

Robert Connelly Oral History Interview

ED METZLER: This is Ed Metzler, today is the second of March, 2015. I am in Fredericksburg, Texas at the Admiral Nimitz Museum. And I am interviewing Mr. Bob Connelly. This interview is in support of the Nimitz Education and Research Center Archives for the National Museum of the Pacific War, Texas Historical Historical Commission for the preservation of the information related to this site. So, let me start Bob by thanking you from coming all the way down here from the northlands in Ohio to share your stories with us. We appreciate that. And I'd like to start by having you give us your full name and date and place of birth and then we'll take it from there.

ROBERT CONNELLY: All right. My name is Robert P. Connelly. I was -- I was born in August the 25th, 1921 in Cincinnati, Ohio.

EM: OK, do the math for me. How old are you then?

RC: I'm 63 today.

EM: Your 63 and have been for a lot of years.

RC: I'll be 64 in a few weeks.

EM: OK, you'll be 94.

RC: Ninety-four. Yeah.

EM: I thought you were pulling my leg there for a minute. OK,
94 in a few weeks -- in August.

RC: Oh, this is only march, isn't it?

EM: Well --

RC: I was thinking it was later.

EM: It will about be that cool here in august. Trust me.

RC: I've been there --

EM: You know what it was like. So anyhow, you were born in
Cincinnati. And, so tell me about your parents. What did
they do?

RC: Well my mother naturally was a housewife. In those days,
women didn't work. My father worked in the printing
trades. Ran printing presses and cutters and so forth.
And actually what they made was the labels for cans and
beer bottles and that. Printed -- and that's what he did.
Although at the time I was born, Ford had a plant in
Cincinnati and at the time that I was born he went out --
they went out on strike and they tell me as a result of
that Ford left town.

EM: Well you know old Henry is pretty tough on those unions
back in the day.

RC: Yeah, I was just told that. I was just born then. But
that's what he did before.

EM: So when you were born you were raised in Cincinnati?

RC: Yes, the whole time, yeah.

EM: Now did you have brothers and sisters?

RC: Yes, I had two brothers that were younger than me and two sisters that were older than me. And my oldest sister, she ended up living in Johnson City, on a ranch in Johnson City.

EM: Right down the road.

RC: That's why I was down -- after I got out of the service and I was pretty nicked up --

EM: Yeah, you were.

RC: I couldn't work for a while so she said, "Come on down here for a while and stay with us."

EM: Cool, I want to hear a little bit of that story when we get to it. So where did you go to school? Local schools?

RC: Local schools in Cincinnati.

EM: So if you were born in '21 --

RC: I went to high school. Very few people in those days -- that was the depression years -- very few people got to go to college.

EM: Oh, I know. It was very unusual actually. So if you were born in '21, you must have graduated high school in what '39?

RC: Thirty-eight.

EM: So it's still -- '38 was a pretty slow year if I remember.

Everybody thought they were out of the depression and then they had a little follow up. A recession we'll call it.

So you came out of high school in '38, what did you do?

RC: The first job I had was in a gas station, attendant in a gas station. Gas was only 15, 16, 17 cents a gallon back in those days.

EM: That's a lot of money back then though.

RC: And then I worked there I guess -- not a whole long, six months maybe eight months. And I got a job driving an ice truck. Delivering ice to homes and saloons and grocery stores. And I kept that job until I went into service.

EM: That sounds like an interesting job.

RC: I enjoyed it.

EM: So what? Was there an ice production refrigeration plant there?

RC: Oh yeah, they made big 300-pound box of ice -- they have a, they call it the ice house. And they -- I went there and loaded up with ice and delivered it.

EM: So what was it like in Cincinnati pre-war? Just kind of easy going?

RC: A whole lot different than it is now. I often tell Peggy that. The way -- well first, we talked about it coming down here. We got in all this snow and ice and you know

they didn't shovel the roads or clean the roads like they do now. They got snowplows that go down and they salt them and all that stuff. You just road on that snow all winter and bought -- pressed it down, you know.

EM: Lived with it.

RC: Just lived with it, yeah. A lot of things were different there.

EM: So you had been out of high school for three years when the war started?

RC: Yep.

EM: Tell me about December the 7th and what you remember in 1941.

RC: Oh, on December 7th, I was pretty active in the Boy Scouts. I was Boy Scouts ever since I was 12 and then I ended up being an assistant scout master. I was assistant scout master when -- and we were out on a camping trip that weekend and when -- it was on Sunday afternoon, we were coming home and someone heard on the radio or something that Pearl Harbor had been bombed and somebody says, "Where's Pearl Harbor?"

EM: You know everybody tells me that. We all know where it is now but back then --

RC: They didn't say Hawaii or anything, they just said --

EM: And it wasn't a state.

RC: No, they just said Pearl Harbor. And --

EM: So how did things change at that point? What changed for everybody? You and your family?

RC: Well I'll tell you what. The Depression was still on and pretty near immediately it seemed like things started to pick up. One thing, they had -- I guess when things started to go sound bad -- when they were talking about war, Wright Aeronautical built a big plant in Cincinnati. And they --

EM: Yeah, and it's not that far away.

RC: No, that's nice. They've got a nice museum up there.

EM: Yeah, they do.

RC: They were hiring like mad there. And it was really a boom, you know? There were plenty of other defense industries opened up -- the supply, [rights?] and all that stuff so it started chang-- roads, they built a big new road out to it.

EM: So what was it? Were they going to make aircraft engines?

RC: Engines. Aircraft engines. As odd, I didn't know her, then my wife, she worked out there -- the Navy had a couple of office stationed out there and the Army too, that inspected. They were inspecting seeing that everything was made right and so forth. And she was a secretary to the commander in the Navy all during the war out there. She worked out there doing that.

EM: So you met her later then?

RC: I met her much later. After I got out of the service.

EM: Oh, you didn't meet here until after you got back? OK. So you must prime draft material then. (overlapping dialogue; inaudible)

RC: Well I was. I was getting close to it and I was thinking well what was I going to do? You know and my brother-in-law who ended up down here, living down here, he told me, he says -- I said, "I was thinking about enlisting." And he says, "Go in the Navy, Bob. You get to see the world." And he's right. And he says, "You always have a nice place to sleep and something to eat." He says, "You won't be in a fox hole."

EM: Yeah, you are going to have warm meals, a warm bed and you'll see the world.

RC: Yeah, he said, "If you're going to go in" -- well, I had to -- so I decided to enlist. They were getting real close to me on the draft. And I went up -- I went downtown to the courthouse where they had their offices and they said, "Well, you'll have to" -- the Navy said, "You'll have to get a release from your draft board." See they weren't drafting in the Navy. In the Marines or Navy, they were not drafting when I went in.

