

## John Eddleman Oral History Interview

MARK CUNNINGHAM: This is Mark Cunningham. Today is March the 14th, 2014. I'm interviewing Mr. John Eddleman. This interview is taken place at the Hilton Hotel in Clearlake, Texas. The interview is in support of the Nimitz Education Research Center and National Museum of the Pacific War for the Preservation of Historical Information related to World War II. First off, Mr. Eddleman, may I call you John?

JOHN EDDLEMAN: Yes.

MC: I want to thank you for your service to our country, and I want to thank you for doing the interview with us. OK. Now, let's start right at the beginning. When were you born? What's your birthday?

JE: July 14, '22.

MC: OK. Nineteen-twenty-two.

JE: Sure.

MC: Nineteen-twenty-two. OK. And where were you born?

JE: Tipton, Oklahoma. T-I-P-T-O-N. Tipton.

MC: All right. And tell me a Little about who were your parents.

JE: Sure.

MC: What were your parents' names?

JE: Fred and Eileen Eddleman.

MC: All right, and what did they do?

JE: Where did they live?

MC: What did they do? What did your father do?

JE: Where did they what?

MC: No, what did your father do for a living?

JE: Oh, he had a hardware store in the John Deere Equipment Tractor Company.

MC: OK. And what were you doing when the war broke out?

JE: I visited -- Well, when it broke out, I was living on a ranch. My dad bought a ranch, and we had cattle. I drove there until I retired, I mean, graduated from high school in (inaudible), Oklahoma. And they didn't go until a few days after Pearl Harbor was bombed.

MC: So you -- shortly after Pearl Harbor?

JE: Yeah.

MC: How old were you when you went in? You'd have been about...

JE: Nineteen.

MC: Nineteen. OK. Where did you go to boot camp?

JE: Great Lake, Illinois.

MC: Cold, huh?

JE: Sure.

MC: That was pretty cold up there in the winter time.

JE: Yeah. Well, everyone was sent to San Diego, and then when they called my group it was at Great Lake, Illinois. It was full of ice and snow when we got there. We all stayed in Oklahoma City for a few days, so we had bought some our clothes. Big overcoat, thing like that. So it's pretty cold.

MC: Right. What were your first impressions of the Navy?

JE: Impression?

MC: Yeah.

JE: Oh it was what I thought it would be. It would be a place where you take orders and carry on, and of course, I've been in the Scouts ever since I was 12 years old, and I knew a lot about, you know, even the military at that time. So, my impression was very really...

MC: Now, boot camp lasted, what, six or eight weeks?

JE: Yes.

MC: OK, and after boot camp did you receive any other training, specialized training?

JE: Took me to a school they called bugle master school. I didn't request it. Before I knew it, that's where they sent me, and I guess they found out I played the trombone in the band. They knew that I knew a little bit about music, so they sent me to the bugle master school.

MC: OK. And where was that?

JE: San Diego.

MC: And how long -- Well, that's a little bit warmer there, wasn't it?

JE: Yeah. (laughter) From there they sent me to Virginia to be assigned the Battleship *Texas*.

MC: So, after bugle school, your first real assignment was *Texas*, right?

JE: Uh-huh.

MC: And when was that, roughly?

JE: When I went aboard?

MC: When did you go aboard?

JE: May '42.

MC: May of '42. OK. Now, what did you do? Where was your first trip?

JE: Where was my first what?

MC: Where did the *Texas* go? Where was your first trip on the *Texas*?

JE: Well, we maneuvered a lot out on the Atlantic Ocean, and we made invasion of Africa in '42.

MC: OK. That was in October, right?

JE: Yeah.

MC: October. I want to back up a minute. When you went aboard that ship, what were your impressions? What's your first impression of the ship?

JE: It was a great big boat. (laughter) There were 300 of us went aboard at the same time.

MC: You were new crew members?

JE: Sure.

MC: You were new crew members? Three-hundred new crew members?

