

Lester McClanahan Oral History Interview

ED METZLER: This is Ed Metzler. Today is the 12th of May 2012. I am interviewing Mr. Les McClanahan at his home in South Dakota. This is a telephone interview. I am located in Fredericksburg, Texas, at the Nimitz Museum. This interview is in support of the Nimitz Education and Research Center, Archives for the National Museum of the Pacific War, Texas Historical Commission for the preservation of historical information related to this site. So, let me start, Les, by thanking you for spending the time today to share your experiences with us, and let's get started by having you give us your full name, place and date of birth, and we'll take it from there.

LESTER MCCLANAHAN: My full name is Lester Franklin McClanahan. My date of birth was February 10, 1927, and I was born in Lawrence, Kansas.

EM: And so, what did your father do for a living?

LM: My father had various occupations. Interestingly enough, my parents divorced when I was two. But he worked in Manhattan, Kansas, for the first Rent-A-Car agency, and it was the fourth Rent-A-Car.

EM: So, in a way, he was pioneer then, huh?

LM: That's right.

EM: (laughs) So he was renting cars to people. I guess that was a new concept back then, wasn't it?

LM: It was, in 1927.

EM: Yeah. Even the car was still a new concept.

LM: (laughs)

EM: Now did you have brothers and sisters?

LM: Did not.

EM: Okay, so you're the only child --

LM: That's correct.

EM: And did you live with your mother, then, after your parents divorced? Or how did that work?

LM: I did. I did.

EM: And where was that?

LM: Lawrence, Kansas.

EM: Okay. So, you stayed in Lawrence, then.

LM: Yeah.

EM: And I guess you went to school there in the public schools? Or --?

LM: That's correct. My mother remarried when I was in the sixth grade and then I went to public school. Nineteen forty-one, when Pearl Harbor occurred, I can remember that I was not aware until I went to some neighbor and they said, "Did you hear about Pearl Harbor?" And I said, "What about Pearl Harbor, and where is it?"

EM: Yeah, "What is it?" Yeah. (laughs)

LM: Yeah. (laughs) And at that time, I think, as I recall then, I'd have been about fourteen years old.

EM: Yeah, I was just doing the math here, and that's --

LM: Yeah.

EM: -- kind of how it works out. So, you were probably in what we could call "middle school" now. I guess you probably called it "junior high school" back then.

LM: Yep, yep.

EM: So, what do you remember, then, about what changed in your life as a result of that? I mean, did things change? Or were you just a happy fourteen-year-old and just kept rocking along?

LM: Well, it changed. The war changed everything. I was in high school, rather than middle school.

EM: Oh, okay.

LM: And I can remember that high school, there was a program -- or at least there was an implementation of -- a change in times of going to school, that if high school students wanted to work, because there was a lot of opportunities to do so, then they could get out of school at noon. And as a consequence, I took that choice and went to work for the local theaters as a doorman, and I ended up -- needless to

say before I was seventeen -- and I was an assistant manager of a theater.

EM: Yeah, there wasn't a lot of labor competition was there, at the time, because --

LM: (laughs) That's correct.

EM: -- everybody was into the military. Or, most people.

LM: Right. And I was so fearful that the war was going to end before I could get into the excitement, (laughs) in a sense it, so --

EM: So, you viewed that as an opportunity, huh?

LM: Well, not --

EM: As excitement?

LM: -- as an opportunity. A little bit of adventure.

EM: Yeah, yeah. Plus, I guess there was the patriotism that everybody was feeling at the time --

LM: Well, yes. And as a consequence, on my seventeenth birthday, I went to high school and raised my right hand and joined the United States Navy.

EM: Now what, were you a senior at that time? Were you almost out of high school? Or still had a ways to --

LM: Well, (laughs) I had a little problem at my high school, and I was classified as junior.

EM: Okay, so you weren't --

LM: I quit a couple of times before I finished the school term,
so I had to start all over.

EM: So, you lost a little ground there, huh?

LM: Yep, yep.

EM: Why the Navy?

LM: (laughs) I guess I'd say, in the old adage of Navy men, "I
like to have my kitchen under me, not five miles behind
me."

EM: (laughs) I've never heard that before.

LM: Yeah?

EM: I've heard the old, "I don't want to have to dig a foxhole
and sleep in." "I don't --

LM: Yeah.

EM: -- want to have to sleep in the mud." And those kinds of
things. But --

LM: Yeah. And being a Midwesterner, I think the Navy appealed
to a lot of Midwestern youngsters because they'd never see
the ocean.

EM: Right, right, so an extra sense of adventure surrounding --

LM: Right. Yep.

EM: When you were young, had you travelled much at all? Or
were you pretty much hanging around in Kansas?

LM: I hadn't been over one hundred and fifty miles from home.

EM: Okay, so here you are, a seventeen-year-old, never been more than a hundred and fifty miles from home --

LM: (laughs)

EM: -- you're ready to go see the world, huh?

LM: Right. And I remember like it was yesterday, I was recruited, I joined up at the Naval Recruiting Station in Kansas City, Missouri, and they had a big push in February of 1944, and they had seven hundred recruits that they marched down the Grand Avenue to Union Station to board a troops train to Farragut, Idaho. And that was the largest contingent of recruits that left Kansas City, Missouri. I'm not too sure it was the largest contingent that left during the war.

EM: Goodness. How many again?

LM: Seven hundred.

EM: That's a bunch of guys.

LM: Yeah, it is.

EM: And I've always been intrigued with the location of a Navy boot camp in upstate Idaho --

LM: (laughs)

EM: -- this has always intrigued me. I happened --

LM: Right.

EM: -- to be interviewing a gentleman yesterday who did his boot camp at -- what was the camp? Farragut.

LM: Farragut.

EM: Yeah, Farragut.

LM: Yeah.

EM: So, you --

LM: What --

EM: -- climb up -- go ahead.

LM: Well, I was going to say, one of the reasons that Camp Farragut was made a boot camp -- was -- there was a lake there, Lake Pend Oreille, and we did life boat training on the lake.

EM: Who would have thought? (laughs)

LM: Yep.

EM: So, hopped on the train. So, your mother is supportive of this? You going off to war?

LM: Yes. Yes. She gave her consent for me to enlist, because that's what we needed -- had to have a document signed by my parent that I was willing to go.

EM: Why do you think she was so supportive of her only child going off to war? (inaudible) --

LM: I think she felt that (laughs) because of the problems that I'd had in the earlier years, of quitting school and what have you, that this might straighten me out, I think.