EM: It was an all-volunteer thing at that time.

RC: So I had to get a release from the draft board and oh lord
I really did it. I'll go up there and tell them --

EM: You're in the Army now.

RC: Anyway, they gave me the release and I ended up in the
Navy.

EM: You didn't have any problem getting the release.

RC: No, I thought I would but the lady was real nice.

EM: Well I'm sure they had gotten plenty of those requests.

RC: So then --

EM: So what time --

RC: That was in -- I guess that was in January, early January,
it was cold.

EM: OK, so this was in early '42. So right after the war is
just started.

RC: Yeah, so I got -- they swore me in down there and all that
and they put us on a train and they took us to Great Lakes
Naval thing up above Chicago.

EM: Beautiful lake Michigan.

RC: That's about the time I knew I should never have left home.
I went there, I just had a life jacket on. I left home and
I got up there and we got up there to the Great Lakes and
there was snow --

EM: You thought it was cold up in Cincinnati but you hadn't
been to Chicago yet, had you?

RC: No, so that's why I don't -- oh and boot camp -- I guess I maybe I was halfway through boots and they changed the law and they started drafting people for the Navy and the Marines and they gave it -- they gave me my choice. See I was signed up for six years in the regular Navy, it was six years what I signed up for. And they said that anybody that wanted to -- that was in boot camp there and came in under those conditions could switch over to the duration plus six months being Reserve, Naval Reserve. So I thought I better do that so I switched over to the naval reserve and --

EM: So what did that change for you then?

RC: Didn't change a thing.

EM: Oh, OK. It's just most paperwork, that's why.

RC: Paperwork. And I knew -- it was the duration plus six months and I figured well, I can't lose on this. If it goes to six years, I'm still all right. So that's how I ended up in the Reserves.

EM: So I guess one of the things they do in boot camp besides running your tail off is they test you a lot to see what your aptitudes are.

RC: Yeah, and I took that test and I went to radio school. I got to go to radio school.

EM: Is that what you wanted to do?

RC: Yeah, you put your choices down, your first and second choices or so. And --

EM: Why did you want to go to radio school?

RC: I guess it wasn't exactly what I thought it would be. It was operating radios. You know, "Dick Docta Docta Donut." I thought maybe it would be repairing and stuff like that.

EM: Learning how they work.

RC: Yeah, but it wasn't. That's what I thought it was. But I was happy with it. So I went to radio school at Great Lakes also and I was -- that was close to Cincinnati, on a weekend I could go home on the train.

EM: So what's boot camp? Eight weeks, something like that?

RC: Sixteen weeks.

EM: Sixteen back then because I know they shortened it quite a bit later.

RC: Yep, 16 weeks.

EM: So you had 16 weeks of boot and then you went to radio school.

RC: Yeah -- we got nine-day leave and then I went back up there and I started in radio school.

EM: Now were your brothers being pulled into the service?

RC: They were both younger than me and my brother next to me -- he got drafted in the Army shortly before I got discharged. He never saw any action anything.

EM: OK, so he was state-side until the war was almost over.

RC: But I think he went down to Panama or somewhere. But he was never in any action.

EM: So how long did radio school last?

RC: I guess that was about three months. I should know but I guess it was about three.

EM: So let's see, you've got basically four months of boot camp and then three months of radio with a little bit of leave in between, so we are talking almost eight months before you really got out of radio school so that's going to be kind of late summer I guess. Did you know where you were going to go at that point? Did they tell you anything?

RC: No they were all rumors. You know how it is. And I was telling the kids yesterday when we in there seeing about the Aleutian Islands. I was saying the Aleutians -- I don't want to go up to the Aleutians Islands.

EM: Even colder than Chicago.

RC: I'll tell you though, it was a blessing. Up there would have been better than where I was because there wasn't much going on up there as far as fighting.

EM: It's just ugly and cold.

RC: It's just ugly and cold but -- no. I guess that's about all. They shipped us out to California then.

EM: Did they give you leave before you went overseas?

RC: No.

EM: So you goodbye by letter and telephone, hmm?

RC: Yeah.

EM: How are your parents handling all this? Seeing their eldest son headed out?

RC: Well I guess my mother was pretty -- I was her oldest boy and she was -- she took it harder I think than anybody but I wrote to her all the time. And we went to Camp Pendleton. They put us on a train and we went to Camp Pendleton and it was new then. They was still working on that thing, building those things out there. And there was 24 of us graduated at radio school at Great Lakes and they put us on the train and send us out there.

EM: That's a long train ride.

RC: Yeah it was. But you know we had a whole train car to ourselves with Pullman sleepers in there and everything.

EM: Sounds like a first class ride.

RC: Right. It was. And they -- aw, I'll tell you what, we were on there on Thanksgiving. We were on that train on Thanksgiving.

EM: All right. So you were going out there in November.

RC: Yeah. And they gave us chits for our meals and the conductor on the train or the guy -- he was the head of the dining car or whatever they call -- the chef or something.

He said, "I'll tell you what I'll do this. This won't cover the cost of a Thanksgiving dinner." -- the chit that they give us -- but he says, "Some of these other meals, I'll charge you something less on some of these other meals so you can have a Thanksgiving meal."

EM: So he made arrangements.

RC: He made arrangements so we could have a Thanksgiving meal.

EM: So Turkey on the way headed west.

RC: I think we were on there three nights.

EM: So how are you feeling about the whole thing about this time? Are you seeing it as an adventure or are you kind of sad or what?

RC: I think I was still seeing it as an adventure. I really do.

EM: So you looking forward to being shot at.

RC: I guess it just didn't register to me much. But after we got the -- this is where it get nice dicey. We got to Camp Pendleton and there were 24 of us and you know they always tell you in the Navy, don't volunteer for anything.

EM: Same thing they tell the guys in the army.

RC: Yeah, so I guess we were there a night or two and they lined us up one morning and they said wanted volunteers for something and nobody said OK. So they said they need eight so every other one had to step forward. So I was on of

those who stepped forward. And then they said OK. There was a Lieutenant, a Navy Lieutenant waiting there for us. He said, "Come with me." So there we go. We got in the -- some kind of station wagon. We head down the highway to San Diego.

EM: Say, how far is Pendleton from San Diego?

RC: Not too far.

EM: It is in the neighborhood?

RC: Yeah. Peg and Bill were out there just a month or so ago and they stayed around Pendleton and we got down there and you've got to remember, I was just a poor boy from Cincinnati. The most water I ever saw was the Ohio River.

EM: Or Lake Michigan.

RC: I hadn't even seen that. I'd been in Cincinnati. I didn't see Lake Michigan. That's the other end of the state.

