

**The National Museum of the Pacific War
(Admiral Nimitz Museum)**

**Center for Pacific War Studies
Fredericksburg, Texas**

**Interview with
Frederick Clark Long
6270808
Coxswain (T) USNR
USS Lexington**

**Interviewed
on
July 1, 2005**

Frederick Clark Long
6270808
Coxswain (T) USNR
USS Lexington

Medals Earned:
Good Conduct
Asiatic-Pacific 6 Stars
Philippine Liberation
Victory Medal
American Area
Ruptured Duck

Original by
John B. Tombaugh and Peg Van Meter

July 1, 2005

My name is John B. Tombaugh and Peg Van Meter and I are interviewing this gentleman on July 1, 2005.

Mr. Tombaugh

Would you please give your name and address?

Mr. Long

Frederick Long, 1316 Madison Street, Rochester, Indiana.

Mr. Tombaugh

What were your parents names and where were they born?

Mr. Long

Thomas and Pearl Clark Long and both my parents were born at Macy, Indiana.

Mr. Tombaugh

When is your birthday?

Mr. Long

I was born on January 11, 1925.

Mr. Tombaugh

What was your service number?

Mr. Long

6270808.

Mr. Tombaugh

When and where did you go to school?

Mr. Long

I went to school at Erie Township and Deedsville and Rochester and left school in 1942. I finished when I got out and graduated in 1946.

Mr. Tombaugh

Where were you on December 7, 1941?

Mr. Long

I was going to school at Rochester at that time. I was in front of Gamble's Hardware Store on main street in Rochester, Indiana. I believe a man by name of Good came out and told us of the bombing of Pearl Harbor.

Mr. Tombaugh

When did you go into the military?

Mr. Long

I went into the military on September 17, 1942.

Mr. Tombaugh

Why did you pick the Navy?

Mr. Long

The kid I run around with, Frances Duncan, was in the Navy.

Mr. Tombaugh

Where did you take your basic training?

Mr. Long

At Corpus Christi, Texas.

Mr. Tombaugh

What were the conditions like there?

Mr. Long

It wasn't to great, we marched on blacktop and it was terrible. We only lasted 30 days basic's and the day we were splitting up I went to the hospital due to an appendicitis and was in the hospital 30 days.

Mr. Tombaugh

Do you remember the clothing you were issued in basic?

Mr. Long

One set of dress white's and one set of dress blue's and dungarees.

Mr. Tombaugh

Where did go next?

Mr. Long

I stayed around the base and did some truck driving and then became an airplane mechanic.

Mr. Tombaugh

How did you get to Texas from here, train or bus?

Mr. Long

I went by train.

Mr. Tombaugh

Did you go in at Indianapolis, Indiana?

Mr. Long

Yes. There was just a thousand of us and it was one of the largest inductions that they had ever had in Indiana and we all went into the Navy. Out of that one-thousand, only one hundred went to Corpus Christi, Texas.

Mr. Tombaugh

How long did it take to get down to Texas?

SNC 1 two seat Navy advanced trainer L.W.

Power :One 450 hp P&W radial

PBX Catalina 7-9 man crew Flying Boat H.W.

Power :twin engine Pratt and Whitney
R-1830-92 Twin Wasps.

HP :1,200 hp ea.

Speed :117 cruise, 179 max at 7,000'

Ceiling :14,700'

Range :2,545 miles

Wing Span :104'

Length :63'10 1/2"

Height :18' 0"

Weight :20,910 Empty, 35,420 Full

Armament :Three .3" and two .5" m.g.s
plus up to 4,000 lbs bombs or
four 650 lb Depth Charges or
two torpedoes.

PBX 5A "Cats" - by wars end 944 of these units
remain in service.

Number of manufacturers of the PBX :five.

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continued:

We had one man who was shot down who trained in Texas while I was there and he later became President of the United States and that was George Bush.

Mr. Tombaugh

You took engine maintenance while there?

Mr. Long

When I got working on airplanes we had an oil pump bench and we would rebuild oil pumps. I was 18 years old and fixing airplanes.

I was on board ship I don't have much use for the English and I will tell you why. We had different bases scattered over the Pacific and we had just moved up to this base in advance and then here comes the British. They had just moved to the one we left and this was the way it went. We would move and they would take our old base.

Mr. Tombaugh

What kind of barracks were you in?

Mr. Long

They were nice one story long barracks. They moved in some WAVES to the base and we cleaned up; you would be surprised.