EM: (laughs)

LM: And it did. (laughs)

EM: Well, not to be nosy, but what were your problems in school? You just weren't doing well, or it bored you --?

LM: Well, I wasn't interested, you know? There were other activities that -- I didn't want to go to school, so I did something else.

EM: (laughs) Seems perfectly logical, doesn't it?

LM: (laughs)

EM: So, how was boot camp? Was that tough on you? Easy? How did that go?

LM: Boot camp was pretty good. Being thrown into a company with two hundred strangers was an experience. We went to boot camp with the expectation of having twelve weeks of boot camp. During the boot camp, we were told, "We're cutting it back to ten weeks." And we thought, oh, well... Turns out we were in boot camp -- Camp Farragut -- for eight weeks. It was shortened to that amount of time. The one thing I had problems with in boot camp, is they said you had to be able to swim fifty yards before you could be graduated, or home on boot leave. And I remember that I struggled and struggled and struggled. And the night before the graduation, I went over to the drill hall, and I was able to swim fifty yards.

EM: Man.

LM: (laughs)

EM: So, you made it in under the wire on that, huh?

LM: I did. I did.

EM: (laughs) So during boot camp, I guess they were testing you for aptitude and probably asking you what you wanted to be, and all that kind of stuff?

LM: That's correct. And I wanted to be a submariner in the submarines, and I took a test for that, and needless to say, I did not qualify for subs. Probably because of the psychological test that they gave to people who they selected for submarine service. And that was the only test that I really applied for, so when I graduated from boot camp, I was assigned almost immediately out of boot camp. There was a thing after boot leave, you came back to Farragut, Idaho, and it was called "Outgoing Unit." And you were there for whatever period of time, and I was only there about a week. And you checked the roster every day, and I checked the roster this one day and I was assigned to the *USS Algol*. And it wasn't even built yet.

EM: (laughs) Oh, my gosh.

LM: I went to a receiving station then, at Tacoma, Washington, for a period of six weeks, or so. And then I was transferred to Portland, Oregon for the ship, which had been -- its keel had been laid in Oakland, California as a merchant ship, and then they decommissioned it and turned

it over to the Navy, and towed it up to Portland, Oregon, to the Willamette Shipyards for refitting, and that's where I joined the ship in -- well, the ship was actually commissioned in June of 1944.

EM: Now, she was an attack transport, right?

LM: That's correct.

EM: And a lot of them were liberty ships that had basically been heavily modified. And I'm just wondering if she was one of those, because you said that she was originally going to be a commercial ship --

LM: Nope, it was not a liberty ship. And I can't remember the exact terminology, but it was another class, but it was not a liberty ship, which I was thankful for because liberty ships were being crafted so quickly that they had a little problem with the structural integrity.

EM: I think quality control was laid aside. (laughs)

LM: (laughs)

EM: Because they built those things almost once a day or something, I mean --

LM: Well, yeah.

EM: -- turning them out so fast.

LM: While I was at Tacoma, you had various trainings. We were sent to gunnery school over on Pacific Beach, Washington. And I went to 20-millimeter gunnery school one week, and I

went back, and then went to 40-millimeter gunnery school. And I remember at the gunnery school at Pacific Beach, Washington, it was so foggy that we could not practice at ten-thirty or eleven o'clock in the morning. But I can remember the Andrews Sisters, and they played "Reveille," and then they played Andrews Sisters, and their song of that day was "Oh, What a Beautiful Morning." And you looked outside, and you couldn't see your hand in front of your face because of the fog.

EM: (laughs) Well, I think that area is famous for its fog, anyhow.

LM: Yep, yep.

EM: Okay, at this point you don't know what your assignment is going to be on the *Algol*, then.

LM: Well, when we got to Portland, there was an opportunity to make another assessment, and I chose to be a radioman. And in the terminology, I struck for radioman. We were trained at Portland, Oregon, at the base there -- the receiving station -- and I could not learn the code. I could not learn the code. And I struggled with that for probably a couple of months, and finally the chief radioman says, "Mac, I'm afraid that you're not going to make a radioman." So, I was a deck hand when I went aboard the ship. At that time, the deck people were -- well, the third class was

coxswain. I understand today they're bosun mate third, but coxswain and then bosun mate second on up. And before the war ended, I got to be a coxswain third class.

EM: But the ship was still, what? Under construction? Or was she --?

LM: It was being refitted from -- the hull was basically completed, and it was probably pretty well outfitted as a merchant (inaudible) down at Oakland, California when the Navy -- however -- bought it and towed it up to Portland, Oregon. There was finishing touches. I think... We got to Portland, probably, in May of '44, and it was commissioned in June of 1944 as a Naval ship. We went aboard and did all the shake down cruises. We left Portland, and went down to Long Beach off of Los Angeles. Long Beach, and we did shake down cruising there. The interesting thing if you're not aware, is that cargo ships and transport APAs did not have a boat crew as such. They were special boat crews, special crews, that were strained in operation of LCVPs, landing craft personnel, and LCMs -- large fifty-foot landing craft -- and they were trained and then they came aboard these various ships, not as a part of the ships' company, but to operate boats.

EM: The landing craft, yeah.

LM: Right, right.

EM: Now what was the designation of the *USS Algol*? I have AKA-54. Is that correct?

LM: Well, (laughs) yeah, it was termed as a auxiliary cargo attack. And yet, as I look at the picture of my ship in my den here, I see painted on the bow, was KA-54. The minute I looked later, there was all kinds of designations, KA was a cargo attack, AKA was auxiliary cargo attack, today they have a different designation for cargo attack ships, and I can't remember exactly what they are.

EM: And I've interviewed a lot of guys that were on ships that were ATA, and I don't know --

LM: That was the transport.

EM: That's transport, as opposed to attack. Okay.

LM: Well, I mean, personnel.

EM: Okay.

LM: That was a troop ship.

EM: Okay, okay.

LM: Auxiliary personnel attack.

EM: Okay.

LM: And it's interesting that the Navy spells "cargo" with a K instead of a C.

EM: Yep, yep, that was kind of strange.

LM: (laughs)

EM: So, the *Algol*, she was outfitted with landing craft on her, is that correct?

LM: Yes. We had one, two, three, four -- we had eight LCMS, which were fifty-foot twin diesel front ramp landing craft, which carried tanks and so forth -- the motorized equipment. LCVPs, I think we had something in the neighborhood of thirty-three LCVPs, and those were personnel attack. But they could carry a Jeep --

EM: Were these what were popularly known as "Higgins Boats?"

