

National Museum of the Pacific War

Nimitz Education and Research Center

Fredericksburg, Texas

Interview with

Mr. AJ “Jim” Durham

Date of Interview: October 12, 2013

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Interview in progress.

Ed Metzler: This is Ed Metzler. Today is the 12th of October, 2013. I'm in Fredericksburg, Texas at the Admiral Nimitz Museum, and I am interviewing Mr. Jim Durham. 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. Well, let me start, Jim, by thanking you for coming up here all the way from San Antonio to allow us to interview, and we do appreciate that.

Mr. Durham: Yes.

Ed Metzler: Why don't we get started by having you introduce yourself. Give us your full name, and where and when you were born, and we'll take it from there.

Mr. Durham: Alright. My full name is Abel James Durham. I was the third member of my family with that name, but I dropped the third when I entered the Navy; entered as AJ Durham, Jr. I've always gone by Jim or Jimmy (sp?) throughout school years. I was ... born in Uvalde County on a farm east of the little town of Sabinal. I attended ...

Ed Metzler: What ... what was your date of birth?

Mr. Durham: Uh, there's some controversy about that.

Ed Metzler: Oh, really?! (laughter)

Mr. Durham: My mother says my birthdate was the 23rd day of February; the Navy thinks I was born on the 23rd day of February. When I applied for a passport, the U.S. government told me I was born the ... 25th of February, same year, 1925. So, it's caused confusion for the rest of my life (laughter).

Ed Metzler: (Laughter), well I guess you could compromise and say it was the 24th (laughter).

Mr. Durham: You ... should, yes (laughter). So, if I'd give ... the 23rd and somebody corrects me, I'll say, "Alright, that (unintelligible) you say, yes." (laughter)

Ed Metzler: Whatever you say, yeah (laughter). So, let's see, that makes you ... eighty-eight!

Mr. Durham: Eighty-eight. It's ...

Ed Metzler: Wow, congratulations. Okay, so ... you were born on a farm?

Mr. Durham: Yes.

Ed Metzler: So, I take it your parents were ... farmers?

Mr. Durham: Well, my dad, at that time, was the post master of the little town of Sabinal, but he was left the farm by his dad, so ... he did ... farm as well as work in town.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum. How many brothers and sisters did you have?

Mr. Durham: I have one sister that was ... two years younger than I. And ... she is ... died only recently.

Ed Metzler: I'm sorry. So, you're the Lone Ranger right now then, huh?

Mr. Durham: Lone Ranger, yes (chuckles).

Ed Metzler: (Laughter), okay. So, you went to school there in Sabinal?

Mr. Durham: Yes.

Ed Metzler: Including high school?

Mr. Durham: Including high school.

Ed Metzler: Alright.

Mr. Durham: Uh, eleven years at that time.

Ed Metzler: That's right! So, let's see, when ... did you ... you were, let's see, if you were born in '25, you were about sixteen or seventeen when the war started then.

Mr. Durham: Yes, I was ... uh, sixteen when the war started, seventeen when I graduated.

Ed Metzler: That's early! But then it was eleven years.

Mr. Durham: Yeah, eleven ... years. Uh, strange thing ... it was very difficult for ... kids my age who wanted to get into the Navy. You think with the rush to enroll ... people that they wouldn't have a waiting period.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Durham: But we had a shortage of training sites ... at the time.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Durham: And they ... put me on a ... or put ... myself and my future brother in law ... uh, took our names, said we'd be ... called up ... when they had a vacancy for us.

Ed Metzler: So, you did that after you were seventeen? You ...

Mr. Durham: Yes.

Ed Metzler: ... you tried to enlist ...

Mr. Durham: Yes.

Ed Metzler: ... and they said, "Don't call us, we'll call you."

Mr. Durham: Yes. And they suggested that we go ahead and go to ... enroll in college or something, and my brother in law did. I was anxious to get started, and I hitchhiked to ... uh, California and went to work ... or intended to go to work in a defense plant until I got called up. When I got out there, I realized California had a law that prohibited anybody under eighteen from going to work unless they could prove that they were ... out of high school ... uh, diploma.

Ed Metzler: Uhm!

Mr. Durham: So, that was before the days of ... instant communication, so ... (chuckles) ...

Ed Metzler: (Chuckles)

Mr. Durham: ... I wrote home for my diploma, and when I received it a couple of weeks later, I went to work for Doak Aircraft ... Company.

Ed Metzler: What ... what ... what aircraft?

Mr. Durham: Doak, D-o-a-k. They made just contract things for the bigger ...

Ed Metzler: Parts and some ...

Mr. Durham: ... be ... parts, yes.

Ed Metzler: ... some assemblies and stuff.

Mr. Durham: Yes.

Ed Metzler: Well, now there's one thing I didn't ask you that I meant to earlier. What do you remember about December the 7th; how did you hear about the start of the ...

Mr. Durham: Well, I was ... working as a soda jerk in the local pharmacy.

Ed Metzler: In ... in beautiful Sabinal?

Mr. Durham: In Sabinal. That was when every drug store had a soda fountain.

Ed Metzler: And every town had a drugstore.

Mr. Durham: Yes (chuckles).

Ed Metzler: (Laughter)

Mr. Durham: And ... we ... heard it ... uh, really fairly late in the day. Some ... customers had come in and asked if we'd heard the news. And we said, "What news?" And they said, "We're at war!" So, the pharmacist rushed back and turned on the radio and ... we listened and ... so, ...

Ed Metzler: So, you were a senior in ... or ... well, you were in your final year of high school at that time.

Mr. Durham: Yes, I was a senior in high school then.

Ed Metzler: So, what changed after December the 7th in your normal life, anything?

Mr. Durham: Well yes, uh, it ... seems a little strange to think about it, but then a little town like Sabinal ... we started practicing blackouts; we ... some of the World War II veterans ... uh, started teaching us how to march in formation, and ...

Ed Metzler: World War I veterans!

Mr. Durham: Yes (laughter).

Ed Metzler: (Laughter), from ... from the previous ... world war, yeah!

Mr. Durham: And how do the ... manual of arms and ... it seems ...

Ed Metzler: Well, it was a patriotic ...

Mr. Durham: Yes!

Ed Metzler: ... thing as much as anything.

Mr. Durham: It seems a little strange now, but ... we were ... really into it.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, the whole country was.

Mr. Durham: Yes.

Ed Metzler: From Sabinal to New York City and ...

Mr. Durham: Yes.

Ed Metzler: ... everything in between.

Mr. Durham: Yes.

Ed Metzler: So, when you say you hitchhiked out to the west coast, did you talk that over with your parents before you did that?

Mr. Durham: Uh uh, no, I stretched the truth a little (laughter).

Ed Metzler: (Laughter)

Mr. Durham: Uh ...

Ed Metzler: Tell me about that (laughter).

Mr. Durham: I ... I told them that I had been able to get a ride ... with a trucker ... that I ... had met. Uh, I didn't, I just got out ... on the road.

Ed Metzler: And stuck your thumb out!

Mr. Durham: Yes!

Ed Metzler: Highway 90 headed west!

Mr. Durham: Highway 90 headed west and ...

Ed Metzler: (Laughter)

Mr. Durham: ... believe it or not, uh, never had to wait for ... more than a few minutes. Anytime I was let out ...

Ed Metzler: Things were different back then, weren't they?

Mr. Durham: ... things were different. Even ... single females would pick you up.

Ed Metzler: I know later on when everybody was wearing a uniform, if you went and hitchhiked when you had your ... military uniform on, they'd get you right away.

Mr. Durham: Oh yes! Yes (laughter).

Ed Metzler: But ... but you were a civilian at this point.

Mr. Durham: Yes.

Ed Metzler: Isn't that amazing?!

Mr. Durham: Yeah. I had me a ... a little sign that ... oh, I'd had a cousin that, uh, had gone out before the war started.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Durham: And he ... had an apartment at Hermosa Beach, California, and that's where I was ... headed to meet up with him.

Ed Metzler: I was wondering if you had a place to stay when you were out there.

Mr. Durham: Yes! Yes, so I had a place to lie ... in.

Ed Metzler: So, what was California like? That's different than Texas I hear.

Mr. Durham: It was ... quite a bit ... of difference. Uh, he had run into ... quite a bit of resistance when he first went out. Uh, called him an Oakie and ...

Ed Metzler: A Hick, and ... yeah, all of ...

Mr. Durham: Yeah, all of that. But ... by the ... the war had gone on six months by then, and ... they were welcoming anybody ... by the time I got out there, so I didn't have to put up with any of it.

Ed Metzler: Well, you know, I think it kind of united the country and suddenly ... didn't matter if you were different. You were American and we were in this together.

Mr. Durham: Yes!

Ed Metzler: Yeah. So, how long did you work for Doak?

Mr. Durham: Well, I worked till Christmas and I still hadn't heard from the Navy.

Ed Metzler: Now that's ... this is '42 now, isn't it?

Mr. Durham: Yes.

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Durham: So, I came back to Sabinal to see what had happened ... why I hadn't been called up, and the local draft board said that they still were having trouble getting anybody into San Antonio, and they suggested I might try Waco ... that they had heard that ... Waco was ... taking people right then.

Ed Metzler: This is Navy now?

Mr. Durham: Navy, yeah, I was anxious to get in the ...

Ed Metzler: Why Navy?

Mr. Durham: I don't know if they called us the Houston Avengers and all of that. Navy was really the thing in this ...

Ed Metzler: This the avenging ... avenging the sinking of the cruiser Houston?

Mr. Durham: Yes, yes!

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Durham: Looking back I really am not sure why I was ... so determined for the Navy. The Army was taking people from Sabinal at that time. But my future brother in law hitchhiked into Waco and they ... they were enlisting right then. Well, I say right then; they did swear us in but told us that ... it would probably be the last week of ... January before we'd be ... called.

Ed Metzler: And this is December that you went up to Waco?

Mr. Durham: Yes. It was ... uh, it was the week following Christmas but just before New Years.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Durham: And ... so, we didn't get a call until ... the last week of January, I believe, because it was the 2nd day of February before I got ... enlisted.

Ed Metzler: You mentioned your future brother in law, uh, several times. Now, was he a buddy of yours?

Mr. Durham: Yes.

Ed Metzler: A family friend or ...

Mr. Durham: Oh, we were ... school-hood friends and buddies, and we joined together and ... we were pulled out of boot camp at the same time ... ahead of ...

Ed Metzler: Where did he ... where did he go?

Mr. Durham: Well, we ... six of us were pulled out of boot camp prior to getting out; we only spent, uh, eight weeks in, and at the time, it was ... three months ... deal. And they sent ... picked eight of us out and sent us to Astoria, Oregon. We picked up an FPO address, so I thought ... that meant that we were going right ... overseas, but when we got up there, they told us to line up together that they were going to assign us to different places. So, thinking that ... pick us if we stood together, my brother in law and I (laughter) ...

Ed Metzler: (Chuckles), you know the military doesn't work like that (laughter)!

Mr. Durham: ... up together. Well, you're right!

Ed Metzler: But you didn't know that at the time!

Mr. Durham: Didn't ... didn't ...

Ed Metzler: You were just a kid!

Mr. Durham: ... didn't know it, so ... they went down the line; they'd assign one guy to this one squadron, next guy to another squadron. They assigned my brother in law to Squadron Sixty; they got to me, they said, "You're in VC-55," and the next ... guy, but we did stay fairly close throughout the war ... not on the same ship, but ...

Ed Metzler: Uhm.

Mr. Durham: ... operating fairly close together.

Ed Metzler: Okay. Now, uhm, I kind of got ahead of myself with that question. Where ... where did you attend boot camp?

Mr. Durham: San Diego.

Ed Metzler: Okay, so the ...

Mr. Durham: And that was the one that ... was ... for some reason, it's very difficult to get in at the time. They were ... uh, opening one up at Farragut, Idaho and ...

Ed Metzler: Yeah, I've heard of it.

Mr. Durham: ... but we were ready to go anywhere that ... they got opened.

Ed Metzler: So, what was boot camp like for you?

Mr. Durham: Well, it was ... I thought easier than I ... had expected. Uh, it was ... hurry up and go kind of ... thing. It wasn't physically as strenuous as I had expected when I heard of all these ... things.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, they'll run you till you drop and all that kind of ... (laughter), yeah.