JE: Yeah, and most of them had just gotten out of boot camp. But they lined us up -- We came in on Saturday, and they told us, "Find a hold to sleep in." -- And then, so Monday we lined up in a big long line for galley aft or fanfare or port side or over to starboard side. After that, when they got to me, they -- front and center -- well, then they sent me up there by the galley, and a commander was assigning the troops. And it was the gunner's mate who saw me in line, and he come over and ask me who I was. He said that that was a gunner's mate on the pom-pom guns. They were replaced later by the 40-millimeter. He wanted to know if I'd like to be up there, and I said, "Yes, that's why I joined the Navy."

MC: So you were going to be a gunner?

JE: Yeah, I thought I was. And so he said, "When you get up there and tell that commander you want to be in the 7th End Division," so -- right front and center - he said, "Stand at attention." I said, "I'm standing at attention, sir," my shoulders back, my chest out, my feet together. And he

said, "How long have you been in the Navy at (inaudible)?" I said, "Well, since right after Pearl Harbor." I said, "I'd like being put in the 7th End Division, sir." "Well," he said, "That's all that I've got. Well, I figure you boys over there should...OK, go on over there with that bunch," and he pointed at a group of guys. And it took us about three or four steps from him, and he holler, "Hey boy, come back here." (laughs) I feel a real fool horse, and I said, "Yeah, what do you want?" He said, "Shows in your record here that you were the number-one man at bugle master school in San Diego." I said, "Oh, it does?" I said, "I didn't want to be a bugler." He said, "Yeah, you know it does." He said, "We've got six of them on this ship, and they don't have a player. Since you went through that bugle master school, you're in charge of them. You're going to have to teach them more than they know." (laughter) So, I didn't want to be that. But I put in for another division right after I was assigned to that one, but they put us all in the navigation division. So I ended up overall with the best job on the ship.

MC: You ended up where?

JE: And I served with them for the rest of the war.

MC: And what division was that?

JE: Sir?

MC: What division did you serve?

JE: Navigation division. Called the hymn division, and so we did a lot of things. We stood watch on the navigation bridge while we was underway. In port, we stood watch on the quarterdeck. And on the quarterdeck, you're assigned to several things. On the navigation bridge, you're assigned quite a number of things too. And beside bugling.

MC: But you did the bugling as well?

JE: Yeah.

MC: So you really had two jobs, huh?

JE: Yeah the navigator was our division, so he let us do several things. He was a real fine officer. And we all wanted to do something else besides play the bugle. So let us go to firefighter school, gunner school, and things like that. They were off-shore in Virginia, so we really enjoyed it.

MC: OK, now tell me about Operation Torch, North Africa.

JE: Operation what?

MC: Torch, North Africa. Tell me about your North African campaign.

JE: North Africa?

MC: Yeah.

JE: Well, it wasn't really a long trip. There were several convoys joined together, just before the invasion, and we

invaded a place north of Casablanca. It was an airstrip there, and then another Army raided south of Casablanca. So Casablanca wasn't bombed or tore up like a lot of places were, but we bombarded for -- well, the troops went in, and they landed ashore. A lot of swells coming up in the ocean. And one of the chains had some troughs that were 30 feet deep. Well we got a call from the general there that they needed to get back to the ships because there was a big call on the tanks coming in from the east, across the desert. And they only had men ashore, with their rifles, and their small arms. They would need to get back on the ship. Of course they couldn't bring ashore their tanks and things like that that they had, but they couldn't get back because of the swells in the sea. So, they saw these tanks. So the general asked us to shoot over the city, and we shot quite a few rounds.

MC: Now, what gun were you on?

JE: Sir?

MC: What was the gun you were on? Were you manning a gun?

JE: No, I was on the bridge, and we knocked out what a number of them -- tanks. The rest of them turned around and left, so it didn't take much from them to take that port.

MC: But you were up on the bridge able to watch all this stuff.



JE: Yeah, there was a correspondent up there at that time, and his name was Cronkite -- of course, before he got his big name. And he was writing all this stuff down. And he wanted to interview everybody up there.

MC: Cronkite? Did you say Walter Cronkite?

JE: Walter Cronkite.

MC: Yeah, I've read he was on there.

