money and he had the -- he was over in Germany; I don't know what he was doing in Germany, but I think he was a CI or something like that. For the government.

(cough) He sent me a ship -- a [capital?] like that. And I sent his check back to him and he -- (laughs) said, I don't want your money. (inaudible) all the guys on ship, [at camp?] on the ship around Christmastime. So he had a couple dollars. (laughs)

PJ: He organized all the reunions.

ANW: Yeah, at the end, yeah. A real nice guy. And he called me a while back. He's got a home in Georgia on an island. Every winter he spends it -- he'd be coming home, he's probably home now. He spends all winter on this island.

F: He's been real good to my dad because my dad was close to his uncle toward the end of his life.

ANW: I used to talk to his uncle a little bit. I didn't know his uncle very much, but he slept in the middle (inaudible) and I slept (inaudible) -- we were close together.

PJ: Real close together, yeah. (laughter)

ANW: And he was older than me. The boy. He had more experience than I did. He was a gunnery. (cough)

PJ: Anything else you want to ask? Or can you remember things or anything that he didn't tell?

F: (laughs) I remember how jittery he was after he came back. Remember, when I was a kid and I dropped that book on that floor. Boy, he just jumped like it's -- (inaudible) He was like that for a long time.

ANW: For some reason, (inaudible) hit -- bothered me a little bit. Even though our gun had small guns compared to the bigger ones. But -- noisy.

D: He'd wake up screaming. We could hear him and stuff for a long, long time.

ANW: I'd wake up once in a while. But one time -- well, here's a story in Shanghai. I was down in the boiler room and seamen opened up a little thing, (inaudible) brought them up from the deck, they poured this water down where the oil was. So we had trouble with the boilers. One minute they'd be purring like (inaudible) -- and I was down there

by myself and the officer deck run back to the fantail and called me and he says, "What's going on?" I says, "We got water in the oil, right," I says, "I need help. Get somebody to come down and help me," so that, that lasted for a couple days.

One time they changed the tank for me and then went back, but he said, "We've got to get the oil, water out of the oil." And when I was down there by myself -- they sent a guy down there -- after that, a young kid to help me stand watch. And the flames would shoot out of the sides of the boilers there, and that way, when it was burning, next time it wouldn't be nothing at all. And I had to change the fittings from small to big, whatever, tried to control the temperature, the temp, the gauge and he says, "I've got to go to the bathroom." I said, "You're not going anyplace." And he's -- I said, "You've got to help me." And so -- when we finished watching that, he must have went to the officers and stuff. He said, "I'm never going to go down there again." (laughter) I was trying to do my best, and it was scary, you know. I could have blown the boiler room up.

PJ: Wow.



ANW: (laughs) That was my -- and about that, about she's saying -- I lived, I slept in a (inaudible) up above. And at portholes you could look out and I can see the smoke and stuff from these stacks. I wake up during the night and I can see that and I go back to sleep and I wake up again. I'm still going back about -- (laughs) the boiler rooms. (laughs) It bothered me for a while. For about a month, I think a little bit, you know. Not real bad, but it bothered me. Because I think something's going to happen. (laughs) That was [cool?] -- I was going to die down there -- (inaudible) stay down and run that thing until I -- I wasn't going to give up. But this kid didn't want to stay with me. (laughs) I had a lot of experiences.

PJ: Yeah. Think of anything else you want to say here or?

ANW: Well, on the *Astoria*, when I got off from the *Columbus*, the -- there was quite, about three or four water tenders on there and I -- I didn't get along with them very good and I was supposed to work on a valve, you know and I closed different valves and then I asked them and they wouldn't tell me nothing. And so I -- left one valve open. It was the one that I was going to work on and so it flew into my eye here. And so when I went to San Pedro that morning, they went to the doctor that day on the ship -- so -- I

woke up in the morning, I couldn't see out of my eye. And I'm going back to the ship. The sun was out and my left -- my right eye won't move, running --

PJ: Water?

ANW: Water into it, you know. So I go on the ship and I think the doctor, the doctor was on the beach the night before, been drinking. He tried to do something. He says, "I'll send you to the naval hospital," so they worked on me. They thought it was metal or something. And this Navy doctor says, "You know, you had something in your eye for a long time, but they just pushed it farther in," so they worked on it and they tried everything and eventually they got it out. First they thought it was metal and then it wasn't metal at all. I don't know what it was, but -- so the worst part about that was the next day I had to go back. They'd take me back and I couldn't -- I have a patch over my eye and so --

The next day two Navy doctors touched, checked my eye and they said, "Oh, your left eye is just as good as right eye now," but they were checking it and they put that stuff in my eyes, you know, and I told them, I had one sailor there. I says, "You've got to get me some of that stuff, because

I'm going to pass out," (laughs) you know, your chance and eyes real center of -- and they was playing with my eye with trying different things in my eye and so I expect about a -- about a month I wore that patch over my eye and that ship, they put me on a pump to work on that was, needed to be fixed and I have the light back in the corner and I got one eye. Can you imagine trying to -- I don't know if they told them to do that to me or not, but it was rough. (laughs) So I -- one person, the officer, one of the officers calling me, says, "You don't get along with these guys very well," "I'll put up with them," and I'm little; those guys are... So he says, "I've got a job for you." He says, "I'm going to give you the job, in charge of the [stillders?] making water for the ship." I says, "Okay," so one of the (inaudible) Steven, he was on there for a little while, he showed me how to operate all the [stillers?] -- I'd ask of him -- (inaudible) where I was off -- same as they did, but I was in charge. They had a key from the officer. The officer never came around. The chief come around once in a while. But (inaudible) and plan. We had two [bombers?] -- folks make about a thousand gallons of water from one [glass?] and it -- most of the times we'd been getting 900 or 800. If you got trouble.