Mr. Durham: Yes. Yes, well, they ... I guess that most of us were really in pretty good shape from high school activities and all.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Durham: (Throat clearing), but other than having to box, and I weighed a hundred and forty pounds at my height and the guy that was ... my height weighed about two hundred and something ... but he was a kind fellow (chuckles) he would ... he'd fake some of the hits from the ...

Ed Metzler: He didn't pound you too much, huh (laughter)?

Mr. Durham: No, and ... the instructor would come by and says, "Come on, mix it up! Mix it up!" So, he'd put on a good show, but ... pull the punches (laughter).

Ed Metzler: Well, fortunately, he was friendly!

Mr. Durham: Yes.

Ed Metzler: If he'd a been a mean one, you'd be (unintelligible) ... (laughter)!

Mr. Durham: Oh, I ... I would have been in real trouble (laughter)!

Ed Metzler: You might not be here now (laughter)! So, what did they do ... put you in barracks, uh, you know ... a hundred guys to a room?

Mr. Durham: Yes, there was ... there was ... a hundred and eighty of us ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Durham: ... in a two-story building, so there were ninety to a ...

Ed Metzler: They fed you well though?

Mr. Durham: Yes, they did.

Ed Metzler: Food was pretty good?

Mr. Durham: Oh, we thought it ... was. Uh, I wasn't ... too fond of some of the terms they used to describe it, but (chuckles).

Ed Metzler: Yeah, some of the Navy terms are kind of colorful (laughter).

Mr. Durham: Yes (laughter).

Ed Metzler: So, you lasted for eight weeks and then they lined up you guys and pulled a ... a small group of you out?

Mr. Durham: Yes, uh huh.

Ed Metzler: Do you know why they chose you?

Mr. Durham: No, I don't, but I ... we ... I had ... and my brother in law ... future brother in law had only taken one ... uh, test at that time, and we had both failed miserably on the ... uh, radio ... sending ...

Ed Metzler: Morse Code?

Mr. Durham: ... Morse Code.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Durham: Uh ...

Ed Metzler: More Code wasn't your friend, huh?

Mr. Durham: No!

Ed Metzler: (Laughter)

Mr. Durham: Both of us had been Boy Scouts so we handled the Semaphore, no problem, but they were looking for somebody that could really ... pound out that ...

Ed Metzler: Do the dot dash, do dot dash stuff?

Mr. Durham: ... yes. So, uh, that might be one reason we got sent out early; I don't really know, but we were the first group that we aware of that left the ... boot company.

Ed Metzler: So, let's see, this is ... you went to boot camp in ... February of '43.

Mr. Durham: '43, yes.

Ed Metzler: So, now we're getting up into late spring of '43, I guess, and you went to Oregon, is that what you said?

Mr. Durham: Went to Astoria, Oregon. And ... they told us that the airfield was not ready at the time, so they used us to unload the ammunition ships for ... oh, I'm sure it wasn't more than a week, but it seemed like a month ...

Ed Metzler: (Laughter)

Mr. Durham: ... when we lifted the bombs and stuff out of there.

Ed Metzler: Man!

Mr. Durham: But ...

Ed Metzler: Now, the facility at Astoria ... was that a Naval Air Station or a ... or a ... depot, a supply depot or what?

Mr. Durham: It ... it was ... a supply depot and it was where the Kaiser Shipyards were sending their aircraft carriers to be outfitted and supplied, and we were Naval ... Station Tongue Point was the name of that. And shortly after we were there, they opened up the ... airfield ... across the bay. And ...

Ed Metzler: Let's see, is Astoria ... now, where is that? Is that close to Portland?

Mr. Durham: Uh, well it's ... it's still on the same river as the Portland is, but ...

Ed Metzler: It's on the Columbus ... Columbia River?

Mr. Durham: It's on the Columbia River.

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Durham: But ... the ocean liners and all can come in ... to there.

Ed Metzler: So, it's a deep-water port?

Mr. Durham: Yes.

Ed Metzler: Now, did you mention that you were assigned to VC-55?

Mr. Durham: Uh, V ... yes, to V ...

Ed Metzler: What is that?

Mr. Durham: That was Composite Squadron, it was ... made up initially of F4Fs and the TBMs, but they ...

Ed Metzler: F4F, is that the Wildcat?

Mr. Durham: It was the Wildcat.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Durham: But, at the time, we didn't have any of those planes, and ... they just had some old ... trainers ... over there that the pilots were ... trying to get the lay of the land and ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Durham: ... and that kind of stuff. In fact, most of us got put off on mess cook ... duty ...

Ed Metzler: Uhm!

Mr. Durham: ... till we got planes and all in.

Ed Metzler: Well, had they told what you'd be doing? I mean ...

Mr. Durham: Well, they gave us an ... an option where we understood mechanics or ... ordnance. And ... I'd fooled around with ... rif ... I ... I had ... was given a twenty-two on my sixth or seventh birthday which ... just astounds people now.

Ed Metzler: I know! (laughter)

Mr. Durham: (Laughter), but ... I chose ordnance, and I ... I hadn't been on this mess cook duty for ... for two or three days and ... a big, tall, uh, Ordnance man, First Class, came by and asked if there were any ... Ordnance Strikers ... there.

Ed Metzler: What's an Ordnance Striker?

Mr. Durham: That's if ... you wanted to be in Ordnance ...

Ed Metzler: Oh okay.

Mr. Durham: ... but you were a Striker.

Ed Metzler: Okay, okay.

Mr. Durham: And I held up my hand, and he said, "Well, come with me," he said, "would you be interested in learning to synchronize a machine gun?" And I said, "Well, you're going to have to help me; what's synchronizing a ... machine gun?" And he said, "We're looking for ... people to ... learn to adjust a thirty caliber to shoot through a prop."

Ed Metzler: Important! (laughter)

Mr. Durham: I said, "Well, I don't know anything ... about that." He said, "Well, I've only got a day to ... teach two of you," and he said, "already all the ... rated Ordnance men have backed out of it."

Ed Metzler: Backed out?!

Mr. Durham: Yeah. Said, "They didn't want to be responsible for ... that," and I said, "Well, uh, I'm a little dubious," said, "I want to do it." He said, "Well, don't say that until you've tried it." And ... he ... found one older guy that ... already an Ordnance rate that was willing ... to go, so he said, "Now, I've only got one day with this squadron; I've got to ... get you done ... right away," and so he just ... he really worked us, and ...

Ed Metzler: So, it was you and another guy?

Mr. Durham: Yes. Another guy ... another guy really helped me out a lot later, too, so I made a good friend ... doing ... that. And I did learn to synchronize a ... gun. Only ... fortunately we didn't have to use a synchronized gun very long. I did ... fix one, the gun that didn't hit the prop ...

Ed Metzler: Oops (laughter).

Mr. Durham: ... that required ...

Ed Metzler: Well, did they test them out?

Mr. Durham: Oh yeah. We did dry testing all that day, and the guy could tell if I was firing it wrong. If I'd fired wrong, he said, "You've hit the prop," and I don't know what kind of equipment he had, but ... it ... kind of works off of a synchronized ... thing down at ... where you could open up ... he could open up and watch it, and he could make some adjustments ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum (throat clearing).

Mr. Durham: ... on it. But ...

Ed Metzler: Now, was this (throat clearing) on a test stand or was this on an actual aircraft?

Mr. Durham: It's one on an actual aircraft, and he had ... lot of the Ordnance men that would refuse to do it ... to ... turn the props ... for us, so we could set the thing. So, we ...

Ed Metzler: Now, these are flown by F4 ... uh, Fs?

Mr. Durham: No, this ... TBMs.

Ed Metzler: TBM, now ... see, TBM is the ...

Mr. Durham: Torpedo bomber ...

Ed Metzler: ... torpedo, got it.

Mr. Durham: ... and the M was made by Grumman.

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Durham: I'm sorry, M was made by General Motors ...

Ed Metzler: That's right, that's right.

Mr. Durham: ... uh, F was, and these were TBFs that's the Grumman ... plane. So, I survived that, and the Gunnery Officer came out, and I still had seen ... I never had had time to put Seaman Second stripes on, and the Gunnery Officer came out and said, "God dam, Apprentice Seaman, synchronizing my guns?!" (laughter)

Ed Metzler: (Laughter)

Mr. Durham: Said ...

Ed Metzler: (Laughter)

Mr. Durham: ... said, "Boy, where is your Captain?!" And I ... I didn't know where the Captain was. He said, "Well, I really not ... asking you ... for you," said, "I need to visit with him." And so, he came back and ... said, "The Captain wants to see you," and he told me, "The ... the Gunnery Officer wanted an enlisted man doing the guns," said, "you're Third Class." So, I got bumped up on stripes ... immediately. So, a lot of the people just ... couldn't believe ... when I got stripes from ...

Ed Metzler: Just for synchronizing guns!

Mr. Durham: Yeah!

Ed Metzler: (Laughter), that is an important job, though, 'cause if you get that wrong, you're in big trouble, or ... the pilot is.

Mr. Durham: Yes, yes. So, I was ... really ... glad that ... that only lasted just about ... I'm guessing, two weeks. And ... they only had gunnery practice one time during that ... time. So, I survived one day of ... of that. But it was ... a ... a quick deal, saved me from going to ... Ordnance School.

Ed Metzler: Now ... you didn't go to Ordnance School?

Mr. Durham: No, I didn't.

Ed Metzler: Where would you have gone if you'd of gone to Ordnance School? Is that somewhere ...

Mr. Durham: Uh, probably in Tennessee.

Ed Metzler: That far away?!

Mr. Durham: Yes, that's where all of them that ... came in.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Durham: Now, after ... VC-55 was sent to ... Atlantic; they didn't take any of the ... enlisted crew with them, only the pilots.

Ed Metzler: So, they went to the Atlantic?!

Mr. Durham: They went to the Atlantic. And they formed a new squadron called VC-4, and I was in ... that, and ...

Ed Metzler: But you stayed in Oregon?

Mr. Durham: No, we went to ... Seattle, Washington to Sand Point. Well, we went into CASU-7 really ... when ... VC-55 broke up, and they pulled us, nearly within a day or so, out to form this new squadron. And the ... Ordnance ... officer interviewed us for ... Torpedo School, and I got selected on that, so I missed the opening two months of the squadron's activities. They went to Arlington, Washington for their ...

Ed Metzler: Now which ... what was this squadron's name?

Mr. Durham: Uh, VC-4.

Ed Metzler: VC-4, okay.

Mr. Durham: Yes. And that's the one I stayed with the rest of the ...

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Durham: ... the war. And I ... completed Torpedo School, so it carried a dual rate, AOM and Torpedo man, and I was kind of partial to the ... right arm ... rate, so I told the ... Corpsman, uh, the ... not the Corpsman, the Yeoman, that I'd prefer the right arm rate. And he said, "Well, now are you aware that you won't be eligible for fly ... flight pay?" And I said, "No, I hadn't even thought about that," said, "I ... I ... just put me down as AOM then." I remained AOM in ...

Ed Metzler: So, what's AOM now?

Mr. Durham: Aviation Ordnance Mate.

Ed Metzler: Mate! Okay, so you became an AOM?

Mr. Durham: Yes, and a Torpedo man and carried both ...

Ed Metzler: And ... and ... and a Torpedo man?

Mr. Durham: Yes.

Ed Metzler: Now, I had heard that ... the military, US military, was having a lot of problems ... with their torpedoes early part of the war.

Mr. Durham: Oh! You just wouldn't believe!

Ed Metzler: Tell me about ... what you know about that.

Mr. Durham: Well, fortunately, I came along when they had just discovered ... their problem. So, the ones I learned to work on were the ... new ones. But when we got out there, there were will quite a bit of the ... old ones still out there, and we did practice using the old ones. And ... oh, they ... they couldn't maintain the depth you set them on. And they never did ... were able to correct that. So I don't know ... what the initial problems were; I don't know if the sensors themselves were faulty ... or some mechanical problem ... that we never got to.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Durham: But, the school made us well aware of it, and ...

Ed Metzler: And ... correspondingly, the Japanese apparently had excellent torpedoes.

Mr. Durham: Yes, they did.