LM: More or less, yep.

EM: Okay.

LM: We had all those landing craft. During the invasion we unloaded the landing craft and they went to APAs, troop transports, and GIs off of the troop ships, to the beachhead. Once they were landed on the beachhead, then they came back and started unloading the support, such as heavy equipment, trucks, tanks, supplies, ammunition, fuel, and --

EM: And sometimes they'd bring wounded back, from what I understand, too.

LM: Yeah, in the later invasion, and they would take those, of course, to the hospital ship.

EM: Right, right. So, after the shake down cruises and everything, I've got to assume she finally checked out

okay, and so where did you guys go first when you left the states?

LM: Oh, boy. I do not remember the chronology --

EM: That's okay.

LM: -- but I know we hit Hawaii a couple -- or three times during our stint in the Pacific. We went to Enewetak Atoll, the Ulithi Atoll, we carried supplies to -- after the invasion -- to Saipan, and I can't remember where we might have loaded. We were at the invasion of Lingayen Gulf, which would have been -- I think -- early '45.

EM: Yeah, that's right.

LM: And then we went back to Luzon and we loaded up for another invasion, and this is an invasion that's not talked about in the history books very much, but it was Subic Bay. That was on the southwest corner of the -- just across from Manila. And when we got there, the radio message words from the rebels on the island, on the mainland there, that the beachhead had already been secured. So, we just unloaded and went home someplace.

EM: Well, that's the kind of invasion you like, I think, when -
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LM: Oh, yeah!

EM: -- beachhead's already secured, just unload your stuff.

LM: Yeah!

EM: (laughs)

LM: You can find references now and then to the landing or to the operation at Subic Bay. Then, I don't remember -- again, we probably loaded in the Philippines for the invasion of Okinawa. And that was April 1, I remember -- April Fool's --

EM: April Fool's Day.

LM: -- Day of '45.

EM: It turned out it was Easter Sunday too, I think.

LM: Yeah, I think it was.

EM: Rather interesting coincidence.

LM: Yeah.

EM: What a way to start Easter.

LM: (laughs) Yeah.

EM: Yeah, that was a tough one.

LM: We were --

EM: So, you were part of the invasion fleet, if I can use that term, that went up to Okinawa. Is that correct?

LM: Yes. Yep. And we were there probably, oh, a week. At least a week. Then when we left the landing site -- or the invasion site at Okinawa -- there was another ship that had lost propulsion, and we towed that ship back to Luzon, Philippines.

EM: Yeah. Now when you went up to Okinawa -- I mean, I've heard stories of how large this fleet of ships was. That you could look in all directions, and all you could see (laughs) was ships. Is that your experience --?

LM: Yep, you're absolutely correct. I do not recall how many ships were involved in the operation of Okinawa. My recollection is that it was probably one of the bigger operations, because we were getting closer and closer to the homeland of the rising sun. I don't know whether (laugh) you had so many ships because they were afraid they were going to be sunk, or whether they figured they needed that man-power to take over Okinawa and --

EM: I think they just wanted as much of an advantage as they could have.

LM: Yeah.

EM: And Okinawa's a substantially larger island than most --

LM: Yeah.

EM: -- of the little atolls that we'd been taking. I mean, you know --

LM: That's right.

EM: -- cities on it, and a native population and --

LM: Certainly.

EM: -- like you say, a lot closer to the homeland. In fact, it was considered a part of Japan.

LM: Yes, it was. And then we --

EM: Well, let me ask you about the Okinawa thing. You guys landed equipment and troops in what? The early --

LM: Right.

EM: -- parts of the landing? Or later on, or --?

LM: No. We were there for the opening advance, whatever you want to call it.

EM: The initial landings.

LM: Initial landings, that's right. Our landing craft were unloaded off of the ship and went to the troop transports. And some of our boats were in the first wave to hit the beach. I can remember the boat crews coming back telling us of what the situation was. And as an example, the LCVPs -- which were the so-called "Higgins Boats," they were the thirty-six-foot boats and carried personnel to the beach. And briefing onto the boat crews, they pointed out that there was a reef X number of yards off the beach and so forth, and that if you hit that reef, or just sit there and gunned your motors and let the next swell lift you up over that reef. And I remember a couple of the coxswains on the landing craft from our ship came back and said, "Well, we hit that reef and we did as we were told and gunned our motors and the next swell, it didn't lift us over it." And basically, what you do is -- my recollection -- is every

third or fourth swell that came off the ocean was a bigger one. And so they said, "We caught that big one and it didn't lift us over it, so we thought we were on the beach. And we lowered the ramp and said, 'Okay fellas, go ahead!'" (laughs) Well, on the other side of the reef it was about ten feet of water. (laughs)

EM: Oh, boy.

LM: So, for the lack of something better, the dogfaces, they were a little surprised when they went off the end of the ramp and fell into deep water.

EM: It's kind of hard to swim with all that equipment strapped to your body. I'd --

LM: Well it was, but I think that, as I recall the stories that they said, everybody made it to the beach. And then, after the personnel was all on the beach, they came back to the cargo ships. And the first priority, of course, was supporting equipment, such as tanks. And then cargo -- well, ammunition. I remember one time, probably into Okinawa, we carried cruiser ammunition -- the shells, not the powder, but the shells -- on deck. And that was a little scary. Most of us slept top-side during that cruise, I think.

EM: Yeah, those are like eight-inch shells, I would think.

LM: Yep. That was eight-inch. I don't remember how many rounds of it we had. But then you had all kinds of cargo. You had fuel in fifty-five-gallon drums. We had K rations, or whatever the rations were of that day, I think they were K or C, I don't remember. Clothing, medical supplies, just about anything that you needed to support the troops.

EM: Now, were those early landings, were they heavily opposed by the Japanese? Were some of the craft coming back shot up? Or were they pretty much in-tact? What do you remember --?

LM: No, no, I would say that, from my observation, is that up to Okinawa, at least, it was sort of a surprise attack. Even though cruisers and -- well, cruisers basically, I don't recall any battleships being involved in [pre?]-invasion. But cruisers would lay off and bombard the coast like crazy, probably for several hours prior to the invasion. I don't recall that we lost any landing craft, because of the action --

EM: What I've heard is that at Okinawa, they pretty much let everybody land, and then they attacked them once they were on shore.

LM: Yeah.

EM: As opposed to trying to resist the invasion to begin with.

LM: Right.

EM: So, that would be consistent with what you're remembering.