JE: So, after it settled, the sea went down, then we went down south. Went ashore on liberty at Casablanca, and stayed there a few days. Then we went up on the Mediterranean side of North Africa, and we helped load a bunch of prisoners aboard troop ships. They took us over there in Army trucks. Then we brought them back to the troop ships. We brought back the first convoy of prisoners. They were Italian and German prisoners, and then several things happened. One, for instance, all they had had around them was a barbed wire fence. They wouldn't want to escape, and one of them -- big, fat guy -- I saw this military policeman, -- This guy was limbering along real slow and holding things up. -- he reached up and blew him in the backend. He said, "Get along there, you're holding things up." And that little guy he said, "You can kick all you want to serge," he said, "I'm going to go to good old USA, and you're going to go to hell-hole Italy."

MC: (laughs) This was a German prisoner, is that this?

JE: He was Italian prisoner. And he was on the ship that I was on, going back to the troops, and I said, "You speak real, good English, like you're from Midwest, United States." He said, "I was raised south of Chicago." And he said, "My family and I come back to Italy to see our kinfolks. We knew the war was coming, so we came back to visit them before we got into it. And so, they made me stay there. They put me in the Army."

MC: So, he was happy to get --

JE: He was actually an American citizen.

MC: -- and happy to get taken prisoner.

JE: And same thing happened to another man who was a lawyer in New York City, but he was a German. He went back to Germany, and Hitler wouldn't let him out of the country. Put him in the Army. So, there's a lot of stories like that of people that went back home to visit, even their folks were still living back home.

MC: OK. Now tell me, where'd you go after the North Africa?

JE: Well, we come back to the states of course, and then back and forth to England, -- Quite a number of trips. -- escorting convoys. The *Texas* was a flagship.

MC: What is the flagship? What does that mean?

JE: That means an admiral is aboard, and he's in command of several ships in that division. The flag is called -- The admiral, his troops are called the flag. So if the flag is aboard, that means the flagship, and the admiral is in command. But he's the command of quite a number of ships. But the Texas, each ship has their own commander, which is a captain, and our captain...Had four captains. Three of them were in the first part of the war. Captain [Fass?] was our commander invading Africa, then he was replaced later on by Captain Baker, which was with us until the war was over. He was our captain during Norman Invasion and our Battle of Cherbourg, the invasion of southern France at Saint Tropez. Then we went to the Pacific and invaded Iwo Jima, and the last battle of the war, we spent 50 days battle stationed at Okinawa.

MC: OK. Let's back up a minute. After North Africa, you said you made several trips to England.

JE: To England and Scotland.

MC: England and Scotland. And those were convoy trips?

JE: (inaudible) those troops across.

MC: Now, by this time, you had been in the service a couple of years, right?

JE: Yes, sir.

MC: Did you get any leave at home in-between?

JE: First leave I got was an eight-day leave, and the trains had to stop at every mill stop. It took me four days to get home, so half of my leave was already up, but I did stay two days. And my dad took me back to Oklahoma City to catch the train back to Virginia. So, I was two days late getting back. Took me four days to get back to the ship, but when I reported I told the officer on deck why I was late, and he said, "Yeah, everybody's late coming back because of the transportation." So, they didn't do anything about it. In other words, weren't --

MC: Weren't penalized. Now tell me, now I lost my thought. I lost my train of thought.

JE: And I had another leave after Cherbourg. We got back to states. We had to have the bridge rebuilt like it originally was. It was torn up when we got shelled; hit.

MC: That was in North Africa?

JE: Huh?

MC: You got hit in North Africa?

JE: No, we got hit in Cherbourg, France. Cherbourg. They had the largest coastal guns in the world. They could shoot 27 miles, and we could only shoot 14 miles, but we had to take them out because that was a port to bring in all supplies for them to go onto Europe, I mean to Germany. And our men come up from the south, but they couldn't approach these

guns. They didn't know what they were, they were so powerful. And there was forts in the gulf, forts there. These guns were Hamburg guns, and they missed us 86 times, but they hit us twice. One was a doozy. But one hit the top of the conning tower and blew up into the deck of the bridge. Had a lot of -- just tore it all up. Hurt a lot of guys. Killed one person. His name was Christian; Chris Christianson. And killed him immediately.

MC: Did you know him?

JE: When I come to, I was --

MC: OK. Now you were in the conning tower -- you were on the bridge when it got hit?

JE: Yes.