Mr. Tombaugh

Any tales to tell while you were there?

Mr. Long

Not really, only that President Roosevelt came through on a sightseeing tour and we all had to stand guard. I told this Lt. "Don't you think this is taking a awful chance strapping a 45 on a republican's hip."

Mr. Tombaugh

Mrs. Long, do you remember where you were on Dec. 7, 1941?

Mrs. Long

I was at home.

Mr. Tombaugh

Mrs. Long what did you do during the war?

Mrs. Long

I remained in school and graduated in 1946. I remember the war because I had three brothers in the service and a brother-in-law in also.

Mr. Tombaugh

Do you remember the POW's working in the fields?

Mrs. Long

No.

Mr. Tombaugh

When did you get married?

Mr. Long

It was on September 17, 1946.

Mr. Tombaugh

Your children's names?

Mrs. Long

Thomas, Sherry and Alex.

Mr. Tombaugh

Where did you go next?

Mr. Long

We left Texas and went to San Diego, California by train. We lived in the hangars while at San Diego. It got so cold at night you needed a blanket.

Mr. Tombaugh

How long were you there?

Mr. Long

I was there between 2 and 3 months and in Fleet Air 14.

Mr. Tombaugh

Who was in that group. Wasn't there somebody famous in that, do you remember?

Mr. Long

I can't remember and I wasn't really there that long to get acquainted.

Most of our Navy planes were small. We had B 24's; PBM's and PBY's but they were just patrol planes.

Mr. Tombaugh

What was the food like?

Mr. Long

It was good. The worst ships food I had was liver. We had baked beans every Wednesday morning for breakfast. We had chili con carny and rice. It was a little buggy and some guys didn't eat to much. I look back and I don't know how I ate that. I really must have been hungry.

Mr. Tombaugh

How often did you have rice?

Mr. Long

Depended on where you were at. I don't remember having fried chicken but we did have gravy and we called it chicken shit on a shingle (SOS).

Mr. Tombaugh

After you got done from work what did you do in the evenings?

Mr. Long

We would go to Tijuana, Mexico to the crow's nest or local bars.

Mr. Tombaugh

Where did you go next?

Mr. Long

From San Diego, California to Hawaii and that is where I caught the USS Lexington.

The following is taken from the files of John B. Tombaugh:

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CV 16 USS Lexington
The fifth ship to carry this name in the
US Navy; aka the "Blue Ghost"
Builder : Bethlehem-Quincy, Mass.
Laid down : 17, 7, '41
Launched : 26, 9, '42
Completed : 17, 2, '43

Note :short hull type
First CO :Capt. Felix B. Stump to 10
Apr., '44 (USNA 1917)
2nd CO :Capt. Ernest W. Litch to 30
Jan., '45 (USNA 1920)
3rd CO :Capt. Thomas H. Robbins, Jr.
16 Nov., '45 (USNA 1920)

The air groups assigned to the ship during the war include, in order of their appearance on the ship:
Air Group 16, 9, 20, and 94.

Following the war the Air Group 92 was aboard.

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Mr. Tombaugh

What was your deck working area level and crew compartment level on?

Mr. Long

One deck above hangar deck.

Mr. Tombaugh

That's where you berthed?

Mr. Long

Yes.

Mr. Tombaugh

That was noisy.

Mr. Long

Yes, but we were at general quarters when they launched planes.

Peg Van Meter

Were you with the airplanes?

Mr. Long

No, you had your air groups they worked on airplanes all the time. I was in the deck division, we didn't have anything to do with the air group. We were ships company and air had there own company.

Mr. Tombaugh

You were manning a gun and did you tell me you saw a movie and said that's me!

Mr. Long

Yes, that was a Movie Tone news reel and you could see the tracers going over my head. I believe it was in 1944.

Mr. Tombaugh

Do you have any idea how many pilots were lost?

Mr. Long

It's a very long list.

A young rear seat gunner came and landed and got out and said that was his last flight and refused to go up again. They threw him in the brig but he still wouldn't go up and they finally turned him loose because he had lost it.

Mr. Tombaugh

How did you handle your induction into combat?

Mr. Long

You didn't have time to think, you knew what you had to do and you just did it. You got scared when it was over.

The first combat I saw was when three Japanese planes were shot down between us and our cruisers. It was that same night we got torpedoed and the next morning when we woke up we were there by ourselves. That's when we headed back to Hawaii, that hole was big enough that you could drive a semi through it.