EM: That's true. I was thinking about your boot camp.

RC: Oh yeah. Saw very little of that. The Great Lakes are so big and we were way back. I did see it there.

EM: So you'd never seen the big pond thought.

RC: No. So we get down there, the eight of us sitting in that thing, this officer not saying anything, just driving us down there. He said, "Hurry up get your bags." You know and low and behold they took us out on this wharf and there was this 56-foot boat sitting there to sail the sea. And

so they had four of them. Four of them came around from the East Coast. And he said, "Put your gear on there." And I went with him. He took me and another fellow, Charlie [Harms?]. Charlie was from Lancaster Pennsylvania. We were the two radio men on the LCC then. And we got on there. He said, "Hurry up, hurry up, we've got to leave." And I I said, "Man, why did I ever leave home. All that water." That's 56 foot. Lord, I should have never left home.

EM: They are going to put me out on that thing on this little plywood boat. Was it wood or metal?

RC: Metal.

EM: It was metal. OK.

RC: So we come and we took off out of there and they said, "We are going out on maneuvers." And what they did is they took us out to the DuPage, was laying out in the harbor and from then on although we were attacked -- we had our own commander and assistant on the LCC. Chuck Williams and Bill Tiller. And we pulled up alongside this DuPage there and I said, "Well, now what's going on here?"

EM: Now that's an attack transport, right? The DuPage?

RC: Uhuh. They hauled troops and --

EM: APA-41.

RC: And we had a big metal ring on that LCC and they lowered the boom over and hooked on to that baby and we all -- well I'm telling you there were 12 enlisted men and 2 officers on the LCC, is what we had. And the radio men, radar men, sound men, two machinist mates, a coxswain and a singleman, quartermaster. We had all. We all standing on that boat and they put that boom over there and I'm standing there too. I don't even know most of these guys and any of these guys just try the arm. Up we go, they pull us up and pull us around. They had a cradle up on the -- they set it in. So we get up there and the guy was running that boom, he said to Chuck Williams, our skipper, he said, "How much does that thing weigh?" And Chuck says, "Oh, I guess about 40 tons." And he says, "That's pretty good." He says, "This is a 30-ton boom." And I said, "Jezz, I thought these guys knew what they were doing."

EM: You were wishing they hadn't told you that.

RC: We never rode on that sucker again after that. We climbed down a rope ladder to get on it. We never rode up and down on it after that.

EM: So you didn't even know what an LCC was. All you saw was this little boat --

RC: The story that got told to me then -- it was the second most secret thing in the Navy at that time. And actually

we were not allowed to leave an Admiral on there. When we tied up or something we weren't allowed to let anyone on that. And the story I got -- I guess this would be as good a place as any to tell you -- at Guadalcanal they had a real problem on the beaches. Of course all these transports -- these APAs and AKAs and all that -- they wanted to get in there and get the hell out. Unload and get the troops off --

EM: Unload and go.

RC: And they had a terrible mess at the beaches there at Guadalcanal. They were getting the baseballs and basketballs and everything they needed -- stretchers or blood or something like that. So that was how we were were born I guess. And we lead those waves in, just like the ducks. See we had radar on there, sounding equipment. We were to make sure that they hit the beach where all [sinker knives?] are watchers with the Air Force and everything and they'd -- when they let up bombing and shelling the ships, we were at the beach the right minute to keep the Japs from coming out. They did after that -- no matter how much shelling you did; them suckers were still there. You had to have ground forces and that's what -- and that's why they built these LCCs. So we were more or less like traffic cops.

EM: That must have been one of the first -- you must have been on one of the first of the LCCs.

RC: I was, these four were the first.

EM: Were the first? OK.

RC: They said these were the -- now, I got on in California and some of the fellows got up on them in the East Coast and came around with them and --

EM: So let's go back to your first exposure to the LCC. So they hauled you onboard, ship and all. Boat and all.

RC: They were waiting to go on maneuvers.

EM: So tell me what happened then?

RC: Well they pulled us up on that boat and got us up on that cradle and then they got us all quarters there -- you know where we could sleep and then if we took off on maneuvers. Just went out with the whole fleet moving and we went through -- what's the name of that Island up there?

EM: Catalina.

RC: Catalina, yeah. Catalina Island. We went out there and hit that thing just like rehearsed the whole thing. And then we came back and we tied up in San Diego then. And by that time then I was getting to know the rest of the crew and the fellows and then we went out again. I think we went out three times and rehearsed and then one day we went out and didn't come back. We kept going.

EM: But I'm sitting here -- they got you guys, alternate guys lined up in a line and sent you out as a group -- what eight of them?

RC: Eight of them. And there were four of us that were LCCs, two of us went on each one.

EM: Oh, I see. And then they brought on the other guys --

RC: But I wanted to to tell you -- yeah, that's what I was telling Peggy the other day. The rest of them -- they didn't, the eight -- sixteen of them. They ended up in the Marines. See the Marines never had their own radio men or core men, they were all Navy men. So they ended up in the Marines, fighting with the Marines.

EM: Yeah, they were the ones who went ashore. Wow. So are you glad you ended up where you did?

RC: Yeah, I told Peggy, "That was a blessing, really that was a blessing when that happened."

EM: Who knows what happened to those guys?

RC: I don't know.

EM: Now you said you knew one of the other guys?

RC: He went to radio school with me. He's still living. I see him once and a while.

EM: Is that right?

RC: Well we used to have reunions with different cities and I had a reunion in Cincinnati with him one time. And we took him up to Dayton by the way to see the museum up there.

EM: Great museum.

RC: It's about 20 or 50 miles up there.

EM: So first time you went out, you are a landlubber, did you get seasick?

RC: Nope, never got seasick. Some of the guys did but I never did. We had one poor guy, he got killed when I got hurt -- every time we weigh anchor he'd start heaving -- it was pitiful.

EM: Would he get over it?

RC: Never did get over it. And he -- I feel so bad that he got killed and he had a baby that he never saw. He had a little girl that he never saw. She was born while we out to sea. A little side story on that. I guess it was, oh, maybe. We were still having reunions. Maybe five, six, seven years ago. She -- we got a letter saying did anyone know him. And this woman was writing. She was the niece of CB Moore and she was writing and said, "My uncle was on an LCC and nobody knows anything about it." So I picked up the phone and I called her. She was in Hawaii. She lived in Hawaii. So I called her and I told her I knew him well. So I sent her pictures and everything that I had, all the

information that I had from her I sent to her. And she told me his wife had since past. Of course that was many years between then and even the baby he had had passed away too. This was a niece. It was just a little side story.

EM: So you went out on three or four occasions just for training.

RC: Just for -- yeah, the whole fleet, the whole thing was going to hit the Marshalls and then we took off in January.