MC: Did you get hurt?

JE: Well, I didn't think I did at first, but I did get hurt. I lost my hearing in my right ear. But when I'd come to, I was laying on my stomach, and my face was a pool of blood. I didn't know if it was mine or not because I didn't see anything. I was kind of numb all over because that was a terrific explosion. But a lot of the guys standing on the deck there -- just about four feet from me -- and the concussion broke all the bones in their feet. And then, some of them's legs blown in half. And two of them, they finally had to amputate both legs. And one, he lost half

his skull, and he was tore up bad. He spent three years in the naval hospital in Maryland.

MC: Now these are all guys on the bridge?

JE: He was -- When we got hit, he was operating the engine order telegraph, which can tell the speed of whether reverse or forward and it sounds signals down to engineers down in the engine room whether to speed up or stop or reverse.

MC: OK. Now, hold on a minute. Let me go back for clarification because we jumped around a bit. This was at Cherbourg, where you got hit?

JE: Who?

MC: Cherbourg, where you got hit.

JE: Cherbourg, yes.

MC: OK. And that took --

JE: This was about two weeks after the invasion of the Normandy.

MC: OK. In a minute I want to go back and talk about Normandy a little bit. What injuries did you get from that? Did you...

JE: What --

MC: When the ship got hit, what were your injuries?

JE: Oh, well, I found out later on, I just bruised up all over. My joints were hurting, and then later I found out that

discs -- yeah, that's what they call them -- in my neck were damaged, and they're still that way. I've got terrible pain in my neck 24 hours a day.

MC: Wow.

JE: But they won't operate. Several doctors have checked me out. Said because if they did, there's so many nerves in that area, it could paralyze me for life. I've chose not to have it. They put me on a disabled veteran's list sometime later because I found out that. I lost my vision too, but not because of that; not because of the shell. When I was come to, smoke was carrying out. The wind was blowing. I looked up, and I saw the chaplain. And he was the only one who was able to stand beside me, and the rest of them laying around with awful bad injuries. I started giving first-aid: syrettes of morphine plus tourniquets. And they were bleeding to death, some of them, and they were in terrible pain. The syrettes must have had quite a bit of morphine in them because it really -- it just took all the pain away from... Actually they got a little happy, and they'd laugh at the mess of things.

MC: Right.

JE: And one of them, I'd thought he'd gone into shock, so I run down to the captain's sea-going cabin, which is up just after the bridge. I got a blanket off his bunk, took it

out, wrapped it around him. And he was feeling good from the morphine by that time, but I thought it'd get him to settle down because he was shaking so bad. So, I ran to hug him, and on top of him, and he started jabbering and talking. And I said, "Let's don't talk. I've got to attend to somebody else." I said, "I gave you the captain's blanket." I said, "They're about twice as thick as ours." He said, "I wonder what the captain will do when I find out we stole his blanket." I said, "Don't worry about that now." (laughs) I said, "He'll never know who got it. He probably won't care; won't say a thing about it."

MC: Right.

JE: And he was the last one they took off the bridge.

MC: OK, now let me ask you something. And this is going back a little bit, but your station of operation was on the bridge, right?

JE: Yes sir.

MC: At the time we were hit, I was watching the radar scope, and that was my job. And there was large ships in the area. Small craft stays away from the large ships, so we don't worry about them, but if you see a large ship on the radar screen, it's called a PPI, and you know that there's a major collision. And I saw a large blip, and I turned and went to the starboard hatch and hollered down to the



captain. He was out on the wig with the navigator and the executive officer. And I hollered, and I said, "Captain Baker!" He turned, "Yes?" It was real hard to hear because it was shooting and they were bombs going off around us -- explosions that is. Like I said, we was missed 86 times, but I told him, I said, "There's a large rip two points off the starboard bow." I said, "I believe it's the Battleship *Arkansas*. That puts in a collision course." Of course, being the old cigarette he was, he knew that, so he hollered in to the held men, "Hard right rudder!" And he was the boy that was killed.

MC: That was Chris Christianson.

JE: Yes.

MC: OK.