Ed Metzler: They (unintelligible) powerful ...

Mr. Durham: And they were powerful! Well, we only had to see a couple of those go off to get your attention.

Ed Metzler: Yeah! So, when you are ... Torpedo man, what are you doing? Are you arming them, maintaining them ... what ... what were your tasks?

Mr. Durham: Well, uh, fortunately ... well, maintaining was what it was for, but when we went aboard ship, the ships have their Torpedo men, so they do the ... maintaining; the inventory and mounting them was the only thing that I was responsible for after we went aboard ... ship. We had special ... braces we had to put in the ... bay of the TBF that I was responsible for, and ... the Metalsmiths put them in for us, but we had to okay it and measure them and that kind of ...

Ed Metzler: TBF?

Mr. Durham: Yes.

Ed Metzler: Tell me about that.

Mr. Durham: That was ... same as the TBM, but just made by a different ...

Ed Metzler: Okay, it's just a different manufacturer?

Mr. Durham: ... company, but ... yes.

Ed Metzler: 'Cause I know they went through a couple of torpedo bombers during the war. They had a later model, I think.

Mr. Durham: Yes, the ... uh, the ... we had a miserable ... torpedo plane at first; I never was ... in that squadron, but some of the people that joined the squadron later were ... on the [USS] Lexington and some of the earlier ones, and they were ... just had horror stories of that ...

Ed Metzler: Yeah, it was obsolete apparently ...

Mr. Durham: Yes.

Ed Metzler: ... when the war started.

Mr. Durham: Yes. Very slow ... uh, not evasive; they said they were just shooting ducks for the ...

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Durham: ... for the Zero.

Ed Metzler: Right. In fact, I've ... I still remember the stories about ... at the Battle of Midway, you know, they sent out a ... a bunch of torpedo planes on the first wave ...

Mr. Durham: Oh yes!

Ed Metzler: ... and none of them ... none of them got through!

Mr. Durham: Only one survivor.

Ed Metzler: That's right!

Mr. Durham: Ensign Gay.

Ed Metzler: That's right, that's right! So, well at this point now, you haven't been assigned a ship yet, is that correct?

Mr. Durham: That's correct; I still had an FPO address, still ... hadn't been aboard ship.

Ed Metzler: You're still a land-lover ...

Mr. Durham: Yes.

Ed Metzler: ... even though you're in the Navy!

Mr. Durham: Yes.

Ed Metzler: Are you getting in ... are you getting impatient at this point or tell me how you're feeling ... right about now.

Mr. Durham: Well, I ... I was very disappointed that I didn't get to stay with VC-55 although I wasn't at all anxious to go ... to the Atlantic. I'd heard about the cold weather and ... that kind, so, I was not that disappointed. Then we really had a great group of ... young pilots that had come aboard. We had an Executive Officer that ... oh, was just a wild man; he ...

Ed Metzler: A wild man!

Mr. Durham: He was ...

Ed Metzler: Well, tell me about that (chuckles).

Mr. Durham: (Chuckles), he was ... he could scare you to death in a plane. Uh, I never really flew with him in combat, but some of the stories was enough to curl your hair. He ...

Ed Metzler: (Laughter)

Mr. Durham: ... uh, I was on ... in a different plane ... that ... we'd took off from Alameda Airport (unintelligible) ...

Ed Metzler: Air Station, yeah.

Mr. Durham: ... Air Station, and he just took off and flew under the ... the bay bridge, under the Golden Gate ... Bridge, of course, the rest of us went up like we were supposed to.

Ed Metzler: But not him!

Mr. Durham: Not him. He rolled, the TBF; he got grounded for a while for ...

Ed Metzler: (Chuckles)

Mr. Durham: ... for that, but he was ...

Ed Metzler: What was this guy's name, do you remember?

Mr. Durham: Flidabeau (sp?), Flidabeau, yeah, he made quite a name for himself. He was a ... he was a pilot.

Ed Metzler: So, was he on the [USS] White Plains then?

Mr. Durham: Yes, yeah, he served through the war, and remained in the service, and later died in a ... a air accident while he was still in the service ... which didn't surprise ...

Ed Metzler: Well, I guess that's fitting anyhow, huh?

Mr. Durham: ... any of us. Yes.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Durham: Figured that's the way he wanted to go.

Ed Metzler: So, you were in with a ... a good bunch of guys you talk like.

Mr. Durham: Yes, I was ... relatively ...

Ed Metzler: So, you guys were a band of brothers and real close or ...

Mr. Durham: Uh, yes, we were. Uh, (throat clearing), we were ... we had a full complement of enlisted people and all. When we went aboard ship, it divided up, so we really lost ... (unintelligible) with friends.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Durham: But ... they all stayed together, and we remained friends; they worked on the flight deck and ... hangar deck, so we were around them, but we quartered in ... right underneath the ... flight deck or the ...

Ed Metzler: You ... you did?

Mr. Durham: Yes.

Ed Metzler: And where were they?

Mr. Durham: Uh, they was ... down below ... decks, below the hangar deck.

Ed Metzler: Well, when did you go on the White Plains?

Mr. Durham: In ... April of '44, so ... I had a full year's ... training.

Ed Metzler: You were well trained ...

Mr. Durham: Yes.

Ed Metzler: ... when you went aboard.

Mr. Durham: Yes.

Ed Metzler: And she had already been out on ...

Mr. Durham: She'd been on ...

Ed Metzler: ... 'cause she was launched in '43, wasn't she?

Mr. Durham: ... yes, she had been ... only on a ... transporting ... planes, but she'd had some experience, not landing planes, but transporting them and having Marines ...

Ed Metzler: Launch?

Mr. Durham: ... fly ... launch.

Ed Metzler: Launch ... launching aircraft?

Mr. Durham: Yeah, so that ... had that experience. And ... uh, they had ... been around the Eniwetok Invasion, but ...

Ed Metzler: Eniwetok, yeah.

Mr. Durham: ... but not active ... in it, still just replacing ... plane losses. So, we were their first ... full squadron. In fact, we went aboard the [USS] Fanshaw Bay initially for the first week, and ...

Ed Metzler: She was a sister ship, right?

Mr. Durham: ... sister ship in ... and was flag ship. And we've never known why ... we were displaced ... if the Admiral was unhappy with our Skipper or ... what the reason was, but ... we were ... put off of the ...

Ed Metzler: So, the White Plains was the flag ship?

Mr. Durham: No, the Fanshaw Bay was the ...

Ed Metzler: The Fanshaw Bay was.

Mr. Durham: ... was the flag ship.

Ed Metzler: And then it wasn't? (chuckles)

Mr. Durham: So, then (chuckle) well it remained flag ship, but they ... put us on ... off on to the White Plains ... and brought another VC squadron ... in our place; never known the reason that ... the ...

Ed Metzler: It wasn't something you said, was it?

Mr. Durham: (Laughter)

Ed Metzler: (Laughter)

Mr. Durham: Not that we know of.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter)

Mr. Durham: Uh, the Skipper was very quiet about the reason, so ...

Ed Metzler: He didn't talk a lot about it, huh?

Mr. Durham: No.

Ed Metzler: Who was your Skipper?

Mr. Durham: Uh, his name was Evans, and he was ... lost in ... during the battle off of Tinian.

Ed Metzler: Uhm!

Mr. Durham: So, Fakincher (sp?) was replaced in ...

Ed Metzler: So tell me about ... the White Plains. What was ... what was it like being on her; what is ... what is an escort carrier all ... all about anyhow?

Mr. Durham: Well, it was small enough that our pilots liked to ... joke around with some of the bigger ... ships or the pilots off the bigger ships asking what runways they used (laughter).

Ed Metzler: (Laughter), I like that! (laughter)

Mr. Durham: Yeah, it was ... we had ... three barriers. Of course, every carrier had ... at least three barriers, but (throat clearing) our ... ship deck was five hundred ... feet long.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Durham: And so, we had ... three hundred feet ... to land, and two hundred to store planes ... forward. Well no, actually, we didn't, we had ... fifteen between the ... the ... the barriers.

Ed Metzler: So, what kind of barriers were they?

Mr. Durham: The were elevated, uh, three cables up, they were about waist high there enough to turn a plane over, put it on it's nose ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Durham: ... if it's going slow enough.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum, uh hum. So, this was considered a pretty challenging ... pretty challenging for a pilot, right?

Mr. Durham: To ... pretty good pilot, yes.

Ed Metzler: Both take off and landing, I guess.

Mr. Durham: Well, take off on a ... for the TBF or TBM ... were all launched by catapult, so that was ... not too difficult ... provided ...

Ed Metzler: So, is this what a ... steam catapult or a ... spring catapult or ...

Mr. Durham: It was a ... hydraulic.

Ed Metzler: Hydraulic.

Mr. Durham: And we never had trouble with our catapult. We watched one of our sister ships, I don't remember which one that had a catapult failure. The first ship ... first plane we saw just ... dropped off the side, and it looked to us like ... the bow of the ship it. We found out later that it did fall to one side, and the ship

missed him. They ... worked on the catapult for a few minutes and launched the second one, and it ... went in the water.

Ed Metzler: So, it didn't build up enough speed ...

Mr. Durham: Yes.

Ed Metzler: for them to get airborne?

Mr. Durham: Yes. So, the third one that was hooked up, they didn't even ... try it. They ... they ... didn't launch anymore that day until it worked.

Ed Metzler: Hum.

Mr. Durham: Next day it was working fine, so I don't know what they had to ... do.

Ed Metzler: So, about how many are in a crew then on a ... on an escort carrier?

Mr. Durham: We had about ... uh, seven hundred ship's complement, and that's ... now they're counting these squadron personnel that ... uh, that helped maintain the planes and all.

Ed Metzler: Pilots and maintenance crews?

Mr. Durham: And ... no, they don't count the pilots or flight crew.

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Durham: And there are approximately ... a hundred of us in the VC squadron.

Ed Metzler: Now, are you guys kind of ... separate from the ship's crew and are you treated that way or how did that work?

Mr. Durham: Well, the ... ship's crew ... considered ... all of us airdales ... whether ...

Ed Metzler: Airdales? (laughter)

Mr. Durham: Airdales is what they called us.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter)

Mr. Durham: Said ... said, "We're sailors, y'all are airdales."

Ed Metzler: (Chuckles)

Mr. Durham: (Chuckles), uh, they usually kept pretty much to themselves. Oh, friendly enough if we ... visited and all. I mean, they weren't rude, but ... they just ...

Ed Metzler: Just separate.

Mr. Durham: ... nev ... yeah, never really developed a ...

Ed Metzler: Now, did you guys ... have the same mess hall and everything?

Mr. Durham: Yes. Yes, uh, but even then, we tended to eat together and ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Durham: Uh ...

Ed Metzler: What was the food like aboard?

Mr. Durham: I really was ... it was not bad I didn't think, but ... of course, I'd lived on a farm and ... kind of used to ... I ... I really thought it was pretty good. We went on long ... the Marianas conflict until we lost a lot of planes ... was long. We weren't replenished, so we went on two meals a day – went on ... meals at six and ... uh, oh-six-hundred and ... uh, oh ...

Ed Metzler: Eighteen hundred?

Mr. Durham: ... eighteen hundred, yeah, I believe.

Ed Metzler: So, six in the morning and six in the evening.

Mr. Durham: Yes.

Ed Metzler: You're pretty hungry by dinner, weren't you?!

Mr. Durham: Yes (chuckles), yes. And then ... later ... I can't remember, it was ... if it was that ... that same ... cruise or not; we were on a long cruise to get replenished in ... uh, we went on just ... oatmeal.

Ed Metzler: Uhm!

Mr. Durham: Or ... oatmeal-type ... food, and powdered ... milk.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, bet you got tired of that, didn't ...

Mr. Durham: Twice a day. Got tired of that and ...

Ed Metzler: Yeah, I bet.

Mr. Durham: Had plenty of coffee fortunately.

Ed Metzler: Thank goodness!

Mr. Durham: We never ran out of coffee (laughter).

Ed Metzler: (Laughter), okay so, you're ... you go aboard the White Plains, and she sails.

Mr. Durham: Yes.

Ed Metzler: That's the first time you've really been on the water?

Mr. Durham: First time on the water.