LM: Right. There was a lot of kamikaze attacks at Okinawa --

EM: Oh, yeah, tell me about what you heard and what you saw in that regard?

LM: Kamikazes, they generally, if I recall correctly, made nighttime attacks. And so what we did, generally in the whole harbor there, is we had smoke pots, smoke generators, on board ship -- all the ships had smoke generators. We had smoke pots on the landing craft, and at night they'd kind of lazily run around the harbor spreading smoke, and it would just blanket the harbor like a thick fog. And as a consequence, it was speculated that, if the kamikaze pilots couldn't see a ship or a -- you know. But (laughs) the higher-ups did not think about well, if the kamikazes are really kamikazes, they don't care about the smoke, they get down in there and they just go until they run into something.

EM: (laugh) Yeah, right. That doesn't slow them down, I guess.

LM: No! (laughs) And I remember one night, there was a ship that had been hit by a kamikaze, and it was adrift. This skipper had flipped the anchor and wanted to get out of the harbor, but he was not travelling very quickly, very slowly, and he did collide with our ship on the bow --

EM: Whoa.

LM: Yeah. And that was a little bit scary, and the fact that up on the bow, the bow watch could hear something. They couldn't see it through the fog or through the smoke, and then all of sudden, this ship loomed up almost like a ghost ship.

EM: Was there another --?

LM: Did not do any damage --

EM: Go ahead.

LM: It did not do any damage, because it hit at a glancing blow and just kind of slipped down along the side of our ship.

EM: Was it another attack transport, or --?

LM: I think it was a PA, if I'm not mistaken. A troop ship that done their job, basically, of unloading the troops. I don't know, that was the second or third night.

EM: Now, you mentioned in the harbor -- were you actually in a bay? Or was it out in the open water?

LM: Well, I don't recall without looking at Okinawa. My recollection, it was kind of a bay there on the west side of the island --

EM: Well, you know, there was a bay there that they ended up naming Buckner Bay, after a general who was actually --

LM: Yeah.

EM: -- killed there. And I was just wondering if you were in Buckner Bay. It was around on the west side, but I don't -
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LM: Yeah, could very well have been.

EM: May have been. I don't remember all the details of what Okinawa looks like, but --

LM: Yeah.

EM: -- but I've heard reference to that before. So, for the most part, though, there was enough smoke and stuff made that the kamikazes didn't really become a threat for your ship.

LM: That is correct.

EM: What was your combat station?

LM: Station?

EM: Yeah.

LM: I was a gunner on a 20-millimeter on the flying bridge.

EM: So, did you catch much action up there?

LM: Well, (laughs) no. We had a gunnery officer aboard the ship who was in control of all guns. He had to give the order for us to fire --

EM: Oh, really?

LM: -- and the story was told, because we never fired a shot in anger, that the gunnery officer was afraid that the tracer bullets that would be fired from the 40-millimeter and the

20-millimeter could be spotted by the kamikazes and tie in on us. Well, I don't know if you're aware -- tracer bullets are only visible from the gun, from the point of --

EM: From the shooter's side.

LM: -- from where they emanated.

EM: (laughs) Right. They're not visible to the victim or the attacker. So, that didn't make a lot of sense. But the gunnery officer was kind of a nut.

EM: Well, he kind of played it safe, didn't he? (laughs)

LM: (laughs) Yeah.

EM: As a result, you guys never pulled a trigger.

LM: Never fired a shot in anger.

EM: Isn't that interesting?

LM: We had a lot of practice, you know, while we were in convoy, and we had target planes that were towing a sleeve and so forth. But never fired a shot in anger.

EM: (laughs) Now you had mentioned that after you were there for about a week, that your ship towed another ship back to -- was it to the Philippines? Is that what you were --?

LM: Yes. To the Philippines.

EM: What kind of ship was it that you were towing?

LM: I can't really recall. One speculation, that it was an LST, which was a large ship tank. They were probably about a four hundred-footer, with ramps and so forth. And it

lost power. But I read something in the history on the *Algo1* the other day, and my recollection is that we towed a troop transport out of Okinawa. But boy, the memory gets a little fuzzy after about fifty years.

EM: Well, it was only sixty-something years ago. (laughs)

LM: (laugh)

EM: I mean, my goodness. Wow. So --

LM: And yet, there's some instances that it seems like it was yesterday.

EM: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, I know some things leave a big impression on you, and other things, the details just kind of melt away after years.

LM: I can remem--

EM: So, you headed back to the Philippines, then.

LM: Right.

EM: And what --

LM: Let's see, that would have been in April -- okay, one of the things (laughs) that always amazed a lot aboard ship, the morning of the invasion of Okinawa, one of the crew made an off-hand comment that we would be back in the states by the 1st of May. And, you know, word got around. And everybody thought, "Well, he's crazy. Crazy as a loon." So, he finally says, "I'll bet money!" And man, they jumped at it.

EM: (laughs)

LM: And so, after we towed the ship back to the Philippines, then we had the orders to head to Guam. And so, we were always -- I think, pulled tail end on most any convoy that we were in. So, when we got to Guam -- and I can't remember the exact date, but -- it was along in mid-April, and when we got ready to pull into the harbor there, we got a message to lay out to the south side of the island to form a convoy to Honolulu. And, okay, we were going to be in Honolulu; that's not the states. Hawaii was not a state at that time --

EM: So, you were still safe, (laughs) yeah, right.

LM: (laughs) So we steamed to Honolulu, and again, as I mentioned earlier, we were in the tail end of the convoy, and as we got ready to pull into Pearl Harbor, we got a message that the moorage and anchorage in Pearl Harbor were full and to proceed to tie up at the Aloha Tower in downtown Honolulu. That was one of the very depressing things. Because here we were, been at sea probably three to four months, tied up at the Aloha Tower in downtown Honolulu, could hear all the nighttime activity sounds, the music blaring from the bars and what have you, and we could not get off the ship.

EM: Oh, how frustrating.

LM: Then, at that time, I was duty Jeep driver, meaning that, when the captain had an occasion to be tied up in port and he needed to go someplace, the ship's Jeep was put over the side and duty Jeep driver was the one who drove him. So, we got tied up that afternoon, and the captain had to go to Pearl Harbor for whatever, conference or whatever, and so I was duty Jeep driver, so I drove him over. The skipper at that time was a fellow by the name of [Axton T. Jones?], and he was one of the greatest guys that -- he came out of the merchant marine, he was related to the Matson -- he married in the Matson-Lurline cruise ship lines before the war.