JE: As soon as he got the rudder hard right, he hollered back, "Hard right rudder. (pause) The rudder is hard right." That's what he hollered, so I relayed that to the captain. I no more than got that out of my mouth, and the shell hit. Bam! Of course, they were out on the starboard wing. They felt a jolt and everything, but no one out there was hurt. Everyone that was hurt was inside the wheelhouse, and so the chaplain did all they could for the guys that was hurt.

MC: Right. Now, your position in the bridge. You got to know the officers pretty good, right?

JE: Yes.

MC: So, you had a real appreciation for the captain and were actually close to them, right?

JE: Yeah. Well, they were all ranking officers who...one or another way another way there was always an officer in command on the bridge, and also in the battle the captain's always up there. Captain executive officer. The executive officer's second in command.

MC: Right. But you must have gotten to know those guys pretty good.

JE: Oh yeah. They were real fine people, especially Commander [Cabarilis?]. Well, in that division, he was the navigator, and he was the one who navigated the whole fleet in North Africa. And he was a superb navigator, but he was promoted to executive officer later on. And he was always on the bridge, and he still got a lot of navigation. But he was a real fine officer because he did a lot for the men. And at one time, we was in our battle stations for 50 days at Okinawa, and he tried to make things just as pleasant as he could because we were all, you know, getting dirty, not eating properly...

MC: OK. Now, I want to move you back in time here. We went to Cherbourg, but I want you to tell me about the Normandy Invasion.

JE: Normandy?

MC: Yeah, we didn't talk about that, so tell me about that one?

JE: The captain -- We were ready to start shooting, and the troops unloaded all the LCVPs. And they go, several of them go in circles, all around, around until they get the signal to land.

MC: Now, you were off of Omaha Beach right?

JE: Yes, and the captain, he said, "Ed, will you do commence firing signal?" I said, "Yes, sir." It was 142 bugle calls I made, and I said, "Yes, sir." And he said, "When I give you the nod, I want you to sound."

MC: Say that again please.

JE: So he wanted me to sound commence firing.

MC: OK. That's with your bugle?

JE: And so, he gave me the nod, and then we started bam, bam, bam shooting. And we're shooting shore installations, tanks, and a million places, and I was on the bridge. I could see planes shot down. I could see gliders going in that crashed.

MC: You saw the whole Normandy Operation?

JE: Yeah. It was just terrible. I saw, in fact, dead soldiers just like you would firewood on a beach over there. A lot of them killed.

MC: Now, how far off the beach were you?

JE: At sea?

MC: How far off the beach?

JE: At that time we was two miles off the beach.

MC: OK, but you could see the activity on the beach?

JE: Yeah, we could see through -- We had binoculars, plus --

MC: Ah.

JE: -- long glasses.

MC: Yeah. OK.

JE: They were scopes.

MC: So you had -- my goodness, you had a bird's eye view of the Normandy Invasion.

JE: That's it. Always said I had a ringside seat --

MC: Wow!

JE: -- of the invasion of Normandy and all the other invasions, but it was terrible. I just couldn't understand why there we so many, but it took that many to chase them, which reminds me, we did get a call to shoot a village that the Army general said they couldn't possibly take it because they tripled in them in manpower. And the admiral -- the command the whole operation of the Navy -- he said we couldn't shoot that far. It was two miles beyond our range. And Captain Baker said, "Hold on." So we fellered [sic] the port buoys. There's pumps that can pump water out, there's, valves that let water in. And they just push

a button, and the electrical motor would take care of things. So we played with the port buoys, and then the (inaudible). And it lifted the ship where the starboard side was slipped out of the water quite a bit, and that raised our guns up. We could shoot further, and the general said he had 4,000 soldiers, but they had 12,000 German soldiers in this town dug in in order to take the town. The civilians had been gone for several hours already, and they were already that far in than our men was. So, we let loose some shells. Ten at a time. Broadside. It's the only time I ever saw them shoot so much broadside. Old *Texas* would shake and shimmer. I thought she was going to fly to pieces.

MC: Kind of noisy, huh?

JE: It was awful, but we got the call to cease fire, and the captain talked to them. The general said that we're going into the town. Said, "It looks like there's no town at all there." So, --

MC: Is that from your guns?

JE: -- we went in. We just destroyed the whole town.

MC: Yeah.