EM: Of '43. January of '43.

RC: Yeah, I guess. That's when we hit the Marshalls. In January. I forget the date. I know it's in there somewhere. And we talk. And we talk.

EM: So you sailed away and you'd gotten a little bit of training, a lot of radio training. So maybe this is a good time to tell me about the LCCs. You and I were chatting about them earlier and you said a few things but give me kind of the executive summary of what they were about, what they were like and what your role was.

RC: Well, like I told you, the story was that they were built after Guadalcanal -- after the trouble they had at Guadalcanal they had to have something so they came up with these. I don't know if you've seen -- you've probably seen a picture of one of them.

EM: I have. In fact, I've got one on the computer.

RC: I don't know if I've got a picture or not.

EM: Keep going.

RC: They were 56-foot-long and they had two gray marine diesels on the -- this a disc of all this. And -- this is it after they got hit.

EM: That's the DuPage.

RC: These are the guys who brought the LCC. And --

EM: Keep talking. I'm going to pull up a picture here.

RC: We, like I said, we had -- Chuck Williams was our -- he was the Lieutenant, he was our commanding officer and then Bill Tiller was -- we called him navigator or something. He ended up as a commander anyhow later on. We --

EM: So how many were on the crew.

RC: Twelve.

EM: Two officers.

RC: Maybe 14. We had 2 radio men. A quartermaster. A helmsman. Two motor machs. A radar man. The sound man. And three gunners. We had three twin .50s on there.

EM: I saw that there was a mark one and mark two.

RC: They were all built after this. A long time. And you ought to see the new ones.

EM: Really? OK. So I'm having problems to get my picture to come up so let's keep talking. So they are metal. They got twin diesels.

RC: Twin diesels. You've got the two gun turrets on them. Two midship on either side and one in the rear and they were twin .50s in there. And we had a radar in there that we had to set up our radar. You had to have a big ball that folded down and then we set that up and our aerials and all that we had to set up.

EM: So you had a deck below where you had all the radio, radio, sonar.

RC: Everything down there. Yep.

EM: Describe that room to me.

RC: It wasn't very big. I say it was about half the size of this room.

EM: And this room is not large, so you're probably talking about eight feet by eight feet or six by twelve or something like that.

RC: Well the LCC was only 12 feet wide at the widest part. It was only 12 feet up at the middle of it and besides that we had the head down there too. Off of there we had a little door and you pump it. After you use it, it has a pump on it and you pump sea water up and flush it out. And that was all down there and I'll tell you, the other thing we had, beyond that room we had a room, it was under the deck and very little or very tight but we had four bunkbeds in there were we could take turns resting or something. And

then beyond that was the engine room. And there you had the two marine engines in there, gray marine engines in there. We had a five hundred mile cruising range, is all we had. At about 12 knots an hour was our top speed.

EM: So it's not that fast.

RC: No it wasn't.

EM: But it wasn't a pursuit.

RC: No. That's why they had to hoist us above a bigger ship to get us where we were going. We didn't have the means or anything. We didn't have a way to cook or anything on there. We'd bring preparations with us.

EM: So tell me about the armament again, you had --

RC: Three twin .50s and they were midship. Two of them were midship.

EM: So how long were you be out on in one of these before you come back to the mother ship. What would be a typical --

RC: Oh, as long as the invasion. [Atoll?] we were out there 14 days. They couldn't get -- we had to wait to the army come in and finish that off.

EM: But would you come back to the mother ship?

RC: No.

EM: What did you do for fuel?

RC: We had 500 gallons of fuel.

EM: So you weren't covering that many miles.

RC: Oh no. Mothership was out here and we were in the beach.

We never --

EM: So would you go back to the DuPage for anything?

RC: No.

EM: So you were eating?

RC: We had K-rations.

EM: K-rations and flushing saltwater toilets and not getting showers.

RC: Oh no, no showers.

EM: And grabbing a little bit of sleep when you could. So what kind of birthing facility did you have, did you have a bunk or what?

RC: Well there were four bunks I told you. We could take turns going in there to lay down.

EM: So what would you do? Work four on, four off?

RC: No, we didn't have any set time. It was like a family. If things were -- actually after the beach was secured it got pretty -- all we were doing was traffic duty then. Traffic cops. What we did then, the ships would be sending a load of say stretchers or food or something.

EM: Or even ammunition.

RC: They had to report to us. We drew four foot of water. We couldn't go in any further, we couldn't beach. We couldn't beach, we were in four foot of water. They'd come to us

and report and then we'd tell them to circle. And then on the beach would call us and say what they need and then we'd send that boat in, something with stretchers or medical supplies or whatever they had or needed. We stayed there until the thing was --

EM: So there is four LCCs assigned to the DuPage.

RC: No, there was just one. There was four -- they were all on other ships.

EM: So how many other ships like the DuPage would there be in a typical invasion.

RC: Well there was four of them I know. That was big --

EM: So you were assigned a certain stretch of beach to be the traffic cop for.

RC: Yeah, like Red Beach. We never knew we were on it and we (inaudible) until it was over. We just said we were going to be on Red Beach but we didn't know anything like that but we just -- I should tell you too though that on our -- the DuPage was flagship of that group and on there was the beach master, Lieutenant Commander [Swadersky?], he was a Pollack and he went to Annapolis and he played football.

EM: What was his last name?

RC: Swadersky.

EM: I am not going to ask you to spell that. I'm going to give you a break.

RC: I couldn't if I wanted. He was a fine man though; he was a commander. You know the funny thing, we never snooted our officers or anything on there.

EM: So it was kind of loose family.

RC: Right. Actually they told us that if there are other higher rank officers around you've got to show respect or you'd get in trouble. So they call me Bob and I called the Capitan Chuck. It was real loose like that.

EM: Did that feel good how it worked?

RC: Oh that was fine. We never had a bit of trouble with it.

EM: Kind of worked as a team, felt like a good team?

RC: Yeah, wonderful team. We had good team. If we were having a bad day or something -- you know I remember Williams, Chuck Williams the Capitan. He was sitting up there and I rubbed his head and I said, "What's the matter? Come on, cheer up."

EM: And that's your capitan you're doing that to.

RC: Yep. And I'll tell you this is skipping way ahead. After I got hurt and they wrote a letter home to my mom and they told her how much good I was for the group. They said no matter how bad things got Bob could find some way to cheer us up, to get us going.

EM: Well you are a little bit of a positive influence on everybody.

RC: I was glad that they wrote that to her.

EM: That's good. Made you feel good.

RC: Yeah, she showed it to me after I got home because I never saw those guys again.

EM: Is that right? Not at the reunions or anything?