EM: Wow.

LM: But anyhow, Axton T. Jones, I took him over to Pearl Harbor, I waited, and coming back from Pearl Harbor to Honolulu, I was speeding, and the SPs pulled me over for speeding. And I said, "Oh, my goodness." So, they gave me a ticket, and I was to report to so-called "[mass?]" ten o'clock the next morning.

EM: They really gave speeding tickets?

LM: Beg pardon?

EM: I said, they really gave speeding tickets for when you --

LM: Oh, yes!

EM: That's amazing.

LM: In Honolulu.

EM: I guess so, okay, well, it was in city, I guess --

LM: Yeah, in the city. And so, when the SPs left and gave me ticket, skipper says, "Mac, give me that ticket." And I said, "Well, okay." So, I hand him the ticket, and he tore it up. And I said, "But skipper, I've got to be at mass at ten o'clock in the morning!" And he says, "Ten o'clock tomorrow morning, we're rounding Diamond Head for San Francisco."

EM: Oh, my gosh.

LM: And I was the first one besides himself who was aboard ship to know it. So, I couldn't say anything, and we got back to ship, and it was a couple hours later that skipper got on the PA system, and announced to all hands that tomorrow morning at 0800, we'd take off for San Francisco. And on the, what, 29th day of April, we sailed under the Golden Gate Bridge. And the guy who'd made all those bets was standing on the quarter deck, dancing a jig, and collecting all the money that --

EM: I wonder how much money he collected.

LM: (laughs) I don't remember. And there was no way that he knew other than premonition, that --

EM: I guess being loony sometimes pays off, doesn't it?

LM: (laughs)

EM: (laughs)

LM: Yeah. And we went on to San Francisco. As I recall, we had a few day's leave. We loaded up, headed back to Honolulu. At that time, we were told to unload at Honolulu and return to Los Angeles, or Long Beach. We got another few days of leave there, and then we headed up -- and I do not remember where we were headed -- but I do remember we went to Enewetak. I'm beginning to -- a little fuzzy here, but I remember that on D-Day -- not D-Day, but when Japan surrendered.

EM: Yeah, VJ Day.

LM: Yeah, yeah, VJ. I don't remember where we were, but I do remember that we had six hundred cases of beer --

EM: (laughs)

LM: -- down, you know, for recreation parties on the islands, and the skipper says, "I'm going to issue chips for two bottles of beer for every man." And at that point, I was working in the mess hall. It was most [interesting?] because not all the crew drank, and so they get a chip in the late afternoon, and the beer would be passed out before evening chow, and they'd come through the mess hall getting their beer. And we standing there, and fellas who did not drink recognized those of us who worked in the mess hall,

and said, "How about my chip for an extra piece of pie tonight," or something. "Sure!" (laughs)

EM: That's the barter system. (laughs)

LM: So anyhow -- beg pardon? Yeah, the old barter system.

EM: Yeah, the old barter system. (laughs)

LM: Yeah, that was all right. And we went down at a point in time after the war, down to New Caledonia, came back up to Bougainville, and took Marine Air Group Twenty-Five, troops and equipment except for the planes, up to Qingdao, China.

EM: Oh yeah, the China marines, yep.

LM: Yep. And I have a neighbor here in Custer that is my age, and he was in the Sixth Marine Division, and he and I every now and then get together and talk about Qingdao.

EM: I'll be darned.

LM: Because he was in Qingdao after the war was over, because the Chinese were battling the Russians up there in north China.

EM: So, did you get any shore leave when you were in China?

LM: Yeah. (laughs) It was interesting, we had --

EM: Tell me what that was like.

LM: Well, Qingdao, China at that time was city of about three quarters of a million people, and they were all jammed in the street. There was basically no public transportation as such, as I recall. We had liberty from ten o'clock in

the morning until six o'clock at night. When we got off the ship, rickshaw boys in their rickshaws were there. We'd climb into a rickshaw and, I guess they could understand "Hubba hubba," and that's what we said, "Hubba hubba," and you'd --

EM: (laughs) That has a universal meaning.

LM: -- went into the main part of town and you started doing some shopping. Interesting, one day, we were in a big department store, and there was plenty of silk fabric. And I remember, we were -- I and a couple of other friends -- we were talking about buying some silk to take home, and I don't remember how it came about, but we were talking about the "Dumb Chinese," and this (laughs) very nice looking young man in a suit came up behind us and he said, "Well, I'm Chinese, I am not dumb, I was educated in the United States." (laughs) Made us all feel like a dummy.

EM: (laughs) Yeah, you kind of wanted to crawl under the --

LM: Yeah!

EM: -- table at that point.

LM: But, yeah, I think we were at Qingdao, probably, four or five days until we got unloaded. I do remember that when we pulled into the harbor at Qingdao, we were some of the first Navy ships that had ever been there since before the war. And Qingdao was quite a naval operation in the '30s,

and a lot of battleships, cruisers, destroyers, I guess probably part of the Pacific fleet made the Qingdao home-port or something. In any case, we were walking up the street -- probably the first day we were in Qingdao, and there was a leather shop there that had photo albums in the window. Like, it had a leather carving of one of the battleships, or something. So, we went inside, and -- I don't know whether you're familiar with Wellington boots, but --

EM: Yeah.

LM: -- Wellington boots were a boot that came up, oh, six-inches or so on the ankle.

EM: Yeah, big high boots, yeah.

LM: So this craftsman, this guy who ran the shop there, had these boots on display -- black boots, white leather lined. Oh, they really appealed to us Navy fellas. And we got to chatting, you know, it was difficult to make yourself understood, but asked him how much, and he let us know that, twenty dollars US. And we haggled and haggled, and finally we got -- these were custom-made boots, he took the measurements and everything. We finally got him down to ten dollars a pair. And I think the whole bunch of us, six or so, ordered boots from him at ten dollars a pair. And he said, "They'll be ready in three or four days,"

whatever. And four days or so, we went back to pick them up. In the meantime, other Navy ships had come in, and we'd gone into this shop to pick up our boots, there was fellas off of these other ships. (laughs) You'd think that "dumb Chinese" are really smart. Because when we haggled with him, the asking price was twenty dollars. He was asking forty dollars for these new guys, and letting him draw them down to twenty-five.

EM: (laughs) And sell your boots.