JE: And he called back later on. Said, "Well, we took our target without firing a shot." Said, "No one was hurt. No one fired a shot."

MC: That was because you guys lighted that tank?

JE: Said, "Their attention was over here with us. Fifty percent." He said the fatal casualty was about 50 percent. Had a lot of young German soldiers killed, and no one liked to see -- even if they were the enemy -- to see so many killed. You know, young people especially. And heck of a lot of young people in the Army. All a man could do was shake their heads, but so we went on. We all did. And by the way, when my older brother was a colonel in the Army, he was on one of those LCVPs. I didn't know it until later.

MC: Going in?

JE: He said we fired guns over his head. Sounded like a freight train flying over. (laughs) He was older than me by about five years.

MC: All right, now during that period of time you guys -- Can you hear me?

JE: Yes sir.

MC: OK. During that period of time, you guys also put a lot of fire on Pointe du Hoc, right?

JE: What?

MC: You put a lot of fire on Pointe du Hoc?

JE: Yeah.

MC: Tell me about that.

JE: Well, they -- First we got a call that there was some rangers, soldiers -- which is a lead, finding out through the Army -- and said they were stranded below the cliffs du Hoc, but they couldn't go in to get them. They was too busy to get them, they said. General didn't send anybody to get them. They couldn't get off the beach, so we sent -- the Navy sent -- some boats over to pick them up. They called them back to the *Texas* because they had 90% wounded. These men were big, husky men. Strong.

MC: Rangers?

JE: They're rangers, well-trained. The Germans were shooting down on them. They did climb. Some of them finally got up the cliff, and they took (inaudible). But we brought those guys back to ship, and also they brought some German soldiers, -- German that was over there -- and we have pictures of them coming aboard ship. All of them, all of the rangers was wounded coming aboard except one, and he was a little guy compared to the rest of them. He was called what they call a war runner for the communications. He had a (inaudible) lay down on the water because he was a little guy. We heard all kinds of stories about what they had to go through over there. They finally took -- We fired on it above the cliffs. Knocked out all our installations, and we weren't the only ones. The

destroyers -- they could go in a little closer -- and they could shoot their smaller guns. But that's the way we took the rangers aboard that were wounded, and our doctors took care of them until we got to the hospital ship, transferred them to the hospital ship. Then they finally got so far in that we couldn't help them anymore, so we were actually released of our assignments until two weeks after the first day of D-Day. We got called and had to take Cherbourg.

MC: Right.

JE: And it was a terrible fight because we had to go in under powerful gun, more powerful than ours. They could shoot it so much further. That Captain Baker was... He was said to be the best battleship commander in the Navy, and he knew how to maneuver. And he made it. He once was under firing (laughs) that was 86 times the distance. Sometimes it was so close the water would be way above our mast, but we lucked out. It was a lucky ship in the Navy. We had two wars and only one man was ever killed, and there were others that died on the ship, but it wasn't from the enemy. Accidents and things like that, but the enemy only killed one man. And a dud that hit the ship. It had an inscription on it as to who helped make it a dud. It was a lady. She had her name on there, and one of the sailors took the inscription off by taking a piece of paper and a



pen and scribing across it, so he could read who it was. So we actually invited her to our first reunion that we had in the Poconos of Pennsylvania, and she was willing to come. -- Of course this was years later, -- And we was all set for her passage and everything. She was going to bring two grandchildren, but she got ill and couldn't make it. So, we never did see her. But they said there was hundreds of people by Hitler that would make duds. They'd catch them at it, but they didn't know which one it was. It might be 25 or 30 in this area where they found some duds. They'd just take them all out and shoot them. That's we word we got. So she risked her life to make a dud. So we shot and shot and shot all we could to make an advance beyond our range.

MC: Now take me, let's shift gears a little bit. Now, after Southern France, the ship went into convoy duty again, right?

JE: What's that?

MC: After Southern France, the ship went into convoy duty. Is that right?

JE: Well, we headed back to the states because we needed to have the bridge rebuilt like it usually was, and we went to Boston Navy yard, I mean Brooklyn. And then we went to Panama to the Pacific, and next we went to Ulithi islands

where there was a place where they could go to load ammunition and fuel without being harassed by the Japanese submarines because they couldn't get in there where we were at. But anyway, we made the invasion of Iwo Jima.