Ed Metzler: How'd that go for you?

Mr. Durham: Well, we ... very good; we ... six days we landed in ... Pearl Harbor and they took us off the ship ... more training.

Ed Metzler: Did you get sea sick at all?

Mr. Durham: Uh, not ... aboard the ship. Uh, later on when I was transferred ... this was ... later in the war when I was transferred from Hilo, Hawaii to Pearl Harbor on a tug boat, I got ... sea sick on.

Ed Metzler: That was a rough run, huh?

Mr. Durham: It was; it'd be ...

Ed Metzler: Short but rough! (chuckles)

Mr. Durham: It was rough, it was ... really about a day and a half run.

Ed Metzler: Really?! That long?!

Mr. Durham: Yeah. It was ... really bad weather and ...

Ed Metzler: Uhm. So, they took you off ... off the ship when you're in Pearl?

Mr. Durham: Yes.

Ed Metzler: And you had more training?

Mr. Durham: Yes.

Ed Metzler: What were they doing?

Mr. Durham: Uhm, (throat clearing) that was primarily ... gunnery training through ... that ... I got to ride on one of the tow planes that towed the gunnery sleeve for the ship which was ... an interesting experience. They used a B-25 and I never had been up in a ... B-25, so I was anxious to ...

Ed Metzler: How was that?

Mr. Durham: Oh, it was ... a great ride! That ... plane had a lot more speed than ... than I was aware of.

Ed Metzler: A little bit more roomy, yeah, a little bit more room, too.

Mr. Durham: Yeah, but ... we'd let out about three thousand feet of cable ... on that and ... (unintelligible) a good part of the afternoon, and then ...

Ed Metzler: And so, this is giving target practice for ... like the AA guys down ...

Mr. Durham: Yes.

Ed Metzler: ... on ... on the ship? And ...

Mr. Durham: Yes, they were ... all six ships were underway.

Ed Metzler: Six ships?

Mr. Durham: Yes.

Ed Metzler: Towed what six ...

Mr. Durham: Six ...

Ed Metzler: ... carriers?

Mr. Durham: ... six, uh, baby carriers.

Ed Metzler: Baby ... baby flat tops.

Mr. Durham: And they would change their formations occasionally, and ... the pilot hadn't even thought about ... that, so I guess they left the pilot instructions on ... how to fly. He would go at different altitudes and ... uh, different evasive mover ... maneuvers and ...

Ed Metzler: Just hope that the guys' aim wasn't so bad that they shot the B-25 down (laughter).

Mr. Durham: Yeah. Uh, none of them were scary; it was a ... but it was ... amazing. First time I'd ever really seen anti-aircraft ... fire. They can nearly darken the sky with six ships.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum, yeah put a lot of ... lot of flak up, huh?

Mr. Durham: Yeah. So ...

Ed Metzler: So uh, where were you ... uhm, where were you staying ... housing there when you were doing it?

Mr. Durham: It was a little auxiliary airfield that had been built just east of ... Honolulu in a pineapple, uh, ...

Ed Metzler: Field, yeah.

Mr. Durham: ... yeah, a pineapple field; they'd just ... had been ... covered with concrete runway ...

Ed Metzler: Hum.

Mr. Durham: ... there, and Dole Pineapple Company said, "Well, you guys can eat as much of this as you want in this area." Said, "We can't get to it for the aircraft flying around." But we soon discovered sure got ... stomach aches in a hurry, if you ...

Ed Metzler: Yeah, if you ate too much of those free pineapples.

Mr. Durham: ... (laughter) ... much, yeah.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, you ate too much of those free pineapples (laughter).

Mr. Durham: Yes (laughter), so it was very uncomfortable from dysentery sitting in the turret and just ...

Ed Metzler: (Laughter), well, what do you think about pineapples today? Can you look one in the eye?

Mr. Durham: I ... oh, I've gotten ... to where I like them now.

Ed Metzler: Got over that huh?

Mr. Durham: But it's been just fairly recent that ... that ...

Ed Metzler: (Laughter).

Mr. Durham: ... that I've started ...

Ed Metzler: I'll be darned!

Mr. Durham: ... eating them again.

Ed Metzler: So, after the training then, uh, your ... your squadron, if I can use that term, of ships or your ...

Mr. Durham: Yes.

Ed Metzler: ... your group ... where did you guys go ... at that point?

Mr. Durham: Well, we (throat clearing) ... uh, went to ... Eniwetok, and there's just a huge fleet of ... ships, heavy ships, big carriers, supply ships, and that is a huge harbor if you've ever ... seen that ...

Ed Metzler: I've heard it's ... I've heard about it, yeah.

Mr. Durham: ... atoll that ... so, we stayed there maybe two ... two days or ... three. We took on ... two more new air crewmen as we hadn't been with; they were seasoned ... crew off of one of the bigger ... carriers.

Ed Metzler: So, what we got ... about twenty-four aircraft on ... on a baby carrier?

Mr. Durham: We had ... uh, eighteen ... eighteen F4 ... F4Fs and twelve ...

Ed Metzler: So, thirty?

Mr. Durham: Yeah, so thirty, yeah. Uh, so we took off for ... Saipan, and ... I think our first ... or second day out of Eniwetok on the way, we had ... no calls to general quarters or anything. We had a Jap plane fly ... fairly low right over us like ... scared us to death. No guns were manned on any ... any ship, and then they just kept going, so ...

Ed Metzler: So, he didn't attack and you ...

Mr. Durham: He didn't ...

Ed Metzler: ... guys weren't at your stations.

Mr. Durham: No.

Ed Metzler: So, it was a fly by.

Mr. Durham: Yeah, it's just ... fly by.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter)

Mr. Durham: So, I guess he reported us to whoever he was ...

Ed Metzler: Well, he knew where you were at that point.

Mr. Durham: ... yes, yes, he did. So, when we got to Saipan, we started ... our missions immediately ... on the beaches primarily and the ... landing field. And one of our planes was the first American plane to land on the airfield.

Ed Metzler: Really?!

Mr. Durham: The ... Radioman was ... uh, pretty seriously injured with gunfire and the Pilot asked permission to put down. And ... they let him come in and land.

Ed Metzler: That was before the island was secured then?

Mr. Durham: Oh, even before the airfield was totally secured.

Ed Metzler: Whoa!

Mr. Durham: So, he ...

Ed Metzler: So, you're busy ... arming and mounting torpedoes on aircraft?

Mr. Durham: Yes.

Ed Metzler: So, you're a pretty busy guy there during ... combat, huh?

Mr. Durham: Oh yeah, yes, that's ... yes and that's ... they'd be ready on something like that by ... oh-five-hundred ... depending on ... when sunrise is.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum, uh hum. So, are you below deck then mounting these and they go up on the elevator all loaded or ...

Mr. Durham: Uh (throat clearing) ...

Ed Metzler: ... are ... are you up on the main flight deck?

Mr. Durham: We were on the main flight ... deck primarily. Uh, but ... if the plane has been ... damaged in any way, they're repaired down there in the ... and we did arm some of them ... below deck as well.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Durham: Below flight deck.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum. Now, what did you got ... two elevators on ...

Mr. Durham: We got two elevators ... for ...

Ed Metzler: They're all on one side?

Mr. Durham: ... forward, and ... no, forward and aft.

Ed Metzler: Okay, on the edge or in the middle of ... of the ... well, it must be on the edge of the flight deck.

Mr. Durham: No, they're in the middle of the flight deck, beam to beam. But lengthwise, they're inboard from the bow about ... twenty-five feet and forward of the stern ... deck.

Ed Metzler: So, very ...

Mr. Durham: About twenty-five ...

Ed Metzler: ... close to the ... to the ...

Mr. Durham: Yes.

Ed Metzler: ... bow and the stern?

Mr. Durham: Yes.

Ed Metzler: So, how long did the Sai ... did the Saipan ... action last for you guys?

Mr. Durham: Well, it ... it seemed forever. It was ... very ... tiring (pause) thing. We didn't get to finish it; we ... we lost our Skipper in the, as I mentioned, during Tinian ... invasion. That was when the Japanese fleet came aboard and they launched their plane so late that ... many of them were running out of fuel before they attacked ... us, so some of them just ... came in un ... unintentionally ... kamikaze, I guess.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, yeah, that was before it was official ...

Mr. Durham: Yes.

Ed Metzler: ... kamikaze.

Mr. Durham: So ...

Ed Metzler: Now, was this Tinian or Saipan that you're speaking of here?

Mr. Durham: Well, both. They're ...

Ed Metzler: They're right next door.

Mr. Durham: ... the Tinian/Saipan and Guam was all one operation.

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Durham: But ... uh, one of our pilots was ... injured pretty severely and he had asked for permission to either land or land in the water beside us, and we were under air attack and ... so they ... instructed him ... to land on the plane if he could ... on the carrier ... if he could, and he said he was ... conscious; he felt he could. But on his approach, he either ... passed out, couldn't see well or something.

Ed Metzler: Man!

Mr. Durham: He ...

Ed Metzler: And ... what happened?

Mr. Durham: He flew into our ... planes forward of the ... deck; killed ... knocked several crewmen overboard that we never could ... recover ... or find. We left destroyers behind to look for them. Of course, they could have been injured or burned; I don't know.

Ed Metzler: Sure, don't know, yeah.

Mr. Durham: Uh (throat clearing), the ... guy that ... bunked right next to me was ... getting off the plane he was on, and there was just a huge ball of fire. We had a ... metalsmith that was a huge man from Minnesota, just walked through that fire, and we thought he was gone or lost his mind; he came back out ... hauling the gunner that he had pulled out of that plane through the ... fire. He was ... his clothes were on fire ... himself ... uh ...

Ed Metzler: You observed this ...

Mr. Durham: Yes, yes. They ... doused him right away; the Medics picked up the ... burned crewman, carried him and put him on my bunk which was ... the first ... bunk under the ... flight deck. And he was just screaming when I went down to ... see him. And ... I guess he died before they got him down ... sick bay; I never was for sure. It was a bad sight; he was ... oh, they ... even changed ... pulled my mattress and all out ...

Ed Metzler: That's right.

Mr. Durham: ... before I used it again.

Ed Metzler: Wow! What about the big Minnesota guy?

Mr. Durham: He was burned but not seriously. Uh, they treated him for a couple of days in sick bay, and ... that tough guy was ... back at work ... bandaged up (laughter).

Ed Metzler: Bless his heart!

Mr. Durham: Yes!

Ed Metzler: What a brave man!

Mr. Durham: I just can't imagine, and I don't see how he could have seen, but apparently, he knew right for the guy ... was; he was up ... even with the plane, so ...

Ed Metzler: Now, the Pilot who was wounded who tried to land, was he lost; was he dead ... killed?

Mr. Durham: No, he was pulled out of the plane by ... his plane hadn't ... caught fire yet when they pulled him out. But he was ... knocked out; he was unconscious or ... he'd been unconscious for ... we were never for sure whether ... he'd lost consciousness before he ... hit or ... the blow had knocked him out. But ...

Ed Metzler: So, you lost a lot of aircraft then on this?

Mr. Durham: That's why we headed ... south, yeah.

Ed Metzler: So, she ... basically, your ... your carrier was knocked out of service ...

Mr. Durham: Yes.

Ed Metzler: ... with that?

Mr. Durham: Yes, we went all the way to Espiritu Santos which was ... we ... went through the pollywog initiation ... on ...

Ed Metzler: Oh, you went through that!

Mr. Durham: ... yeah (chuckles).

Ed Metzler: So, let's see, that's crossing the equator for the first time, I think.

Mr. Durham: Yes.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Durham: Yes.

Ed Metzler: So, what'd they do to you on the pollywog ...

Mr. Durham: Well, really it was ... I wouldn't to go through it ... again.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter)

Mr. Durham: The ... the Pilots really got it. Those of us ... that were getting flight pay got ... pretty good ...

Ed Metzler: Licking, huh?

Mr. Durham: ... licking.

Ed Metzler: What'd they do to you?

Mr. Durham: Well, of course, you had to kiss the ... everybody had to kiss the baby's belly; that was ... one that had the fattest guy on the ...

Ed Metzler: (Laughter)

Mr. Durham: ... ship. He'd ... hold his nose and ...