LM: (laughs) Well, he --

EM: That's the free market in action. (laughs)

LM: That's right. It just seemed so strange to us eighteen-year-old kids that he could learn this fast. But never the less, that was kind of an interesting sight after the World War. The first day that we pulled in there, a lot of Chinese [junks?] came out. And we were unloaded at that time, and the [screw?] on the ship was about a third of the way out of the water. And we got ready to steam on in to the inner harbor, and these boats were right up against the side of the ship, and they were kind of sucked back in through the propeller of the ship. And there were two or three Chinese that were killed on that --

EM: Oh, dear.

LM: It was kind of a sad situation. But I recall that with some vividness.

EM: On the other hand, there was only a billion of the Chinese, so --

LM: Yeah, yeah.

EM: -- but that makes it tough for that individual, though.

LM: Yeah.

EM: So, you made the one trip to China, then, to deliver the six marines? Just the one trip?

LM: Yep, yep. And we came back -- well, we hauled people back to the states for discharge, military, probably all Navy, were aboard --

EM: Well, all those guys were out there. So, you were kind of part of the "magic carpet" thing that --

LM: Yeah.

EM: -- they called it, I guess, yeah.

LM: And we came home on the northern passage. It got pretty rough along there. And I guess it was October -- and pulled into Seattle -- and we got a seven-day leave out of Seattle to go home. Then, when I reported back to that at muster one morning, we were asked who had less than seven-days at home. We only had a seven-day leave, (laughs) so -

-

EM: That didn't give you very much time at home.

LM: Didn't get much time at home. And said, "Whoever had less than seven days, we'll give you another fourteen." So here I was, along in January and February of '46, I got home on a leave for about two days, then I got home like a week later for a week. Then, (laughs) believe it or not, I developed a kidney stone.

EM: Oh!

LM: I reported to the sick bay, and they did not know what it was, but they said, "We're going down to San Francisco, can you hold off?" And I said, "Yeah." So, went down to San Francisco, was transferred to a Navy hospital at Treasure Island. I was there about a week, and they said, "kidney stone," you know? "What are we doing about it?" "Well, we're not going to perform surgery, we're going to keep you under observation and if you happen to pass it, that'll be great." I said, "Why can't I be home on leave?" Because the two leaves I'd had had not been recorded into my record. And said, "Are you doing leave?" I said, "I haven't had a leave for two years."

EM: (laughs)

LM: "Oh, well, yeah!" So (laughs) they gave me a thirty-day R&R. All the people back in Lawrence, Kansas were asking, "What in the world are you doing home again?"

EM: Yeah, third time in three weeks --

LM: (laughs) Yeah!

EM: So how did that kidney stone -- that's supposed to be really painful, huh?

LM: It was rather painful. However, they did not do anything. Once the pain subsides, so what. I was discharged with the kidney stone and told by the Navy that if I ever had any problem, I could turn in to the VA. My career with the National Park Service through a friend of mine that I was on the ship with, and he and I both had a career in the National Park Service. But when I got ready to take my physical for permanent appointment with the Park Service, I took the physical, blood showed up in my urine, and I did not pass the physical, needless to say. I turned in to the VA hospital and they performed surgery -- I was in VA hospital at Oakland, California. So, they removed the kidney stone, and then I was able to pass the physical, and got a permanent appointment with the National Park Service, for which I served thirty-four years.

EM: I'll be darned. Now, when you were in the south Pacific, did you communicate back with your mother or anybody else in the family by letter? Did you get letters? How did that work?

LM: Yeah, we would get mail. There were many times that we did not mail for six weeks or so because there was no mail

delivery in the port where we arrived. Yeah, my recollection is that so-called "V-mail" was sent by air mail, which was a thing (laughs) long forgotten today, isn't it? Air mail --

EM: It was a big deal back then, yeah.

LM: Yeah. And it was written on very thin paper, because then it didn't weigh a lot. And we'd get mail whenever we pulled into port. We would see if there was mail waiting there for the *USS Algol*. If there was, the boat went over and picked it up, then it came into the ship, and to the post office on board the ship. Because there was a third-class mailman, I guess, I don't remember what it was, that would sort it all out. Then, by division, your division chief would go to the post office and get it, and then you'd have mail call, where he'd call it off. At mail call, depending on how long it had been since you'd gotten other mail, you could have eight or ten letters from whoever. Mother, girlfriend, whatever.

EM: Right. And what about the food? How was the food aboard the *Algol*? Was it pretty good, or? How --?

LM: Food was pretty decent. I had no objection except to Australian beef.

EM: (laughs)

LM: You know? And we had a lot of that. And then there was also Australian mutton.

EM: Yeah, I was going to say, mutton usually gets real thumbs down from most of the --

LM: Yeah.

EM: -- guys I talk to.

LM: That was probably as bad as it got. But we had a good bunch of cooks aboard ship, and they tried to -- even the mutton, they tried to do something (laughs) good with.

EM: They worked hard on it, huh? (laughs)

LM: Yeah. I had an occasion to work in the chief petty officer's mess, and this was on about a three-month assignment. So, I ate what the chief petty officers ate. And they ate pretty well. The officers did not eat all that well all the time, because the officer's mess, the officers had to -- if I recall correctly, in the Navy -- they had to pay for their meals.

EM: Really?

LM Well, I mean, there was an allowance of some sort, and so when they were in the states and soon after we left the states, they ate real well because they spent all their money for steak and what have you. And then when that was gone, they ate pretty much what the enlisted people ate. So, they did not eat all that well at times.

EM: Did you ever get seasick when you [went?] out to sea at first?

LM: (laughs) I got seasick at the time that we hit -- we left Portland. Portland was on Willamette River, we hit the Columbia River, and in the morning, we went out to the Pacific Ocean from the Columbia River. It was rough. That's where the big river hits the ocean, and it's naturally rough. And we were at general quarters because it was at dawn, as I recall. And I got pretty sick, yeah. But that's the only time I ever got seasick. There was a lot of fellas aboard that had chronic seasickness, and I remember a couple of them that actually got discharged from the ship and sent back state-side because they had chronic seasickness. But no. I'm trying to think, I think it was after the war, we took supplies up to an island in the Ryukyu chain, Iwo Jima, and this was a little island called Aoshima.

EM: Yeah, I've heard of it, yeah.

LM: We took supplies up there, and we got caught in a typhoon. And we put out to sea when we were [forecasting?]. Riding out that typhoon, it was rough. But no, I never got seasick after that first escapade at the -- they call it "crossing the bar," when the Columbia River hit the Pacific Ocean.

EM: Right. So, you got your sea legs pretty quickly, then --

LM: (laughs) Yeah, got sea legs pretty quick, I guess, yeah.