RC: Just Charlie Arms was the only one that was on our boat. We couldn't find any of the other ones. Couple of them I found, they were dead already. By the time I found them I get the letter back that they had passed away or something.

EM: So you are headed out and your first invasion is in Eniwetok is that correct?

RC: Right.

EM: So tell me the prep work going into that and what happened there at Eniwetok?

RC: Well, I'll tell you I never saw such a mess in my life. The shelling and the ships and the Air Force and we got in there and it looked like a city dump and we did tie up in there after they secured the -- Oh, I was going to -- Swadersky. He was a Beachmaster and he came on our boat. He was on our boat and after they secured the beach, he went in there and he set up headquarters on the beach and he'd get off.

EM: So you took the Beachmaster in. He hitched a ride.

RC: Yeah.

EM: And Beachmasters were important dudes, weren't they?

RC: Yeah, he was a Lieutenant Commander I think and then he had a guy, a second Lieutenant or something was his communication man. A big fat guy down in Alabama.

EM: Big ol' Southern boy, huh?

RC: Yeah, he'd sit there. Actually what we'd do is we'd appropriate things in order to take on their food and grapefruit, they had grapefruit in big cans like that. And he'd come down and he'd say, "You boys got any more of the grape juice? Grapefruit juice?"

EM: Well at least you were getting your vitamin C. So Eniwetok was kind of a mess.

RC: I'll tell you that was my first experience with deceased people. There were Japanese floating around in the water and we tied after we secured the beach on a broken down old dock and we got ashore and we walk -- And I'm telling you that they had, the dead ones, the dead Japs they piled them up just like cordwood. They couldn't bury them. It was all coral. They threw gasoline on them and burned them.

EM: What about dead Americans?

RC: Well we'd take them to the ships, while the fleets would sail in, they'd also bring wounded out and report to us and we'd tell them what ship to take it to where they could -- I mean if they all went to the same ship -- they'd radio in

to us where they had room for them and we'd know where to send them.

EM: So you guys knew almost every detail of what was going on because you were coordinating.

RC: Yeah, that's more or less what we were doing. And that's where I am saying they got away from that mess they had in Guadalcanal.

EM: Right. So overall, how did the Eniwetok invasion go? Was it kind of rough or was it -- did it go well?

RC: Well I'll tell you what happened. That was only a mile wide. Three miles long and a mile wide and the Marines went across there like nothing. Well they messed some Japs in between them and that night we were tied up there and there was the damnedest war going on. And the Japs were start -- and the Marines were shooting at each other. I mean it was so close by --

EM: It's dark. It's hard to know.

RC: You couldn't see. That was pretty bad. That was pretty bad. But it -- after that first night there wasn't much there at all.

EM: Things settled down.

RC: Well it was so flat and the Marines went all over. That first night they missed a few and --

EM: They were dug in underground or something?

RC: Yeah and they were fight--

EM: Now where were you when the big navel guns were bombarding before the invasion. You guys kind of staying offshore?

RC: Oh yeah, we are offshore. Yeah.

EM: Were you actually on the DuPage?

RC: No, we are off on the water and I've got a film at home about how they do -- we circle around and the LCM, LCVP, landing craft. We'd line them all up. They'd get lined up behind us and actually we didn't have -- they all had commanding officers or something that knew where their positions were and then they'd follow us in like ducks. So we had to make sure that they hit there right.

EM: Did you're LCC come under fire by the enemy during the --

RC: Yeah, a couple of times.

EM: In Eniwetok or?

RC: No, not at in Eniwetok we didn't, no we didn't.

EM: That comes later. OK.

RC: We didn't. But actually -- I think there was only one time that we got under fire. It wasn't at Eniwetok though.

EM: So Eniwetok was what, a two to three-day experience?

RC: We got back out there and they hoisted us back up on the DuPage and we took off, back.

EM: So you feel like things went reasonably well then? You did your job, you kind of felt confident?

RC: Yeah. I'll tell you what though. We had -- they had all those Japs, they were laying there dead in the hot sun, their eyeballs are popping out and their pants have split from where their legs --

EM: Swell up?

RC: Yeah. Flies were flying on them and we were trying to eat and I'm brushing them off my food and I said, "Good Lord." It was quite a mess. It smelled bad too.

EM: Yeah, they say war is hell and you are starting to experience that aren't you?

RC: Actually when we got back to ship, we threw our clothes away. The smell -- you couldn't get that odor out of them. That dead stench. I just now thought of that. Their eyeballs popping out laying in the hot sun. They had been there may be several days, or a week or so. About the time they started shelling them. And that was my first experience with that.

EM: So are you writing letters home at this point?

RC: No. We don't even know where we are.

EM: They didn't even tell you were you were? All you knew was there was an island and you're supposed to --

RC: It was -- maybe it was a four to six weeks after that they telled us, now you can write home and tell them where you were.

EM: Now you mentioned earlier that your command was actually kind of separate from the ship itself command. Tell me how that worked.

RC: Well we were assigned to this LCC and all they were was our transport. Transport ship.

EM: That's interesting.

RC: No, we were on LCC.

EM: But I mean you -- when you were aboard ship...

RC: Oh, we mixed with the other guys.

EM: Yeah, you just kind of blended in.

RC: Yeah, we ate in the chow hall and everything.

EM: You had your own bunk area.

RC: And our officers slept in the officers' quarters on the ship in fact.

EM: Did you have a combat station aboard the DuPage?

RC: Yes. We manned our two, three twin .50s to give them extra fire power. You know when we had an air raid or something like that. In fact, I was standing between the two when we got hit. I had my earphones on, waiting -- I was listening for the fire -- the command to fire. We never got any command to fire.

EM: How well did the fancy electronic technology work? I know you are on the radio so you are doing mostly communication

and coordination but you've got sonar, radar, I don't know what else.

RC: Bryant was on the sonar and he was giving them the depth we were in because we didn't want to go ashore and get hung up and then Paul Gettys was a radar man. He was watching the radar.

EM: So he's watching what? For aircrafts and stuff?

RC: Yep.

EM: One man looking down and one man looking up. And you communicated. Did you communicate in code or did you just talk?

RC: No, just talk. It was all -- yeah, we didn't have any code on there at all. I learned that all in school but we didn't use it.

EM: Didn't use it?

RC: No. And the guys who went with the Marines didn't either. They just used the --

EM: Yeah, well it sure slows things down. I mean you are right in the heat of the battle; what difference does it make?

RC: Now on the DuPage they used it. Because they were command and they had all -- you just typed the letters, four letters and a space, four letters. And then you give it someone in the communication office and they coded it and said what you -- that was boring to sit there.

EM: What was the food like aboard?

RC: We had pretty good food.