Ed Metzler: (Laughter)

Mr. Durham: ... (unintelligible) greasy ... thought you'd ...

Ed Metzler: So, they got the fattest guy on the ship, and that was the baby.

Mr. Durham: Yeah. That was the baby.

Ed Metzler: And you had to kiss the baby's belly?

Mr. Durham: Yes!

Ed Metzler: And it was a long kiss?

Mr. Durham: That was a *long* kiss!

Ed Metzler: (Laughter)

Mr. Durham: And then you'd ... there was ... several other ... just humiliating ... circumstances before you went through the belt line ... of feeding you ... stuff that we wouldn't us ... know what it was and that kind of ...

Ed Metzler: Oh, my gosh, so this was a pretty serious pollywog thing?

Mr. Durham: Yes.

Ed Metzler: I've heard some of it just kind of fun, but these guys took it pretty serious.

Mr. Durham: Oh yes, especially on ... especially on the Pilots; they ...

Ed Metzler: And you were basically considered part of the Pilot group because you were on flight pay ...

Mr. Durham: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: ... and you were part of their ...

Mr. Durham: Yes, but they were a little easier on us because we were enlisted.

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Durham: The Pilots ... they ...

Ed Metzler: They're all officers, aren't they?

Mr. Durham: Yes.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter)

Mr. Durham: (Laughter)

Ed Metzler: So, here's your ship; she's beat up; she's burned a little bit; you've lost aircraft ...

Mr. Durham: Yes.

Ed Metzler: ... you've lost crewmen; you've lost aircrew.

Mr. Durham: Yes.

Ed Metzler: ... and yet you've still got ... you're still able to kind of have a little bit of fun crossing the equator.

Mr. Durham: Yes. Yeah, a pretty ...

Ed Metzler: Maybe you needed that release a little bit, huh?

Mr. Durham: I think it probably helped; it got our mind of it.

Ed Metzler: So, you went to Espiritu Santo for ... repairs?

Mr. Durham: Repairs ... then replenishment. The ship didn't need much ... repair, although we ... certainly needed supplies.

Ed Metzler: And you're ... going to need some more aircraft, too.

Mr. Durham: Then we ... yes, yes, we got aircraft. (Throat clearing), if you've got ... time to put up with me, I've got a kind of humorous story about ... picking up the aircraft.

Ed Metzler: Please do it!

Mr. Durham: had a high school friend ... that couldn't get in the Navy, but he got in the Seabees, and he was ... trained as a cook and was a Seabee cook at Espiritu Santo, and I knew he was ... down there, so I was able to contact ... him.

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Durham: And when we ... went ... ashore to pick up our planes ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Durham: ... uh, he sent a air ... armory or the Pilot, Gunnery Pilot and myself to pick up the ammunition part, checked the planes for all of that. Well, I went aboard with this ... Pilot, named Palmer, very nice, friendly guy. I told him that ... I had a friend there if ... he could drop me of, the friend could show us the island or

feed us or whatever. And he said, “Well, just drop me off at the Officers ... quarter’s ... bar ...

Ed Metzler: (Laughter)

Mr. Durham: ... pick up your ... friend, and visit and ... when you go to check the aircraft out, well, pick me up.” And I said, “Well, that’s ... a good ...

Ed Metzler: That’s real nice guy, huh?!

Mr. Durham: ... yes. I said, “Very good.” So, everything went smooth. Cook had asked the Commissary Chief if he could feed me a steak and they got a big steak out ...

Ed Metzler: Wow!

Mr. Durham: ... and a whole lot of special food that ... I’d ever eaten, and I ... I told him that the Pilot ... would like to know about the island or if there was any ... hooch that he could ... buy, and I ...

Ed Metzler: (Chuckles)

Mr. Durham: He said, “Well, there is a ... place that we could buy bootleg,” but he said, “I certainly wouldn’t recommend it, and I ... but I’ll show it to you.” And we used the jeep to go out and they ... these native women were ... they did have a little something on, but they were all squatting around. They dug out a little ... kind of hole and they had some kind of animal skin ... in this, and they were ... had a bunch of bark and weed-looking stuff, and they were chewing it up and spitting ... into this ... (unintelligible).

Ed Metzler: Yeah, yeah!

Mr. Durham: And he said, “I want to know, the hooch that you would buy, this is how it started. They ...

Ed Metzler: This is how it’s made! (laughter)

Mr. Durham: “This is fermented. Now it’s strained and everything,” but says, “there’s no way that ... this is ... clean.” Said, “I wouldn’t drink it and I’d sure tell a ... the guy if he still wants to buy it that it’s not very sanitary.”

Ed Metzler: Oh my gosh!

Mr. Durham: Well, anyway, when I picked up Lieutenant Palmer, well he was in a real good humor; he had had a few ... drinks, and he said, “Hell, yes, if we can buy some of that hooch; that’d be fun to have it aboard!” So, we went back out there;

didn't take him by the see where it was, but took him by where they were selling it.

Ed Metzler: You didn't take him to the preparation pit (laughter)?

Mr. Durham: No, no. So, he bought two bottles of that ... stuff, and he kept drinking on it, and drinking on it, and I'd already ... checked just two of the planes, and he hadn't ... even signed off on ... those yet before he got to where he couldn't ... sign his ... name.

Ed Metzler: He couldn't write anymore (laughter)!

Mr. Durham: So, I thought, "What am I going to do?!" So, I went over and talked to ... Engineering Officer and he said, "Well, if you've checked all of them, I'll ... can sign for you." And I said, "No, I've only checked two of them." And he said, "Well, get busy and ... check the rest of them."

Ed Metzler: How many did you have to check?

Mr. Durham: Uh, had eight ... to check.

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Durham: Well, he came by before I'd checked them all, and I said, "Now, I haven't gotten to those last two," and he says, "Well, we've got to get ... back." I said, "I don't know what's on them ... even." I said, "There's one plane I've already signed off, I mean ... on here that's ... doesn't have one wing gun." And he said, "Well, we can put that on ... after we get it on." And he said, "We've got to get Palmer ... on ... some way." And, so a couple of the other enlisted men that were over helping with the ... engineering thing helped load him on the jeep and we drove him to ... down to the dock, and they put a cargo net over ...

Ed Metzler: (Laughter)

Mr. Durham: ... we put him in a cargo net, and ...

Ed Metzler: Pulled him onboard like cargo, huh?

Mr. Durham: ... pulled him ... aboard, and he ... he was so out of it that ... (throat clearing) I was really worried maybe ... that stuff would ... kill him.

Ed Metzler: Poisoned him, yeah.

Mr. Durham: Yeah. So, (throat clearing) I told the doctor what he'd been on, and he said, "Well, I think he's still alright, but," said, "I've never seen anybody this ...

drunk.” But said, “His vital signs are ... still fair,” but said, “it’s going to be a while before he’s ... up and around.” And ... we were two days out and they came in to see me and said, “Are you aware that some of your ... planes don’t have guns in them?” And I said, “Well, I was aware that one of them didn’t have ... complete ... guns,” but I said, “I knew that we had ... one we could replace.” And they said, “No, there’s ... two-wing ... one plane without any wing guns.” And I said, “Well, there are two planes that I didn’t sign for,” and they ... said, “Well, we’re going to have to fly you back and pick up those ... things.” So, they put a plane ...

Ed Metzler: And this is when you’re two days out?!

Mr. Durham: Two days ...

Ed Metzler: Holy mackerel!

Mr. Durham: ... out, and I said, “Is Lieutenant Palmer going to go?” And they said, “No, he’s not on flying status yet.” (laughter)

Ed Metzler: He’s still too sick to fly! (laughter)

Mr. Durham: Said, “They’ve got to ... we’ve ... we do know that the stuffs available, so ... at the airport.” So, they flew us out and we picked it up and flew ... right back home. And then ... I had to ... appear at Captain’s Mast.

Ed Metzler: Really?!

Mr. Durham: Yes, so ...

Ed Metzler: What’d they do to you?

Mr. Durham: Oh, they said, “Just ... dismissed.” (Unintelligible)

Ed Metzler: So, they let you off?

Mr. Durham: Well yes.

Ed Metzler: Well, you were too busy babysitting Palmer (laughter).

Mr. Durham: (Laughter). I don’t know ... maybe he (throat clearing) ...

Ed Metzler: You think he put in a word for ...

Mr. Durham: ... gotten off or something.

Ed Metzler: ... he may have put a word in for you.

Mr. Durham: Yeah, he might have, so ...

Ed Metzler: (Laughter).

Mr. Durham: Yeah, so I went up, and they said, “No, that’s ...,” said they’d decided just to take two days liberty off the next ... liberty, and by then they had forgotten it.

Ed Metzler: So, you got off okay?

Mr. Durham: Yeah, yeah.

Ed Metzler: So, after you ... had your new aircraft or replacement aircraft aboard, and you’re headed ... I guess north again then?

Mr. Durham: Yes, we ...

Ed Metzler: Where ... where did you go?

Mr. Durham: We went to participate in the ... uh, invasion of ... Peleliu and Palau, and ...

Ed Metzler: What was that like?

Mr. Durham: Well, that was one of the most frustrating ... aircraft ... most frustrating ... things ...

Ed Metzler: Campaigns, yeah.

Mr. Durham: ... campaigns for us ...

Ed Metzler: Why?

Mr. Durham: ... I’ve ever been on. We had a target initially at the ... for the landing, and that went off ... real smooth. I say real smooth, it wasn’t ... uh, really any serious battles; we didn’t suffer any casualties; there was very little anti-aircraft ... fire. The Japanese retreated, but from then on, you never saw them, you ... we couldn’t use ... napalm because the lines were so close, we could actually ... I mean they would be ... just across a little strip from each other. If one side would stand up, they’d get shot, and ...

Ed Metzler: So, they were almost face to face.

Mr. Durham: Yes! Yes, they were ... within flamethrowers of each other if the flamethrower could stand up to get a burst off. But they ... that was ... cruelest type of ... hand to hand ... type ... fighting I’ve experienced, and that lasted and lasted. They finally withdrew the carriers there ... there. We were just not ... offering any support.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Durham: And by then, the Marines had a landing strip there.

Ed Metzler: Okay. So, then they could take off from ... but ... so, after that then they withdrew ... the ... the escort carriers?

Mr. Durham: Yes. Yes, so we went on to ... the next island of ... (unintelligible) and Palau I think it was.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Durham: Resistance was ... uh, very light, not any resistance from the air. That wasn't really much of a campaign for us; it was horrible for ...

Ed Metzler: For the guys that had to ...

Mr. Durham: ... the Marines, yeah.

Ed Metzler: ... take, yeah.

Mr. Durham: Oh, and that lasted ... I'm not sure, and I haven't ... really reviewed any notes, but that must have lasted into sixty ... or ... more days ...

Ed Metzler: Really?!

Mr. Durham: ... for that.

Ed Metzler: So, after that, where did you guys go?

Mr. Durham: Our next operation was ... well, between these, we had rehearsals at ... different places we would go to secure the island or something to rehearse with the landing boats and that kind of ... stuff, but our next operation was invasion of ... Leyte.

Ed Metzler: First invasion of the Philippines?

Mr. Durham: Yes.

Ed Metzler: That's a ... a well-known ...

Mr. Durham: Yes ... well, now ...

Ed Metzler: ... event.

Mr. Durham: ... I don't know, the first invasion of Mindoro might have been ...

Ed Metzler: Uh, maybe so.

Mr. Durham: ... or your ...

Ed Metzler: Yeah, you might be right.

Mr. Durham: But it was first invasion of the upper Philippines.

Ed Metzler: Right, right.

Mr. Durham: So ...

Ed Metzler: So, how was the White Plains involved in that?

Mr. Durham: We ... en ... endured ... a hurricane. The ... first day that we were supposed to lay down supporting fire for the invasion forces, so we were a day late getting onto our bombing ... thing. The next day, the seas were still high, but we ... launched ... a ... met fairly severe anti-aircraft fire, but ... not intense, able to ... really bomb their air ... airport ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Durham: ... pretty thoroughly. Second ... day that we were up, we were ... did a little further inland, experienced more anti-aircraft fire, but ... the landings went off ... well.

Ed Metzler: Were there any Japanese aircraft resistance at this point?