MC: OK. Let's talk about Iwo Jima. Tell me about that one.

JE: Well, it was -- They had a mountain on one end that used to be a volcano. They called it Mount Suribachi, and they had thousands of Japs surrounding, inside and out. And they had the heights on our Marines and some soldiers that was landing on the beaches. And to the east of this Mount Suribachi -- on the other end of the island -- rose up higher altitude, but they launched grenades that didn't make noise or their location where they come from. And they killed -- we got word they killed about 6,600 marines.

MC: Right.

JE: It was -- actually, we were told at the air (inaudible) didn't want to make the invasion because there was no reason for it. It had a lot of Japs on it, but MacArthur said it had an airstrip. And his thinking was -- when he left the Philippines the first part of that war -- that he was going to take all these islands back, one at a time.

MC: Right. Now --

JE: And they got 6,600 marines killed because... And they didn't need the airstrip. They only thing they used it for

was bring in supplies and take off someone, and that was Iwo Jima.

MC: What did you witness the day of the landing? Were you on the bridge?

JE: Yes.

MC: So, you saw the whole thing there, right?

JE: We saw them raise their flag in that famous picture there. They didn't raise it the first time the Japanese was hold up shooting at them.

MC: So you guys were bombarded, right?

JE: Yeah. So they attempted to raise it, and they didn't. The second time they were successful at it. It was later we heard the story that they were all -- everyone was killed later on. And yeah, we were just offshore about two miles, and then they had a Navy -- they didn't call them the seals then. They had another name for them, Navy commandos. They were the first ones to leave their ships. They had underwater structures that would tear the hole out of the bottom of a landing craft. And they were made of railroad tracks, and they were welded together just below the surface of this water. And they couldn't see them. So they went in to set their demolition to blow those things out of existence before the invasion started, and they were picked up by fast running boats, like a PT boat. And the

way they picked them up, they had ropes that would (inaudible), like nylon ropes, and they would be down there waiting, have their arm up like this. And we could see all this from the ship. And they'd go by real fast. They didn't stop because they'd be a target. So, around -- seemed like a life throw and an arm would chase that ring. It wasn't such a joke that it would break their arm or hurt them, because of the stretching rope. They'd bring them ashore (inaudible) real fast. That's the way the recover their commandos, they'd set those explosions, but they couldn't afford to stop and pick them up because the target they made. And it was quite a sight to see how they do that. So, in other words, from the bridge we could see everything that took place. And we set watches with a lot of people that weren't in the navigation. I say a lot, there's a few talkers. There's a talker that talked to engine room, then one that talked to the gunner officer, and they had messengers up there to run messages in case we lost our communications. All our communications was tore to pieces up there when we got hit. The chaplain started to run away, trying to get help up there, and while I was giving first aid at the beginning. And nothing would work, except what they would call a telephone, but he got a hold of a simple station finally and told them to spread the

word that we needed help up there, to get those people off the bridge.

MC: Yeah, now after Iwo? After Iwo Jima?

JE: Iwo Jima?

MC: What'd you do after Iwo Jima?

JE: We went to what they called Mog Mog (laughs), called the recreation island of the Ulithi group. They played softball and baseball. Gave me two hot beers. Most of them wouldn't drink it, but some of them old guys, they'd drink anything. They drank all the hot beer they could hold. (laughs) They didn't leave it in the cooler long enough to get it cold. So anyhow, Mog Mog was a recreation little bit, nobody enjoyed it.

MC: OK. Now let's talk about Okinawa a little bit.

JE: Well, we were sunk several times in Okinawa. Tokyo Rose, she sunk us. They couldn't understand why the Japanese sunk so many Battleship *Texas*. Of course, we never would have sunk, never would have hit.

MC: Why, was Tokyo Rose was telling everybody telling everybody you were sunk?

JE: Sir?

MC: Was Tokyo Rose telling everybody you were sunk?

JE: I didn't get that.

MC: OK. Tokyo Rose, was she telling people you were sunk?