EM: Not the LCC but I mean the DuPage.

RC: Yeah. Especially when the troops weren't on there we ate very very well. Of course when the troops were on there, I don't know how many they had on there -- 1000 or 1,500 -- they can't cook -- so we ate the same things the troops did.

EM: Did they have just troops or did they have armor and --

RC: Yeah, well they had some of them tanks and amphib things. They had them on there. They put them down in the hold for --

EM: Were there any other landing crafts assigned to the DuPage? In other words, if you had a tank or a piece of artillery that needed to go in, what would -- would one of those LC tank carriers, LCTs or whatever they call them come up and --?

RC: The Marines or the Army brought them with them. That was part of their thing and they'd use these booms and they'd put that -- and that was there --

EM: All right so they'd bring that up and --

RC: Yeah.

EM: So after Kwajalein where did you guys go?

RC: I got it written down. Guam. We hit Guam.

EM: So was this when we took Guam or was Guam --

RC: No. We went in there.

EM: Was that much of an operation?

RC: No, it was pretty nice. It was a pretty nice operation.

EM: Was it difficult?

RC: No. Not for us it wasn't and I don't think the Marines had much trouble.

EM: I seem to remember that it went reasonably well and wasn't as tough as some of the later ones.

RC: There was a brewery up there on the hill. I know that. They said, "Try not to hit that brewery."

EM: Yeah, that'd be important. Not to destroy that brewery.

RC: Yeah, the funny thing is Peggy has got a friend that lives there. And I believe she went back there to live. I guess Peggy met her through her daughter's school and she -- they used to go back there on vacation to visit.

EM: So Kwajalein and Guam.

RC: Peleliu. Peleliu was a bad one. That was a bad one.

EM: Yeah and I think Peleliu was kind of a controversial, did we really need to do it kind of thing.

RC: Yeah, I guess I didn't know that until yesterday or the day before when I saw it in the watchacallit, they said they had some difference of opinion in the hierarchy.

EM: Yeah there was some arguing about whether we could skip it or not.

RC: Yeah it was terrible. We were 14 days going around out there. The Marines couldn't get up that hill. They had to bring in the Army with some heavy equipment.

EM: So tell me. We've discussed Kwajalein in some detail. So let's kind of do it for Peleliu now. So tell me what happened, what sticks in your mind, what went right, what went wrong?

RC: Well Peleliu always before an invasion the top dog of the Marines or the Army -- whichever, sometimes we had the Marines, sometimes we had the Army -- they made a speech. I remember them saying, "Within 48 hours your country will have another base to operate against the enemy." So 48 hours, that's a couple of days we'll be here. I don't know -- they used to estimate how much the casualties would be too. Did you know that? They'd say we are going to have so many casualties. I don't know how they estimated that or however close they ended up.

EM: I bet you they didn't hit it right very often because they were always being surprised about how easy or how hard some of these invasions were.

RC: But anyhow we went in there -- Peleliu -- we thought well, this won't be much. And it -- I guess it was 14 days we

were out there directing traffic there and watching those Marines going up there and getting blowed up and come back down and when they finally brought the Army in with the -- see the Marines didn't have any artillery. They just had rifles and stuff like that and they brought the army in who had some heavy and then they went on, secured the place.

EM: So you are out there 14 days, directing traffic, coordinating --

RC: Yeah that was a big one. That was a long one. That was the biggest longest one we went on.

EM: And did you say you came under fire then or not?

RC: No. It was -- It was at Leyte.

EM: At Leyte is coming up probably next. The Philippines.

RC: Well we had -- let's see we had Eniwetok. We had -- There was six of them and I only have two of them.

EM: Well we've talked about Eniwetok and you've mentioned Guam and we are on Peleliu and I know you've got --

RC: Saipan or -- I think Saipan is in there.

EM: Oh yeah, Saipan is in there. I didn't know you were in Saipan too.

RC: I don't know Saipan or Tinian I was in.

EM: Well those are right next door to each other. My goodness you guys got around, didn't you?

RC: Yeah, they kept us going there.

EM: So what did you learn at Peleliu that you didn't know already. What surprised you?

RC: I guess I didn't see anything that supri-- I meant we were tired, I know that. And like you said, no bath, no nothing for all that time. Just eating K-rationing and C-rationing. You don't -- in between all those we'd go back -- one time we stayed on Guadalcanal for a couple of weeks. They put our boat off the DuPage.

EM: Was this an R&R thing?

RC: Yes. Well yes sort of and sort training. We did some training too there. But we stayed in -- I'll tell you. At Guadalcanal, I'll tell you a little story. We were on, like you said, R&R and we slept in tents. We had a tent. An eight-man tent. They used to have movies on the island every night time. We'd get stuff. We'd -- what the heck did you call it -- we'd appropriate it, they had another name for it. We'd get rice, steel rice. Go out in the jungle with the natives and we'd trade with the natives. Grass skirts and war clubs and stuff like that they made. And I'll tell you another little funny story about that.

EM: Well what did you trade for?

RC: I had grass skirts.

EM: Well you needed a grass skirt didn't you?

RC: I brought it home with me. And I got the war club. Well I haven't got the grass skirt. The wife gave it to the little girl up the street. And I got the war club. But we were at Guadalcanal and like I say we slept and while the movies were going on there we'd go up to the commissary and we'd pick up all this rice. So this Alston Bryant, he was from down in North Carolina, he was good friend of mine. And he took a sack of rice and threw it over his shoulder and come on back to our tent with it and he put it under his cot and we were going to go out trading the next day.

EM: For grass skirts and war clubs.

RC: Yeah. Anything we could get. And so we laying in the bed there and Chuck Williams comes in and said, "You guys ever going to get up?" And we said, "Yeah, we are going to get up." And he sat down on Alston's cot and he says, "You going to do a little trading today?" And Alston says, "No, I don't think so." And he says, "Why not?" And he says, "We haven't got anything to trade." And he said, "Well why don't you use that rice you've got under your bed?" There was a hole in that bag of rice and he had followed it all the way back along the beach to our tent and right under Alston's bed.

EM: So he left a trail and he didn't know it. Follow the bread crumbs.

RC: So we got out and we rushed all that up there. But Chuck didn't care. He was funny like that.

EM: What was access to alcohol to you guys during the war?

RC: I guess I can only remember twice that we had R&R on a beach, unoccupied beach. They took all the sailors over, the whole crew of the DuPage and give us all two beers.

EM: Now where was this island?

RC: I don't know whether it even had a name. It was unoccupied --

EM: Well you know I've heard about --

RC: Couldn't drink on the ship see.

EM: I've heard about an island from a lot of guys. It was called Mogmog.

RC: Maybe.