Mr. Durham: Uh yes, we'd had ... a few ... of the ... nuisance-kind aboard ship. We hadn't encountered any air to air ... resistance on our own; our fighter planes had. They had intercepted a number, and some of our Pilots had shot some ... down, but we'd been pretty well protected ... from that.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Durham: The ships that had some nuisance ... raids, kind of ... would just come in for ... causing ... standbys, closing down the ships for a while.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum. Now, your ... your ship is part of Taffy 3 ...

Mr. Durham: Yes.

Ed Metzler: ... isn't that correct/

Mr. Durham: Yes.

Ed Metzler: Why don't you explain what ... Taffy 3 was and how it fit in.

Mr. Durham: Taffy 3 was stationed right ... at the entrance of San Bernardino Strait, and Halsey's fleet, to our officers' knowledge, was guarding it. Uh ...

Ed Metzler: And he's got the big aircraft carriers and the big surface ships.

Mr. Durham: ... and a big fleet; it was a ...

Ed Metzler: And Taffy 3 is ... mostly ...

Mr. Durham: Taffy 3 ...

Ed Metzler: ... escorts and destroyer escorts and ...

Mr. Durham: ... consisted of ... consisted of six destroyers ... uh, six escort carriers, four destroyers, and three destroyer escorts. Five-inch guns was the ... largest ...

Ed Metzler: Big as they got (chuckles).

Mr. Durham: ... gun we had. And then ... the early morning of the 25th, uh, I had ... was not on any flight duty that ... day. In fact, I hadn't been on any because ... we were expecting to use torpedoes, and it was my duty to get them ... out if we did. So, I ... had not been up ... any. And ... I had gotten up ... early and ... fact, we had ... hadn't really secured from general quarters when we saw ... Halsey's fleet ... we thought. And they were ... at a distance, but we could see ... the mass of ships and ... have you seen the picture of ... four huge ... geysers ... surrounding two on one side of the ship and two on the other side?

Ed Metzler: I probably have, yeah.

Mr. Durham: It's a famous picture; that's the White Plains; we were the closest ...

Ed Metzler: You were the ... you were ... kind of on the front of the front lines.

Mr. Durham: ... yeah, we were the closest ships ... to the Japs.

Ed Metzler: And those weren't Halsey's ships, were they?

Mr. Durham: Well, we manned the anti-aircraft 'cause we thought those were huge bombs ... or ... some way, but it wasn't. But just minutes later, we realized those were ... 'cause the other smaller ships had opened fire by that ... time. And ... yes, we had ... it was a general quarters for sure (chuckles) then.

Ed Metzler: Well, just to be clear, what it was...was the big guns from the Japanese fleet ...

Mr. Durham: Yes!

Ed Metzler: ... that were bracketing you, your ship, right?

Mr. Durham: Yes! And that ... uh, dislodged our electrical connections, so we went dead in the water which ... probably we think now might have saved us. Since we weren't moving, Japanese ... uh, started concentrating their ... fire on the Fanshaw Bay which was ... next to us. And then ... uh, by this time, we could see them ... *clearly*, and we ... well, I say this time ... we ... had gotten into a rain squall, so that ... we weren't ... facing any fire during the rain squall, but we weren't moving either, so ...

Ed Metzler: So, you're still dead in the water?

Mr. Durham: Yes! So, the ships had ... kind of passed the rain squall and were chasing the ships that were ahead of ... us, and concentrated their fire on the Fanshaw Bay and, of course, by the time our ... crew found out what was wrong and had gotten the electricity and all ... going, uh, the Japanese ships had gotten far enough ahead of them that they had turned around. If you remember ... the graph of it how ... the squad ... how the ships ... retraced their steps?

Ed Metzler: Well, they turned back around, did they not?

Mr. Durham: Yes, they turned around, yes.

Ed Metzler: For no apparent reason from ...

Mr. Durham: Well, they had turned around because the destroyers and cruisers had gotten ahead of them, and ... were shooting torpedoes at them. And they ... turned around and then we were leading ... the bunch then.

Ed Metzler: So, did you launch planes?

Mr. Durham: Uh, yes. We got ... additional planes off; they were not armed for ... uh, ship combat, but we armed them and they had five-inch rockets and hundred pound bombs.

Ed Metzler: What about the torpedo planes?

Mr. Durham: Uh, well those ... that we still had aboard, they were launched with ... what ... two-part ... two torpedoes that we were able to ... get loaded.

Ed Metzler: So, you're busy loading those torpedoes ...

Mr. Durham: Yes.

Ed Metzler: ... ASAP, right?

Mr. Durham: Yes! So, we only had two ... torpedo planes on the hangar deck. So, they were ... launched. And uh, they got hits on a cruiser. We ... did not ... have another ... hit from ... heavy fire; we just had ... other shots fired at us from ... destroyers; had torpedo runs made on us.

Ed Metzler: By Japanese torpedo ... planes?

Mr. Durham: No.

Ed Metzler: Or submarines?

Mr. Durham: By, no, by ... just ... their destroyers.

Ed Metzler: Destroyers.

Mr. Durham: But aircraft, by then, had pretty much beat them off; we had the aircraft from Taffy 2 by that time, and even some that were on Tacloban.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum ... off ... off ... on Leyte, yeah.

Mr. Durham: (Unintelligible), yeah. Had gotten back and they were giving the Japs fits ... then. But ...

Ed Metzler: How close ... how close a look did you get ... at some of the Japanese ships, or ...

Mr. Durham: Very, I mean, close enough we could see the sailors individually.

Ed Metzler: No kidding!

Mr. Durham: Yes, they ...

Ed Metzler: What was ... destroyers or ... cruisers or what?

Mr. Durham: We had some of them on the destroyers and cruisers, uh, we couldn't believe it, but when they turned around to leave, some of them stood at the rails at attention. And if you can believe, we continued, our ships ... continued shooting at them however.

Ed Metzler: What do you think was going on?!

Mr. Durham: I don't know; it was kind of spooky.

Ed Metzler: You know, I've heard these stories before. I heard that sometimes they even saluted ... the ... some of the deck ... some of the crews that were in the water ... of ships, our ships, that had been sunk, you know, some of the destroyer escorts ... and stuff.

Mr. Durham: Yes. Well, they might have.

Ed Metzler: I have heard some strange stories, but they stood at attention as they went by?

Mr. Durham: Yes! (pause)

Ed Metzler: Isn't that strange?!

Mr. Durham: It ... it was strange.

Ed Metzler: Now, what's going through your mind? You're ... you're in the middle of one of the most ... intense battles, surface ship battles, of the war ...

Mr. Durham: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: ... and we're way out-gunned.

Mr. Durham: Yes.

Ed Metzler: What's going through your mind.

Mr. Durham: Well, that ... the Good Lord was looking after us. That was two hours and forty minutes; it seemed ... much longer. But, of course, we were ... I mean, we're not just standing there ... looking; we're ... arming and aiming and ...

Ed Metzler: Oh, I understand, you don't have time to think about ...

Mr. Durham: ... and then ... yes.

Ed Metzler: ... well, how much trouble you're in ...

Mr. Durham: ... yes.

Ed Metzler: ... probably. (laughter)

Mr. Durham: ... yes (laughter), so we were ... even ... those of us that weren't ... part of the ship's company were trying to help ... move ammunition up to them and ...

Ed Metzler: Sure!

Mr. Durham: ... especially when we didn't have electricity. We weren't getting those elevators working, and ... yeah, so we were ... volunteered to do anything!

Ed Metzler: Now, the [USS] Gambier Bay and the [USS] St. Lo were both ... sunk ...

Mr. Durham: Sunk, yes.

Ed Metzler: ... as a part of that overall action.

Mr. Durham: Yes.

Ed Metzler: Were you guys aware of that, could you see ...

Mr. Durham: Oh ...

Ed Metzler: ... any of that?

Mr. Durham: ... oh, we saw both of them; we were ...

Ed Metzler: Tell me about that.

Mr. Durham: ... we even ... uh, we were aware that ... we watched two of our ships land on the ... St. Lo; we were ... close enough to see them, well, we were ... within cruising distance of them. The plane that ... first plane that made a run at us ... uh, our anti-aircraft on both sides was active, and they fired; the St. Lo was taking on ... aircraft, so ... that was ... kind of wide open, and it veered off ... to the St. Lo. But another plane came in and I'm not for sure which plane hit the St. Lo whether it was the one that ... veered off from us or if it ... was the one

that hit the St. Lo, but the one that our gunners exploded ... exploded right under the Landing Signal Officer's platform. Its ...

Ed Metzler: Where is that on the ship?

Mr. Durham: ... it's (throat clearing) right ... on ... as far aft as you can go on the starboard side; it's a little platform. (Unintelligible) ...

Ed Metzler: So, this is ... this is near the stern on the starboard side?

Mr. Durham: Yes.

Ed Metzler: So, she hit the water, but not the ship?

Mr. Durham: Well, it exploded in the air.

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Durham: It ... parts of it ... uh, well, it wounded the Ordnance man standing right next ... to me ... not seriously. He ... I teased him about ... getting a ... Purple Heart for a scratch there.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter)

Mr. Durham: Uh, it ... it did cut him bad enough he needed a stitch or so, but ... (laughter).

Ed Metzler: (Laughter), so you gave him a hard time about that, did you? (laughter)

Mr. Durham: Yes (laughter), but ... shrapnel ... cut some holes in the side of the ship. One was wide enough to ... stuff a ... pillow into it, too, so ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Durham: ... I wouldn't get out at night. (pause)

Ed Metzler: So, that was a close for the ...

Mr. Durham: Yes.

Ed Metzler: ... White Plains?

Mr. Durham: Yes, it was.

Ed Metzler: And the other ships ... just like yours ... they're going down right and left.

Mr. Durham: Oh, it ... it exploded; we saw that hangar ... uh, not hangar deck, the elevator that went to the hangar deck ... just tumble. It ... I'll bet it went five hundred feet in the air. You've never seen an explosion like ... that.

Ed Metzler: Was this on the St. Lo? Or ...

Mr. Durham: Yes.

Ed Metzler: ... the Gambier Bay?

Mr. Durham: It was the St. Lo. The Gambier Bay was just sunk with shell fire.

Ed Metzler: That's what I heard ... like ... it ... either shell fire or a bomb.

Mr. Durham: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: I don't remember which.

Mr. Durham: Yeah, it was shell fire, but ... St. Lo exploded. I'm surprised that everybody wasn't killed; they had a surprising number of ...

Ed Metzler: Survivors.

Mr. Durham: ... survivors. Even ... our guys that were ... there ... in the ... on the hangar deck survived ... in ... why, that was an explosion like I've never seen.

Ed Metzler: Now, did you see the destroyers and the destroyer escorts, the [USS] Samuel Roberts, and the ...

Mr. Durham: Yes!

Ed Metzler: ... [USS] Johnston?

Mr. Durham: Yes, I did. I ...

Ed Metzler: Tell me about that.

Mr. Durham: Those were ... sacrifices.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Durham: They sacrificed themselves.

Ed Metzler: I mean, they just charged ... quietly and ...

Mr. Durham: Yes, and kept it up ... kept it up. Even the [USS] Hoel ... made runs after they had fired their torpedoes. Of course, the ...

Ed Metzler: The ... the Hoel was a ... a destroyer or a destroyer escort?

Mr. Durham: It was ... it was a destroyer.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Durham: Uh, the ...

Ed Metzler: That's H-o-e-l, if I remember.

Mr. Durham: Yes.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Durham: The Samuel. B. Roberts took ... I just couldn't imagine that little ship could keep ... going. The ...

Ed Metzler: Was she close by to the White Plains?

Mr. Durham: She was right ... west of us, and we ... we saw that first shell that hit her, and sent ... a bunch of her ... people overboard. One of the ... guys killed with that ... first hit ... his brother visits here often; wish I could think of his name. Uh ...

Ed Metzler: We've interviewed a lot of the guys from both the Samuel Roberts and the Johnston.

Mr. Durham: Yes, well, he ... was, of course, was ... older brother, but he was at this ... he's attended each one of their meetings. I've visited with him at this ... last meeting of the Samuel, or the ... presenter ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Durham: ... who wrote the book at the Samuel ...