JE: Yeah, she was like -- Tokyo Rose was like the gal from Germany, broadcasting. Trying to break your morale. The soldiers, but they made the invasion -- our men, the Marines -- and the Air Force was bombing, and we did our bombardments, but they had quite a bit of resistance. I don't think they expected there. They said the front line would lose 100 yards today and back 100 yards the next day. There was so many Japanese concentrated and committing suicide by strapping a lot of explosives on their back and run into the lines of American soldiers; exploded. So every time they saw a group of Americans, they run into them, committed suicide to kill some of the soldiers. And we had Kingfishers on the trip, which is an airplane to spot our targets for us.

MC: You had what on the ship? Kingfishers?

JE: Kingfisher. We shoot them off a catapult, and they would have a pilot, and he'd have a seaman within to either radio men or --

MC: Oh, this is an airplane!

JE: It's an airplane yes, called a Kingfisher.

MC: OK. I'm with you now. OK.

JE: One of them got shot down, but it wasn't too far from the American lines. The pilot, he was lucky with his landing, got in behind the American lines, but the seaman with him,

he come down in enemy territory. And they were shooting at him, but he was out of that strap so fast, it'd make your head spin. And he was running for all he was worth, and they never did hit him. Just bang, bang, bang, but he kept running when he got to the American sector. And they was hollering at him saying, "You're in safe territory."

(laughs) He didn't slow down, he kept running. I asked him later on, "Did you know where you was at?" He said, "No, I didn't know where I was at. I knew I was being shot at, and I kept running." (laughs)

MC: Wow.

JE: He was kind of a story to tell later on to get people laughing, but it was a true story.

MC: Right. Now you saw -- you were on the bridge for the Battle of Okinawa as well, right? You saw the whole thing?

JE: They took quite a while, several -- Well, we was battle stations 50 days.

MC: Now what does that mean, battle stations on full alert?

JE: Sir?

MC: What does "at battle stations 50 days"? Does that mean full alert?

JE: I don't understand.

MC: OK. Were you at the battle stations for 50 days?

JE: Yeah.

MC: OK. Does that mean you're on full alert, ready to fight?

JE: Yes. And we'd pull out --

MC: That's kind of pressure. That's kind of high pressure there, wasn't it?

JE: Yeah.

MC: We'd pull out at nights; cruise away from the island. But they'd drop flares, and they'd just light up the ocean. And torpedo planes would come in and attack then. But we never was hit. The captain knew how to zig-zag real well. We owed our lives to Captain Baker, more than one time. One time we was detected by three suicide planes coming in low from the fanfare after part of the ship, and we needed more guns to shoot at them. So, he maneuvered it real fast where all the guns on the port side can shoot at them. Well, one of them sneaked through, I mean, all that firefighting. The other ships were shooting at them, and we have pictures of the airway just plumb full of fire. And if the photographer hadn't made a circle around the plane... We would have known that the plane was there, if we saw the picture. But when he developed them, he put a circle around that. We have that in our book. And he got awful close to the ship, but he was hit by one of our 200 millimeter guns and bombed out before it got to us. Now,



we had two or three that the wings would tip the side of the superstructure --

MC: Hold on just a minute. (pause)

JE: OK.

MC: Now, let's finish up, though, OK.

JE: OK.

MC: All right, now if I can summarize this, you are an eyewitness (pause) on the bridge of the USS *Texas* to North Africa, Normandy, Cherbourg, Iwo Jima --

JE: Saint Tropez was next.

MC: Saint Tropez.

JE: Southern France. Yeah.

MC: Southern France. Iwo Jima, and Okinawa.

JE: Yes. That's where --

MC: You are a unique fella.

JE: Sir?

MC: You are a unique fella. I don't think I have ever talked -  
- I've been in 100 interviews -- and I've never talked

JE: (laughs)

MC: I've never talked to anybody that was an eyewitness to all that.

JE: Well, I had a ringside seat to World War II.

MC: OK. If you have time, and I'm going to go ahead and close this off. I think we got a pretty good picture of your military career.

JE: OK.

MC: OK. And once again, I want to say thank you for doing the interview with us, but most of all I think our country owes a great deal of debt to people like you. And thank you very much for your service to our country.

JE: Thank you.

END OF AUDIO FILE