Mr. Tombaugh

When you got back to Hawaii weren't you thrilled at all the sights you could go around and see?

Mr. Long

We were there just four days and four nights and then we headed for Bremerton, Washington. I believe we were there for 50 days to get the hole fixed.

Mr. Tombaugh

You had quite a leave in Bremerton.

Mr. Long

We had two leave parties and half of us came home. I was with the first leave party and came back home for 21 days then went back. I truly enjoyed my stay.

Mr. Tombaugh

You went out on a shake down cruise to make sure everything was working alright before you headed out again?

Mr. Long

Yes, we went down the coast and loaded up with airplanes and took off again.

Mr. Tombaugh

The planes landed on the ship?

Mr. Long

We loaded a lot of the planes with a crane. Now each pilot had their own plane and a lot of those planes we took with us were

replacements.

We loaded on a lot of stuff. You wouldn't dream you would use that many spare parts.

You couldn't pull into port when you needed something and so a ship would pull along side and replenish what we needed.

Mr. Tombaugh

How many was on your ship?

Mr. Long

Ship crew was three thousand and air crew had five to six hundred.

Mr. Tombaugh

Just look at all the food it took to everybody.

Mr. Long

We had a guy by the name of Gilbert Waller that would go down and bake cream puffs; he was a great baker.

Mr. Tombaugh

How many times was your ship in combat area when you were aboard it?

Mr. Long

About all the time.

Here's the list:

Gilbert Island 13 Nov - 8 Dec 1943

Marshal Islands 26 Nov - 4 Dec 1943

Asiatic Pacific Raids 1944; Palau; Yap; Ulithi;

Woleai Raid 30 March 1- April 1944

New Guinea Operation 4 Sept

Marianas Operation 10 June - Aug 1944

China Sea Operation: Jan. 1945

Raids on "Tokyo" - Feb. 1945

Mr. Tombaugh

When you got back to the states for the last time and ready to get out where did you land?

Mr. Long

When we came back the last time. Now we had to get it repaired after the torpedo when a suicide plane hit us.

It was the same as before we came home then reported back to the ship.

Mr. Tombaugh

Where was your ship hit at?

Mr. Long

Right in the super structure. A lot of people didn't know it but you could steer it from the island in front and the aft also from

the bowels.

The ship was not only a airplane carrier but a supply ship and we would take a lot of stuff to the other smaller ships.

Mr. Tombaugh

When you got hit the second time where were you at?

Mr. Long

On the same 20 mm.

Mr. Tombaugh

So you were on the opposite side of the ship from where it got hit?

Mr. Long

It was the same side but we got hit in the aft side of the island.

We had shot down airplanes before and we poured buckets of lead into that airplane and still it hit. The pilot had a parachute and it didn't make sense. We should of shot him down because before we would put three or four shells into those planes and they would be a ball of fire. We knew without any doubt that we were hitting him but not in the right spot.

Mr. Tombaugh

After you got the ship repaired and went back out where did you go?

Mr. Long

We went into Yokohama Bay, Japan a little bit later after the Missouri when they signed the Peace Treaty.

We had liberty in Japan, I believe we were there for a month.

Mr. Tombaugh

What did you do on liberty?

Mr. Long

Well, with all the spoils of war available, if you wanted something you just took it. Maybe I'm off a few degrees but I'm a little ashamed of that last atomic bomb. I could have strafed the beach with a 20 mm before they fired that last one. We were that close and you could see people walking around.

Peg Van Meter

You witnessed the second drop?

Mr. Long

We were 250 miles out from Nagasaki, Japan. You could feel it and we reported that somebody had exploded a mine that's what it felt like and that's when they came out and told us they had dropped the second atomic bomb. I just don't think there was any reason to. There was too many children that died with that one.

Mr. Tombaugh

When you left Japan did you come back to the states?

Mr. Long

Yes, we came into port at Los Angeles, California at San Pedro Bay.

Mr. Tombaugh

Where were you discharged at?

Mr. Long

I was transported back to Great Lakes Naval Station for discharge.

Mr. Tombaugh

What would you tell the young people today of your time in the military?

Mr. Long

I was proud to serve my country and I think every boy should go into the military.

Mr. Tombaugh

What about the girls?

Mr. Long

I don't believe girls should be carrying a weapon. They don't have any business being on the front. In my generation men were taught from the time they are born to protect them.

Mr. Tombaugh

We would like to thank you for your time Fred.

-END-

7.5 hours