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Durham: ... B; the brother was ... here, but ... no, we watched that ship get torn to piece on ... didn't see all of it, of course, 'cause they were putting down a lot of smoke for us.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum, uh hum.

Mr. Durham: But we could see the flashes and see ...

Ed Metzler: Well, some of those ships were so small that the heavy ordnance ... went through them ...

Mr. Durham: Yes!

Ed Metzler: ... rather than exploding because there wasn't enough resistance ...

Mr. Durham: Yes.

Ed Metzler: ... to (unintelligible).

Mr. Durham: Well, we've had ...

Ed Metzler: You just hold them!

Mr. Durham: Yeah! We ... had some holes in our ship that ...

Ed Metzler: Tell me about that, where?

Mr. Durham: ... of ... above the water line, but didn't explode ... not until it hit the water on the next side or ... maybe ...

Ed Metzler: Is that right?

Mr. Durham: ... it didn't explode; we don't really ...

Ed Metzler: So, it just went through clean, huh?

Mr. Durham: Yes.

Ed Metzler: How ... how many ...

Mr. Durham: I ... I think ...

Ed Metzler: ... crewmen were lost on the White Plains?

Mr. Durham: Really, I think there was only ... eight ... lost, and we ... it's amazing that ... but that was all that there was. And I'm not for ... for sure that that's an accurate ... number.

Ed Metzler: So, when the dust cleared and the smoke cleared, the Japanese were retreating because, I ... as I remember, they thought they had run into ... the big American fleet.

Mr. Durham: Well, that's what we've read ... later.

Ed Metzler: (Unintelligible), yeah. Didn't know it at the time ...

Mr. Durham: Yes.

Ed Metzler: ... I'm sure.

Mr. Durham: Oh, we were totally surprised at ... especially after they'd already ... cut us off, and those ... cruisers acted like they were ... uh, reluctant to ... retreat. Oh, and our ... since ... long since the war was over, the ... uh, Navy Department's given the White Plains credit for sinking a cruiser with their five-inch gun.

Ed Metzler: Really?!

Mr. Durham: The ... gun crew kept telling us they ... sunk a cruiser, and we'd say, "Yeah."

Ed Metzler: Yeah, right, right, right.

Mr. Durham: (Laughter)

Ed Metzler: (Laughter)

Mr. Durham: Yeah, but we never did ... believe them at the time we were ... well, if we'd knew the cruiser blew up, but ... uh, this Hornfischer, I believe is ... wrote a book and ... he sent most of us that he had the addresses to ... that the War Department said the ... the Japanese think the five inch ... gun hit the torpedoes on that ... cruiser ...

Ed Metzler: (Unintelligible)

Mr. Durham: ... stored torpedoes on deck and exploded it.

Ed Metzler: I'll be darned! Now, I ...

Mr. Durham: So, the ... the gunner was still alive last year at our reunion and he was really putting it on us for ...

Ed Metzler: (Laughter)

Mr. Durham: ... yeah (laughter).

Ed Metzler: So, he was strutting his stuff, was he?

Mr. Durham: Oh, you bet!

Ed Metzler: (Laughter)

Mr. Durham: I'm glad he lived to see that.

Ed Metzler: That's alright!

Mr. Durham: Yes.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter), I'll be darned. Now, where ... uh, so you go to the reunions on a ...

Mr. Durham: Yes, we just had our last one this ...

Ed Metzler: And the White Plains is ... specifically for the White Plains?

Mr. Durham: Yes, that's ...

Ed Metzler: Where was the last one held?

Mr. Durham: Wichita, Kansas.

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Durham: Only ... three of us showed up.

Ed Metzler: Three of you, huh?

Mr. Durham: Yeah, but ...

Ed Metzler: Well ...

Mr. Durham: ... we had the reservations for ... six, so we decided to go ahead and have it, and ... three of them were not able to make ...

Ed Metzler: Couldn't ... couldn't make it, yeah.

Mr. Durham: ... the trips, so ...

Ed Metzler: So, what did the White Plains and the rest of the surviving ships do after the ... Japanese broke the engagement and ... and retreated?

Mr. Durham: I can't recall ... the ... anchorage ... we went to; we ... the ... total ships that were still floating and able to make it ... went to an anchorage fairly nearby, not any big island or anything.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Durham: But ... we ... everybody checked to see if ... put parties overboard to ... and scuba gear ... to check the hulls and ... that stuff, and those of us that ... uh, felt we were seaworthy ... took off towards Pearl Harbor.

Ed Metzler: And so, the White Plains took off?

Mr. Durham: And so, the White Plains took off; we did stop at Eniwetok just ... overnight. I think that was primarily for ... food; I'm not for sure.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Durham: And ... headed back ... overnight at Pearl Harbor and then straight to San Diego.

Ed Metzler: Ah, that's a ... that's a little bit different than being in a battle, isn't it?

Mr. Durham: Yes!

Ed Metzler: To make it to San Diego; how did that feel when you steamed in?

Mr. Durham: Oh boy, that was great! It ... each ... well, half of us got thirty days off immediately ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Durham: ... and half got thirty days off later. I was in the first group, and supposed to report to ... Washington State, so ... had time for some of my ... heat sores to heal before I got up in February to freezing ...

Ed Metzler: Yeah, it gets cold up there!

Mr. Durham: ... Idaho and Montana ...

Ed Metzler: Uhm!

Mr. Durham: ... and Washington. Yes, that ... that was the most uncomfortable place that I'd been in. I ...

Ed Metzler: You prefer ... you prefer the warmth to the cold, huh?

Mr. Durham: Yeah, I complained about the heat, but never again (laughter).

Ed Metzler: You quit after that (laughter)?

Mr. Durham: After that (laughter).

Ed Metzler: So, who was your best buddy aboard ship when you were there?

Mr. Durham: Garland Crawford was his name.

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Durham: And he was a gunner aboard the (unintelligible) Plains; we ... vacationed together; we went on leave together; we drank beer together.

Ed Metzler: Stayed in touch after the war?

Mr. Durham: Stayed in touch; we continued to ... to visit. I know his daughters and his grandkids; he ... knew mine.

Ed Metzler: That's great!

Mr. Durham: He lived, initially, in uh, just north of Dallas. He bought a ... farm in the '60s up on the border. I can't think of the name of the little town that ... so I've visited him on his ... farm and did visit in San Antonio.

Ed Metzler: Well now, after you ... after the White Plains came back to the States, did you go out again on her?

Mr. Durham: Uh, no, not on the White Plains. A ... VC went through the complete, VC-4, went through the complete training cycle again. We kept a nucleus of the Pilots, uh, same Commanding Officer, uh, same Executive Officer, not many of the enlisted ... crew, uh, they kept me because I was the only torpedo rate ... that they had. We went through the ... same cycle of training ... did our rocket training up north, did gunnery training and rocket training in salt and sea. Uh, offshore training at Santa Rosa Naval Air Station.

Ed Metzler: So, this is what ... late '44, early '45 then, huh?

Mr. Durham: Yes. And we finished up again on ... Hawaii, this time we were stationed at Hilo for ... several weeks. We did ... all the ... flight ... crew and they ... I had to ... to that training ... the ... would drop you from a tower on a chute into water and teach you how to get out of ... a chute above water, and I never had gone through that training. Some of the actual flight crews that flew every day had gone through that, and ...

Ed Metzler: Why would they put you through that?

Mr. Durham: Well, because ... I was still ... flying occasionally, would fly if a crewman were sick or ... something special.

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Durham: Uh, the ... I usually flew on ... one with the torpedo ... drops. Uh, so, went through pretty ... rigorous training and really the Pilots were training on seaside assaults ... on this ... mission. Uh, we didn't find out that ... we were ... scheduled for the initial assault until the war was over; we were already at ...

Ed Metzler: The Jap ... Invasion of Japan, you mean?

Mr. Durham: Yes.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Durham: Uh ...

Ed Metzler: That was a good one to miss!

Mr. Durham: Yes! Yes, fortunately ... we missed that one. So, I was ... at Saipan we'd pulled in the harbor at Saipan waiting to ... see if we were going to pick up survivors or ... head back ... home.

Ed Metzler: Survivors in Saipan?!

Mr. Durham: Well, uh, from Japan ... we didn't know if we were going to pick up ...

Ed Metzler: Oh, to Japan, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Mr. Durham: ... POWs or not.

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Durham: So, we waited there, I guess, ten days and ... they said they had enough ...

Ed Metzler: So, you didn't actually get involved in that?

Mr. Durham: ... already, so, we weren't involved. Took off ... home.

Ed Metzler: Did you take ... were you part of the Magic Carpet effort that took ... people back home from ...

Mr. Durham: Yes, we took a ... a bunch of people ... home. Uh, I don't know who did a lot of our aircraft at Saipan, no, I take that ... back. We put ... we ... kept our aircraft, we put as much people as we could ... put on the hangar deck ... we put all our aircraft we could ... on the flight deck and unloaded them in Saipan, uh, at Pearl Harbor.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Durham: And then we picked up more people at Honolulu, so I don't know ...

Ed Metzler: So, you were a floating cruise ship ...

Mr. Durham: Yes.

Ed Metzler: ... at that point, huh?

Mr. Durham: Yes. So, I don't know if the people we brought on ... I don't remember if they were actual ... POWs or if they were just ... returning service ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Durham: ... people or ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum. So, where were you when you heard the war was over?

Mr. Durham: Uh, we were ... had just ... put off ... out of ... Hawaii; I can't even remember the name of the ship ... now, but it was the one that put her planes on and all and ... thought we were on our way when we heard it was over.

Ed Metzler: So, was there a little party when the ...

Mr. Durham: Oh, there was a bunch of hollering (laughter).

Ed Metzler: (Laughter)

Mr. Durham: A bunch ... of whistling; we didn't even ... have a drink. The officers might have been able to ...

Ed Metzler: Yeah, but not the enlisted guys.

Mr. Durham: ... break ... break into theirs; I don't know. I never did hear any of them ... say.

Ed Metzler: So, when were you ... when did you muster out of the ... Navy?

Mr. Durham: Well, I ... extended when I got back because ... I got stationed at Los Alamedas; that is a great place. I'd made friends out there when I was ... working there shortly before the war. It was a great liberty ... place.

Ed Metzler: Location, yeah (laughter).

Mr. Durham: And so, I'd missed that rush ... home and was able to ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Durham: ... save a little money.

Ed Metzler: So, what was ...

Mr. Durham: Saved some ...

Ed Metzler: ... what made it such a great liberty place?

Mr. Durham: Oh, people were nice. I ... you're invited everywhere, uh, war was over ... people were inviting you to eat ... treated us to ...

Ed Metzler: Treating you like kings, huh?

Mr. Durham: Yes!

Ed Metzler: Well, you deserved it after ...

Mr. Durham: Yes, so, well I don't know if we deserved it ... certainly treated us ... nice. And ... duty was very light although I did end up having to go on ... SP duty. I hadn't counted ... on that.

Ed Metzler: SP duty?

Mr. Durham: Yes.

Ed Metzler: What's that?

Mr. Durham: Uh, Shore Patrol.

Ed Metzler: Shore Patrol! So, you were like an MP, huh?

Mr. Durham: Yeah, so ... I ... didn't have a lot of trouble, but it was just ... cumbersome having to ... report in, and ... we voted ourselves to go on ... twenty-four hour straight duty, and off ... forty-eight, and they permitted us to do ... that which made it easier. And then we lost our mind, and ... asked for thirty-six on and ...

Ed Metzler: (Laughter)

Mr. Durham: ... and ...

Ed Metzler: Seventy-two off, I guess (laughter).

Mr. Durham: ... seventy-two off, and ...

Ed Metzler: Well, why didn't you just stay on for a week and then get two weeks off?

Mr. Durham: They said, "Try it." We lasted that two ... things and said we couldn't it ... went back to that twenty-four one and ... forty-eight off.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter). I want to go back to the Battle of Leyte Gulf and ask you a question.

Mr. Durham: Alright.

Ed Metzler: What's your view or opinion of ... Admiral Halsey and the fact that he ... took off up north to chase the Japanese and left Taffy 3 and the others pretty well ...