EM: And they used to take them there and they'd play softball and baseball and you got a couple or three beers and you know you could lay in the sun.

RC: That may have been the name of it. You spent the afternoon over there or something. That could have been the same thing. I didn't know the name of it or anything. The couple of times we did that, that was all.

EM: Did you ever go to any USO shows or, you know, where they -
-

RC: Bob Hope?

EM: Yeah, the Bob Hope shows.

RC: I'll tell you a story about that.

EM: Tell me that story.

RC: We were tied out in I guess maybe -- I guess that was in New Guinea. Anyhow, Bob Hope was going to have a show on the island but only the officers on the ship were going over. So we said, "well that" -- there were three of us. Wally [Ludwick?], he was a motor machinist and Bryant was a soundman and me. We bummed around together pretty much. We said, "Well, we'll try to get over there." So we made a deal. They took the officers over in one of the LCM or LCVPs or whatever and they all went down the gangplank but we got this guy, this LCVP, we told him come around, first come down the stern and we'll come down that ladder back there. We got down there and we crawled over. If you ever saw one of them there was a place in the back where the coxswain stood and underneath there was a place they kept ropes and stuff. We went down there and we climbed under there -- the three of us hid under there. Then he went around the ladder, picked up his officers and into the beach we went. So once the officers got off, we crawled out and we went up to the show too. We sat down and watched the show too. Bob Hope was there. And then when

it was almost over, we hurried back and got under there before any officers came and got in.

EM: This is New Guinea?

RC: I think that's where it was. Then they took the officers to the ladder on the ship and they went up there and they tied on those back of the ship when they were at anchor, you know and we come up the rope ladder. But the next day, Chuck Williams asked us how we liked the show.

EM: What did you say?

RC: "That show? Only officers got to go that." He said, "I saw you guys down there."

EM: Man, you talk about a special relationship with your Capitan, you had one. He allowed you guys to do that.

RC: Yeah, he didn't care. It wasn't his idea that we couldn't do it. It's just they weren't doing it for the enlisted men. He saw us (inaudible) he said, "I saw you under there, back there." I don't know whether he saw us going in or coming back but he saw us.

EM: He saw you. I'll be darned.

RC: Yeah, that was funny.

EM: So what -- now you guys weren't at Tarawa were you?

RC: No.

EM: OK. You missed that one which was a good one to miss I'm told. And you mentioned Saipan Tinian. Was that --

RC: That wasn't very --

EM: Was that a pretty easy one?

RC: For us. Now I understand Saipan, I think the Marines ran into some opposition when they got up in there.

EM: Yeah, it's always tough when you go ashore but --

RC: But it wasn't much on us.

EM: So we must be starting to get close to Leyte. So were you guys involved in Leyte?

RC: Yeah. That was the first invasion. And I saw MacArthur.

EM: Tell me about that.

RC: Wading ashore.

EM: Again and again and again.

RC: I got a radio thing the PBV coming in from some direction. I don't know. Hold your fire, hold your fire. You know they kept it on. I didn't know what it was. We didn't know what it was but pretty soon the PBV landed and MacArthur and his crew jumped out and waded ashore.

EM: Now where were you when that happened?

RC: On the LCC.

EM: You could see it.

RC: Oh yeah. I came up top side.

EM: So you are an eyewitness to the great return. He actually got his pants wet. Did he do it once or I was told the

theory goes -- the story goes he did it multiple times for all the movie cameras.

RC: I only saw it once.

EM: You only saw it once.

RC: I never saw him do it.

EM: What was the scuttlebutt about MacArthur or was there any?

RC: I saw him several times sitting -- he'd always sit backwards on the deck of the ship he was on. He said only a damn fool would sit with his face into the wind. And that was (inaudible) on that. But he'd -- ship would be going that way and he'd be sitting up on there smoking.

EM: The old corncob pipe.

RC: Several times I saw him.

EM: But you never got close to him.

RC: No. I was just on the LCC and he'd be on the --

EM: Did you ever get any exposure to any of the other quote "famous" names in the Navy?

RC: No.

EM: Any of the admirals? Nimitz or any of those?

RC: No. We had pretty high officers on our boat time to time. Marine generals that came. We were transporting them between places. But no, I didn't have any. Nimitz.

EM: So you guys just kind of basically operated in a relatively informal manner --

RC: We did. It was like Gilligan's Navy, a whole lot like Gilligan's Navy. You'll see all the shirts off.

EM: Yeah, everybody's suntanned and naked from the waist up.

RC: Yeah, just like Gilligan's Navy, we were. When they were running that television show.

EM: So what else happened at Leyte other than --

RC: We got in there and got out pretty fast at Leyte.

EM: Well there was a lot -- there was a big Naval battle. We all know about the battle of Leyte Gulf.

RC: Oh yeah. That was really a beauty.

EM: Tell me about that. What did you see?

RC: Well we were going up there. You know we had ships, they say they were 30 miles wide, the ships. As far as you could look -- anywhere, ships. Well we were floating along and evidentially along and evidentially the Japs were back in a cove or some kind of an inlet and they -- whether they tried to get out or what, I don't know but I'm telling you all hell broke loose with all the battle wagons and destroyers and everything. It was like fourth of July. Just went on and on. Had a big battle there.

EM: A lot of aircrafts there too?

RC: Oh yeah, aircrafts. We had the aircrafts. That's another thing. I think it was at Leyte we got in a typhoon. It

raised that ship up and dropped it down just like it was dropping on cement.

EM: This is the DuPage.

RC: Yeah. And the Japs, they said the Japs had us -- if that hadn't come on we would have had a big mess there too. The thing to do in a case like that is to head for the open sea so you don't get thrown up against each other and the ships and that. And that's what the Japs did. They ended in the open sea and that gave us time to call back for air support and air support came and they caught the Japanese out there in the opening and they did away -- that's pretty well what they did away.

EM: That was pretty much the end of the Japanese (inaudible) and that's the first of the Kamikazes showed up too.

RC: Yeah, well we -- they told us on the speaker on the DuPage that if we had to abandon ship, to try to get ashore as best we could and hook up with the army or whatever because we were really getting banged around out there.

EM: Yeah, I've heard stories about how high the waves are.

RC: Yeah. They'd just drop you and I said, "Boy, I hope this thing is welded right." It seemed like you were hitting cement.

EM: A wall of water is pretty hard.

RC: Yeah, I forgot about that, that we got that trap out there.

EM: So after Leyte, then of course Luzon has to be invaded and I think that's where things get interesting for you and the DuPage?

RC: Yeah, we went -- I think, I forget where we went after Leyte. Back to New Guinea I think for a couple of weeks. They were pretty close together and we went on to some maneuvers there and then we went up to Luzon and that was a pretty smooth operation for us.