I'd say --

EM: I'll be darned.

LM: -- because of the boat operation. As deck hands on board ship, we would be on working parties when we were in the harbor, and these ships -- they were supply ships -- and we'd go to get supplies. While it was calm, there was a little rocking swell, and so forth. And the diesel exhaust and so forth, when you got up against the side of that ship and got caught there, was pretty nauseous. But I didn't get seasick. I had a few guys that did get seasick on those working parties, and we kind of had fun with it, you know, "Oh, hear we're having pork chops today for lunch!"

EM: (laughs)

LM: Things like that.

EM: Or mutton, yeah. (laughs)

LM: Or mutton! (laugh) Yeah! We didn't have all that much mutton, though. And the other thing I can remember aboard ship, I served as helmsman for I don't know how long. But there were a lot of days, as we were under way, that the ocean was just like glass. And you didn't have to tend to the helm for, like, five minutes or so. You could stay on course that long or better. We had recreation parties on

some of the most beautiful islands. I often would like to have gotten back to them. And I'm sure that they've been made into great resort areas. (laughs)

EM: Yeah, I have heard of these "R&R islands," and I'm trying to remember their -- it had an odd name, one of them. It was like --

LM: Well, the one that I --

EM: -- [Lulug?] or something.

LM: -- can think of is Mogmog.

EM: Mogmog! That's it! I was close. So, did you make it to Mogmog?

LM: Oh yes, that was such a delight.

EM: What did one do on Mogmog?

LM: Well, you went over to the island at about ten o'clock in the morning. You could play ball on the beach -- baseball, volleyball. You could go swimming. You could go exploring a little bit. Then, you had chow at noon. And I don't remember exactly when they handed out the two cans of beer; it was kind of hot by that time (inaudible). It was tasteful. But then we'd go back to the ship, oh, mid-afternoon or so. But it was just getting offboard the ship and really relaxing. Beside Mogmog, one of the recreation locations -- wasn't really and R&R, but -- we were in Bougainville and were taking aboard the six marine-- no,

MAG-25, that was it. MAG-25 marine air group. We had liberty there. We would go exploring the island. And I remember one time, there was a Japanese prisoner camp away from the beach, or whatever. We got a ride on an Army transport, or Army truck, up towards the prison camp. They were going into the prison camp, but we could not go into the prison camp. So, they said, "You've got to get off now." Well when we got off, there was a nice stream, and so we kind of explored up this stream. There was a nice swimming hole there, and we stripped down and went swimming. Later on, we found out that this was basically to be reserved for Navy nurses that were on the island.

EM: I see.

LM: (laughs) But we didn't see any Navy nurses there that time.

EM: Oh, your timing wasn't good, then. (laughs)

LM: (laughs) No, no.

EM: I'll be darned.

LM: Bougainville, there was a mountain on Bougainville and I can't remember the name of it, but it seemed to make its own weather, because you could almost set your watch by thunderstorm coming up at two thirty in the afternoon.

EM: Because that's down in the tropics, so --

LM: Yeah.

EM: -- you're almost getting those monsoonal rain showers every day.

LM: Yep.

EM: Did you ever contract any of the infamous diseases? The tropical diseases that --

LM: I did not. I did not.

EM: Did you take your Atabrine tablets? Or did they even give them to you to keep you from --?

LM: I don't think they gave us any tablets that I can recall.

EM: Well, you never had any of that, and that's good, from --

LM: Yeah.

EM: -- what I hear.

LM: I remember, in [preparation?] to going to China, we were given a cholera shot. And there may have been other inoculations that were given, but I don't remember. But I do remember that cholera was one of the things they vaccinated for.

EM: So, what do you think about the Japanese after all these years? They were the enemy back then, and --

LM: I have no animosity to the Japanese. I think they were following their leaders. They were just as dedicated as we were in serving our country. I'm not too sure that the kamikaze, or suicide pilots, had all that much choice. But they were following orders. They were defending their

homeland. I think the thing that, as I reflect back on history, the Japanese were trying to expand, and they thought a sneak attack on Pearl Harbor would be the thing. They were not aware of how quickly the American enterprise and industry could gear up to meet that menace. I was just reading the other day that [Boyd?] Aircraft in Seattle, at the height of the war, they were producing B-17 bombers. I saw the statistic and it amazed me -- that they were turning out a B-17 every sixty-four minutes.

EM: (laughs) Wow.

LM: I read someplace else in the history of World War II is that the reason that we defeated the Japanese, in part, was we were producing more planes than they could destroy in the air. And we were producing more naval ships and what have you than they could destroy.

EM: Yeah, we just overwhelmed them.

LM: Yeah. No, I think one of the blots on our American society during World War II was we interned all the Japanese-Americans into camps.

EM: Especially the ones on the west coast, right.

LM: Yeah, yeah.

EM: Yep, that's not a good --

LM: During the year since the war, I went to school with a Japanese fella down at Colorado [Aggies?], Fort Collins,

and his family had been moved from the coast into Colorado, one of the camps in Colorado. And as a consequence, his father, when the war was over, his father ran a very, very lucrative truck gardening operation outside of Denver.

EM: Yeah, most of them lost their truck farms in California.

I mean --

LM: Yeah.

EM: -- it was basically a land grab, and they sold for pennies on the dollar under duress, and -- no, it's not one of our prouder chapters of the era, no question about that.

LM: Yeah, certainly not. And it'll be a blot on our history, I'm sure.

EM: Do you feel like your experiences in the Pacific during the war substantially changed you as person and the way you thought and looked at things? Or not?

LM: You'd better believe it. I was a (laughs) almost, you'd say, a smart alec-y kid when I went into the Navy. I was discharged when I was about eighteen and a half. I had grown up quite a bit in the eighteen months. I realized that I needed an education if I was going to do anything. I had always thought, while I was aboard ship, I would get my GED, but mail service was so erratic, that I gave that up. However, when I was in the Naval Hospital in Treasure Island, one of the friends that I made at the

hospital, he and I were pretty good chums, and one morning I did not see him after breakfast, and didn't see him until lunch. And I said, "Where in the world have you been?" He said, "I've been over getting my high school diploma." I said, "Oh?" "Yeah," he said, "I found this place that they give a GED examination. Four tests. I've been doing them, two at morning, and I'll do two this afternoon." And I said, "I'm going back with you." And I did four of them that afternoon.

EM: Wow!