Mr. Durham: Well, I had ... pretty harsh ... views towards him at the ... at the time. I've kind of eased up ... on it. I still ... think he certainly should have left a part of his ... force there. I can see why he wanted to get up ... to get the carriers.

Ed Metzler: Yep!

Mr. Durham: Uh, but to have left it just completely unguarded, I think was an error on his part.

Ed Metzler: Now, I know it was certainly a controversial move.

Mr. Durham: Uh, was just ... really very anti-Halsey for ... some time, but ...

Ed Metzler: Was that because of what you read or what you heard when you were there actually or what?

Mr. Durham: Well, I thought had just ... deserted his ... his post. But that was ... just the scuttlebutt going around ...

Ed Metzler: At the time, huh?

Mr. Durham: ... at the time. Uh, really when I ... when the war was over and we were beginning to hear more ... stories and all, uh, I certainly saw reason that he ... took the majority of the fleet, however, I would ... had better feelings for him now if he'd of left ... at least a ship or so down there.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Durham: Somebody could ... even radioed us.

Ed Metzler: What do you think about the Japanese?

Mr. Durham: (Pause), well, I was ... (unintelligible) introduced to the war until they were past their prime but apparently, they were very astute and dedicated fighters. They were ... conscientious fighters as far as I ... knew. I've ... heard some horrible stories, as far as about the way they treated prisoners and ... so that's hard. I never actually ... saw any of that.

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Durham: (Pause), they ... they visit now as visitors ... as ... friendly ...

Ed Metzler: Yeah, they're allies now, right?

Mr. Durham: ... polite people.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Durham: So ...

Ed Metzler: Did you ... uh, get letters from home, send letters home when you were ...

Mr. Durham: Oh yes, heard ... my mother kept every letter I sent home.

Ed Metzler: Is that right.

Mr. Durham: Someday ... I'm going to break them out and see; I've never looked at them.

Ed Metzler: Oh, you've never looked at them?!

Mr. Durham: No.

Ed Metzler: And you've got them all!

Mr. Durham: And I've got them all, yes.

Ed Metzler: What's keeping you from looking at them?

Mr. Durham: I don't know, I've ...

Ed Metzler: You think you might have a good cry when you ...

Mr. Durham: Yes, I might. (laughter)

Ed Metzler: (Laughter)

Mr. Durham: Yes, I might. I've ... kept ... all of hers even ... some of the emails that ... we weren't very fond of at the ... at the time. The emails did get through to us however.

Ed Metzler: These are the V-mail things that?

Mr. Durham: Yes (throat clearing), they were very ... difficult to read on our end, I'm sure they were the other way, too.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Durham: But ... I would ... every time we pulled in, I would get a lot of mail from my ... folks and then ... small towns you'd hear from ... teachers ...

Ed Metzler: Right! The whole community.

Mr. Durham: ... whole, yeah.

Ed Metzler: How'd that make you feel?

Mr. Durham: Teary.

Ed Metzler: Really?! (laughter)

Mr. Durham: (Laughter)

Ed Metzler: But it felt good though ...

Mr. Durham: Yeah, oh yes.

Ed Metzler: ... it's good to know they were ... worried about you ...

Mr. Durham: Yes.

Ed Metzler: ... and thinking about you.

Mr. Durham: And it ... for sure, my family was doing well, you know?

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Durham: Not to ... just that they were safe, so ...

Ed Metzler: Right. And they knew you were okay.

Mr. Durham: Yes.

Ed Metzler: 'Cause did they ... they probably didn't know you were in the Battle of Leyte Gulf.

Mr. Durham: No, no.

Ed Metzler: They'd really of been worried if they'd of known that (chuckles)!

Mr. Durham: Oh well, uh, I was ... asked to speak at ... the school auditorium. The ... that thirty day leave after that, and they'd given us very strict instructions not to ... speak of our losses. Of course, if I had read the newspapers, I'd of known they were already ... out ...

Ed Metzler: They already knew.

Mr. Durham: ... so, I didn't (unintelligible) about the ... the battle or ...

Ed Metzler: Really?!

Mr. Durham: ... anything, and ...

Ed Metzler: And this was right after you came home?

Mr. Durham: This was, yes, just ... probably the first day I was home.

Ed Metzler: My goodness!

Mr. Durham: They ... sent some high school kids over at the ... asked me to visit, so I ... I did ... they had a lot of questions, so ... I talked about Saipan or ...

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Durham: ... or some of the others. But ... I just ... when they'd say anything about the Philippines, I said, "Well, I'm not supposed to talk about that yet."

Ed Metzler: Yeah, it's classified.

Mr. Durham: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Just read the newspapers.

Mr. Durham: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Anything you want to know! (laughter)

Mr. Durham: (Laughter), yes, by the time I read the newspapers, I knew more of what was going on.

Ed Metzler: Do you ever think much about ... the war years other than like when we're together here, or does it ... is it still on your mind?

Mr. Durham: No, I've roomed with ... veterans during my ... in fact, I worked on the railroad too late to get into pharmacy school at Austin; that's what I'd wanted to do, and so I went to Baylor ... they were opening later, and Baylor had a house just for veterans. And I roomed in with six ... guys; I knew they were all in service. We never visited with each other ... what we did ... uh ...

Ed Metzler: Never talked about it.

Mr. Durham: ... in fact, never ... asked who ... what service. (Unintelligible) day during the Army/Navy football game, we decided to have a touch football game between us, and we divided up those in the Navy and those in the Army; that was the first time I knew ...

Ed Metzler: Who was what.

Mr. Durham: ... uh, three of my roommates were in the Army and the rest of us ... were in the Navy ... in that room of ... six of us.

Ed Metzler: Now, why do you think that was? Why ... were you guys so reluctant or ... just kind of not ... revisit that?

Mr. Durham: I don't know; I ... I really ... I didn't like to visit ... visit about ... our kids when they growing ... up; I didn't mind them knowing I was in the Navy. I ... I visited with them about ... if they'd ask questions about the Navy, I didn't mind, but I didn't like to talk about ...

Ed Metzler: Tell them stories about combat, yeah.

Mr. Durham: ... combat. Yeah, so I don't know, I ... uh, I really wasn't comfortable ... really until in the '80s we started having these reunions, and then it got to where ... wife said, "That's all we'd visit," so ... we'd all get together and the wives would go ... visiting and shopping in ... whatever town we were ...

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Durham: ... meeting, and ... and I learned ... more about the other guys' experiences even that friend that ... we visited so much. I really never ... visited with him till we got to going to those ... things. After that, he told me that ... during that Battle of ... Leyte Gulf, that ... the way his Pilot would miss anti-aircraft ... fire, he'd ... fly down at sea level between the ships and said they couldn't depress their anti-aircraft guns ...

Ed Metzler: Low enough.

Mr. Durham: ... low enough ... to do any ... and said, "That's ... they'd stay ... down ... right at sea level until they had to pull up due to some obstacle or ... or something."

Ed Metzler: Uhm!

Mr. Durham: Said ... if it was only fire coming in, that they had to ... endure.

Ed Metzler: Wow! Well, what else can we talk about ... about the war years?

Mr. Durham: (Sigh).

Ed Metzler: What would you like to tell me?

Mr. Durham: Well, (pause) ... I don't know. I ... was ... very disappointed that it took me so long ... to get into combat, and so thankful ... now for the training. My ... attitude has matured.

Ed Metzler: Turned out that training came in handy, huh?

Mr. Durham: Yes, and fortunate that I was not over there; they were outgunned, outmanned, uh ...

Ed Metzler: Yeah, you guys, in a lot of ways, you got lucky.

Mr. Durham: Yes. Yeah (unintelligible) was our lucky point.

Ed Metzler: But ...

Mr. Durham: (Unintelligible) and (unintelligible).

Ed Metzler: ... it was more than luck though, I mean ...

Mr. Durham: Oh yes, it was!

Ed Metzler: ... you guys were the ... probably ... of all the stories of the war in the South Pacific, there's *nothing* ... that, in my opinion, that rivals the valor ... of Taffy 3!

Mr. Durham: Oh, it was ...

Ed Metzler: That's just ... it's *still* an amazing story!

Mr. Durham: Oh, you have heard that ... we were ... issued (unintelligible) side arms ... we had available ... in the ...

Ed Metzler: No.

Mr. Durham: ... in the event we could get ... to shore.

Ed Metzler: Really?!

Mr. Durham: Yes. So ...

Ed Metzler: So, assuming you were sunk, if you got ashore, you would have a sidearm.

Mr. Durham: Yes!

Ed Metzler: Isn't that amazing?!

Mr. Durham: Yes. But of course, squadrons all had pistols, but we did have a few rifles aboard ship that they ... issued some of the ... their own crew in the event we could ... get ashore.

Ed Metzler: Do you feel like your combat experience ... changed the way you look at life and changed you ... as a person?

Mr. Durham: I don't know that it ... changed me as a person; I was ... I was raised in the church. My parents were certainly churchgoers; I attended church services in the service. If ... anything, I've grown maybe a little more lax in my ... attendance, and that bothers me.

Ed Metzler: But you went in as a kid; how did you come out ... of the war?

Mr. Durham: Oh, I was ... I was absolutely ready to ... join ... get an education ... join the labor force.

Ed Metzler: Get on with your life.

Mr. Durham: Yes!

Ed Metzler: Have a life.

Mr. Durham: Yes.

Ed Metzler: Which is what your generation did.

Mr. Durham: Yeah. Go to work, get a job ...

Ed Metzler: Have a family.

Mr. Durham: Yes!

Ed Metzler: Which you did. How many kids did you have?

Mr. Durham: Two daughters.

Ed Metzler: And when were you married?

Mr. Durham: In ... (throat clearing) '52.

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Durham: Yeah, and got out of college in ... '50, uh, had gotten a job in Corpus Christi as a pharmacist, gotten ... I stayed in the reserves, gotten a notice I was going to get recalled.

Ed Metzler: Korean War.

Mr. Durham: So, quit my job. I joined a bomb disposal force at ... at the university ... that was ... 'cause I'd been ... I'd gone through that ... bomb disposal course in ... Hilo, Hawaii.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Durham: Uh, so I ... had a pharmacy degree, and I wanted to get in the Medical Corps, and the Navy said they were ... didn't have room.

Ed Metzler: Didn't need you.

Mr. Durham: Didn't need me there, and they advised me to transfer to the Air Corps, said they were taking applicants for pharmacist. So, I did transfer to the ... Air Force Reserve, and I got a letter that I was accepted. And I noted that ... when the pharmacy opening came up, they would call me. I bummed around, I partied and drank beer for a while (chuckles).

Ed Metzler: (Chuckles)

Mr. Durham: Ran out of money, so ... had a chance to go back as a relief pharmacist there at Sabinal, and ... called to find out why I hadn't heard. And they said, "No vacancy." And when my ... enlistment time came up, I hadn't heard anything, so I ... called and notified them my enlistment was up, and they said my discharge ... was in the works; hadn't cleared yet, but I was ...

Ed Metzler: I'm out of here!

Mr. Durham: I was free, so I went ahead and accepted the ... full-time job out there and ... got ... well, before I got married, I accepted a job ... traveling ... for Abbott Laboratories ... calling on physicians and hospitals. And I worked through this area, and married shortly after I went to work for Abbott.

Ed Metzler: Cool.

Mr. Durham: And ...

Ed Metzler: Well, we've pretty well covered the war, haven't we?

Mr. Durham: Yes, we have.

Ed Metzler: And I appreciate your spending the time with us. I ... I'm always spellbound by ...

Mr. Durham: I wasn't ...

Ed Metzler: ... talking to you guys and ...

Mr. Durham: ... wasn't ...

Ed Metzler: ... what you went through and I thank you for ...

Mr. Durham: ... able to ... issue you ... much ... new.

Ed Metzler: Oh, yes you did, because it was ... as seen through your eyes, and it was ... and that's different than anybody else saw it, so ... that's why we value every single ... individual interview, so thank you for that.

Mr. Durham: Uh hum.

Ed Metzler: And I want to end this by ... thanking you for what you did for our country during the war, and ... we still don't say that enough.

Mr. Durham: Well ...

Ed Metzler: So, thank you, sir, for ... your service to our country.

(end of interview)

FINAL copy

CD – #OH04051 – Mr. AJ “Jim” Durham

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