One time I had -- I was running it perfect at first, until I had trouble one night and it got [soldering?] up and so I pumped -- open that thing and pumped it over in the water and started all over again. And -- and it got a little bit bad again. So I put that water into the drinking water for the ship. And then when it got real good again, I give all the good water to the boiler rooms, for the boilers.

Because those copper things in the tubes there, if they get clogged up -- you want to keep -- (inaudible) you'd better get around that seal or you won't have no water or nothing, you know. And so -- I'd have to clean them out at the end of that but -- as far as I was on there, I never had any trouble with the [rafts?] after that. But that was a good job. I didn't have to put up with those other guys and that. They were older than me and sometimes -- (inaudible) when you go to a bar or something, there's (inaudible) real good ship, they'll pick on the other guys and fight and they get drunk and they fight with each other. It's a screwy mess, you know.

PJ: (laughter) How old were you then? You went in when you were 18, right?

ANW: Nineteen.

PJ: Nineteen when you went into the service?

ANW: I was -- a little while after I was on the -- I was probably (inaudible) -- probably pretty close to 20 when I got on the ship, maybe. Because I went to Bermuda on my birthday.

PJ: And when you -- were released you were about 25 or 26?

ANW: Twenty-four and a half, maybe I guess. I'm not sure.

(clears throat) Around there, close. (cough)

PJ: Now that one ship, is that *Estoria* or *Astoria*? Is it A or E?

ANW: A.

PJ: A. Okay. I had (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) --

ANW: Astoria, yeah, Oregon, you know, Astoria, Oregon.

(inaudible) was that.

PJ: Okay. I had it spelled wrong. I wondered. Well, I think --

ANW: We got part of it, anyway. (laughter)

PJ: Yeah, I got part of it right, got part of it spelled right.

I think --

ANW: Some of it is --

PJ: Well, I want to thank you for spending the time and --

ANW: Some of that stuff, they will appreciate some of that stuff I said. (laughs)

PJ: Yeah, it's always interesting to listen. You know, I read quite a bit of history now, but it's a lot different when you hear somebody that was actually there, versus reading in a book. You know, it's -- did you ever see anybody like Nimitz or any of those people?

ANW: One time, the vice admiral -- Nimitz's right-hand man, maybe, I guess -- I think it was at *Carter Hall*, before we come back to the States, he inspected -- on this Saturday, inspected the ship and all that. And [they still could see?] because your shoes aren't polished in the back, all this and that. And he come to the front, he said something about, "This is a good sailor." He come around and he said to me, he says -- look at my (inaudible) and stuff. He says, "Where'd you get that unit citation?" I said, "US *Greene*." "Never heard of it." (laughter) I says, "Yeah, I was in the Atlantic Ocean. I got that in submarine duty." He says, "You're a good sailor," something like that. And they don't talk to everybody, you know. They did talk to me, though, that time. One time, [they saw?] where the guy (inaudible), he said, "That guy needs a haircut." (laughs) You can't be perfect all the time.

F: My dad has quite a few medals.

ANW: I sent for my medals, you know. I got the medals  
(inaudible). And you know, I found out I could get medals  
from the Philippines. Twice I sent to them, the second  
time I sent to them with my copies of my papers, and they  
wrote back and says, "We quit giving medals out from the  
Philippines; it costs too much money." You can imagine how  
many medals they'd have to give out: Army, Navy, Marines.  
So I think I had two or three medals I could have had from  
the Philippines, but I didn't get them because they  
wouldn't give them to me.

PJ: Waited too long.

ANW: Yeah.

F: He's listed in the VFW. He has the most medals of anybody  
there.

PJ: Is that right?

ANW: The ship --

F: I didn't know it till my uncle told me.

ANW: The ship I was on, my brother signed me up for the VFW  
because he wanted me to be on his bowling team. So -- what  
was I going to say about that? Oh yeah. This Martha, she  
was (inaudible), and her husband was the commander of the  
VFW. And I was sitting next to her after -- a couple  
nights later I was sitting next to (inaudible) her, and she

said, "You know, you got the best record in here." I said, "How do you know?" She says, "I take care of the stuff for my husband." (laughs) Then I said to my brother just before we left here, he went to a ship reunion and (inaudible) probably at home now. But he was on the [Macon?]. But he was in the -- maybe out of the (inaudible), I don't know, but he went all over. *Goodwill*, Sweden, Germany, Africa. He went everywhere.

PJ: He just was like a tourist, then.

ANW: Yeah, he had a good time. He got in trouble, too, though. (laughter) He was in charge of liberty for the people. There was one boat, and they had to come over, get their last four officers off the boat. And he's the coxswain on the boat, and he's got an engineer on the boat. So that day or the day before that he told that officer that "This boat's condemned. It's no good. It's unsafe." So (laughs) -- I don't know if my brother had any drinks [in?] him or not, but the officers were all drunk. And he had a [cabbage box?] or something out there in the water, and they sunk. So they all swim ashore. So they're trying to court-martial my brother because it's all his fault, you know. (laughter) And I don't know how many times he went in front of them people before they cleared him. You know,



they can always blame somebody. I don't know what the officers said, but they should have stuck up for him, you know. You can't see nothing in the dark, hardly, you know. Plus he said that boat was actually -- should have been condemned.

END OF AUDIO FILE