LM: And about three days later -- the way they'd administered the test, she said, "Come back in about three days, we'll see how it goes." So, she said, "Hey, you passed with flying colors." So, I guess I would say from the standpoint of -- you know, it was just a general educational test that was given at that time, at least, for the GED. Being in the war, yeah, you learned a lot. So, as a consequence, the night that Japan surrendered, the three of us -- one was from Sioux City, Iowa, one was from Long Beach, California, and I -- we said, "What are we going to do after the war's over?" And if I remember correctly, in anticipation of the completion of the war, the GI Bill was passed. Probably in August or so of '45. But anyhow, we already knew that there was going to be some

financial aid. And the three of us, we laid in our hammocks until two o'clock in the morning or so, talking about what we were going to do. The one from Long Beach had worked at Lassen Volcanic National Park in northern California. And he said, "I'm going to go back to school and I'm going to become a park ranger." And we said, "What in the world is that?" Because all I knew about national parks at that time was Yellowstone Nation Park and the geyser. And he talked about it, and we decided that the summer we were discharged, if we could get a job at Lassen Volcanic, we'd all go to work up there. We all got discharged. I was discharged from the ship while I went to the Naval Hospital. But I got discharged from the Naval Hospital and I had a job at Lassen Volcanic National Park, and these two friends also had gotten a job there. We worked for the next three summers while we were going to college, and I quit the school and got married. Two years later I decided that I wanted to back to school and become a park ranger. So, the three of us ended up in -- the one from Iowa, he went to school at Iowa State and got a degree in forestry, and he decided he had too much forest technical knowledge to go into the park service, and so he went into private forestry. Interestingly enough, the three of us who met during the war, sixty-five years or so

ago, we stayed friends. After we had all ended our careers, we decided, "Let's see if we can get together for a week someplace in the country." The one from Iowa lived in Reno, the one from Long Beach lives now in Flagstaff, Arizona after retiring from assistant superintendent at the Grand Canyon, then I'm here in South Dakota. And so, we all got together, we have been getting together for, I don't know, twenty years? Yeah, since we ended our careers. The one in Reno passed away a number of years ago. But the one in Flagstaff, in fact, that's why we were in San Antonio -- we were having our annual get-together in San Antonio --

EM: Well, I'll be darned.

LM: -- last month. And we went to Fredericksburg and --

EM: And that's how we managed to hook up.

LM: Yeah, yep. Got the notice that you guys were looking for interviews, and that's (laughs) the rest of the story.

EM: Yeah. That is something. Now, let's see, what was -- I had another question I was going to ask you. Oh, I know. Have you been able to keep in touch with any of the other shipmates? I mean, a lot of times these ships have reunions --

LM: Yes.

EM: -- all over the --

LM: We've had reunions. A radioman aboard the ship that lives in Merced, California, a number of years ago -- what, in the '80s I think -- he kept in touch with a few of his shipmates, and they decided they wanted to get together. And my recollection, they got together in Portland, Oregon, where we put the ship into commission and all. As the six or seven of them got together and got to reminiscing and talking, our friend that was from Iowa ended up into the bakery shop -- he was a baker -- and needless to say, the Radio Shack, they were very cordial with the bakery, they wanted to get the donuts to use on their nighttime watches. Anyhow, they got to talking about who else did they know. The one from Merced remembered Bill Wood, so he had Bill Wood's address, and I have been to, I guess, four or five ship reunions. There are only such a few of us now.

EM: Yeah, we're getting thin on the ground, yeah?

LM: Yeah. And what happened in the interim, they made contact with people who were on the ship after the war, during the Korean and Vietnam era, and that's most of them that attend any other reunion. Three years ago, we had a reunion of the ship here in Rapid City, South Dakota. At that reunion, there were four of us from World War I era.

EM: World War II.

LM: Oh, pardon me. (laughs) World War II.

EM: (laughs) Don't make it worse than it is!

LM: (laughs) Don't make yourself older than I am.

EM: (laughs) That's right. Well, that's neat --

LM: There were only four of us.

EM: It's good that you've been able to kind of stick together. A lot of the ships, of course, were scrapped or sold right after the war, and so you don't have the younger generations to kind of carry on the family.

LM: Yeah.

EM: Sounds like the *Algol* hung around for a while.

LM: Yeah, it ended up -- my recollection, it was decommissioned two times, at least, then reactivated, and then the last time it was decommissioned, it was sold to the state of New Jersey, who bought it to sink it off the coast for a fishing reef.

EM: (laughs) Well, you know exactly where she is, then, don't you?

LM: Oh yeah.

EM: (laughs) I'll be darned.

LM: Some of the guys that were on the ship during World War II actually went back -- New Jersey invited us back. I did not go, but the radioman from Merced who has kind of headed it all up through the years, he did, and (inaudible). One of the other things, now, that I -- we saw the memorial

wall there at Fredericksburg. Did not see the *USS Algol*.
So, we picked information, and I went on the internet, of
how we go about doing that.

EM: Right, right.

LM: So, I sent Tony [Soria?] in Merced information to ask if he
wanted to spearhead that at the next reunion he's going to
down in Pensacola, Florida. I'm not going to it, but I
just thought Tony ought to have the information if -- I
would be more than pleased to make a donation --

EM: Sure.

LM: -- to have a plaque on the memorial wall down there
(inaudible).

EM: Yeah, that'd be neat. We'd love to have it --

LM: Yeah.

EM: All right. Well, what else can we talk about about your
war experiences?

LM: Not a lot. I think I've probably covered it --

EM: You sure have.

LM: -- I can remember some good times. I can't say that I was
probably ever scared, except that night that I spoke of
earlier of the ship that was hit by kamikaze in Okinawa --

EM: And sideswiped you, you.

LM: Sideswiped us. I was on the bridge, and I remember when she slid down along the port side, I could have reached out and touched her.

EM: Oh, wow.

LM: That was probably the only time that I could honestly say that I was really scared during the war.

EM: You were blessed not to get caught in heavy combat.

LM: Yeah, yeah.

EM: Everybody likes to talk about that and glorify it, but the fact of the matter is, it can have devastating results.

LM: Devastating result, that's right.

EM: So, you did your part and came home in one piece, and that's important.

LM: Oh, yeah.

EM: Well maybe that's a good way to end this. First, let me thank you for spending the time to share your experiences.

LM: You're more than welcome.

EM: And then lastly, let me thank you for what you and your generation did for our country, I think we don't thank you guys enough, and so I'll take another opportunity to do that.

END OF AUDIO FILE