EM: Now this is Lingayen Gulf.

RC: Yeah, that's where we went ashore. And that was a -- I tell you -- yeah, that's where we got fired on too and there was an LCI alongside -- an LCI was a smaller thing than LCST --

EM: Smaller than an LST but bigger than an LCC.

RC: Yeah but it was alongside of us and we were laying off of there and shell come and hit on one side of that LCI and it hit on the other side of that LCI and the third on hit that LCI and then they pumped water (inaudible)

EM: Now this is what? Shore bombardment?

RC: Yep, from up there. We could see it where it was. And where it was coming from. And it hit our side and it hit on the other side of us and Chuck says, "Back off boys, back off."

EM: Yeah, we've been trying to --

RC: Yeah, we backed off and we got out of that one.

EM: So you didn't actually get hit. So what happened to the LCI?

RC: He got hit and funny part was -- some of their casualties they took out and put on the DuPage and then later than night the DuPage got hit --

EM: So this all happened on the same night then?

RC: One of the guys on the -- that got hit. I ended up in the hospital with him, got to know him and he was from Cincinnati.

EM: I'll be darned. Was he on the LCI?

RC: He was on the LCI.

EM: I'll be darned.

RC: And he had -- his elbow was all messed up.

EM: So where were you when the LCI got hit, were you at just --

RC: We were out directing traffic. And you know when -- we were there.

EM: So you were close.

RC: Yeah, we were right alongside of it. You know and well not real close but it was next thing up from us.

EM: That's really the first time you've seen anything close by to you actually be hit and --

RC: Yeah, that was the first and the only time that we were in -- now some of these LCCs that operated in Normandy, some of them got really --

EM: Worked up on. So tell me about the Kamikaze experience.

RC: Well, whenever we had General Quarters, we would man our twin .50s up on the what's-it-called --

EM: You'd jump up on the LCC.

RC: Yeah and I would -- my station was in between the two (inaudible). I had my earphones on to listen to commands to fire, you know. I was standing between them two and we had -- you know in here we got the whole -- I got the whole ships log that night. The times and everything. It's all in there.

EM: That's a --

RC: That's the official --

EM: That is a great thing to have.

RC: We got it one time at one of these reunions. Somebody had deal -- we got it anyhow and made copies of it. Never did get words to fire on them. They come in so low out of the sun and we had so many ships around if we had fired at the sucker, we'd have been hitting our other ships.

EM: What time of day was it?

RC: Just about dusk, sun was just about setting. In fact, I think exact that time --

EM: I'm sure it is.

RC: I know -- the last thing I know; I saw that baby coming. I said, "That SOB's got us." I remember saying that. And I could see the propeller going and that was it. Next thing I know I was laying up on the deck.

EM: Do you know what kind of aircraft it was?

RC: No.

EM: All you knew is that it had a red meatball on it.

RC: Anyhow, what they tell me afterwards, he hit our boat -- he hit the LCC and you can see how it ended up, the LCC and he went on down to the deck of the ship, the hold of the ship. And I followed him. And this buddy of mine, he says that he looked down in that hole and he says -- he told my mom this -- he come visit me after the wall. He was a Southern boy, he always called me Bobby. You know how those Southern --

EM: Yeah, I do know those (inaudible)

RC: Yeah, he says -- he told my mom -- he says, "I looked down in that hole and there was nothing but fire down there." And he says, "Bobby down there and he went straight to hell. Bobby's dead and he went straight to hell."

EM: He's in fire immediately.

RC: But anyhow they got me up out of there --

EM: Of course you don't remember any of this.

RC: No I don't remember that at all. And the next thing -- I think it was three days they told me. I woke up, I was laying on one of those wire stretchers, you've got one over there in the museum. And I said -- Alston was kneeling along side of me, from North Carolina. He was kneeling along side of me. He said -- he was trying to feed me pork -- he said, "Come on Bob, you like pork."

EM: It's a pork chop, right?

RC: I guess. I said, "Alston, go get my mattress." I said this is killing my -- my face was all blood --

EM: Now how long after you were hit did all of this happen?

RC: About three days he told he me.

EM: So this is three days later.

RC: He told me that I had been unconscious and they said it -- they said one of the .50 -- see we had 10,000 rounds of .50 millimeters in each one of those gun turrets up there and they blew up.

EM: Fifty caliber?

RC: Mm-hmm. And one of them got me right here.

EM: I'm looking at that scar over your right eye.

RC: Well I fractured my skull and they said they scraped some red paint off there from the tracer -- the tracer bullets. That's what the doctor said. And anyhow, our -- it's a

shame our coxswain Joe Zalinsky -- they said he looked like Swiss cheese. He died. He was killed.

EM: He was killed. So how many people were killed?

RC: Thirty-four or thirty-six. I think 34, and then two the next day died. There's a picture in there of them burying them.

EM: Yeah, I did see that picture.

RC: Then -- then they -- Alston went running and got coreman or doctor or somebody and they came and they hauled me down to to operating room.

EM: So this is all aboard the DuPage. So when you woke up you were on the DuPage?

RC: Mhm.

EM: What kind of condition was the ship in?

RC: It was in pretty bad shape. They said they found a live bomb.

EM: It never went off.

RC: Never went off and he's dead now -- one officer, he'd come to all of the reunions and everything. He got two other guys and they picked it up and they threw it overboard.

EM: Golly. If that think had gone off, I think it might have sunk the ship.

RC: I guess, yeah.

EM: You might not be here.

RC: I'm lucky to be here as it is. And then they put me on -- they got back to Leyte and they met a hospital ship at Leyte. The USS Mercy and they put me on that.

EM: So tell me what -- you mention your skull fracture above your right eye and what else is bunged up?

RC: This hand was broken.

EM: So right hand.

RC: Burned. I got burns over my arms and back.

EM: Burns on your right arm and back.

RC: And my knee -- they wired -- I think it's at the patella -- they wired that together.

EM: Kind of the cover of the knee cap.

RC: They wired that together. And you know doctors today look at that x-ray and they say they never saw anything like it.

EM: Still got your wire, huh?

RC: One doctor. You know Peggy's husband is a doctor.

EM: Is that right?

RC: He's a doctor. He's semi-retired now.

EM: That's Bill?

RC: Yeah, Bill. And their daughter is a graduate as a doctor in May. She (inaudible). But he -- I've had -- you know I've got no complaints with the VA. The VA is great as far as I'm concerned.

EM: Handles you well, huh?

RC: I'll tell you, when I got discharged from Great Lakes, they told me -- they give me a card and -- with a number on it and that and they said if you don't hear -- And I didn't even know about getting about compensation or anything. I didn't know about anything at that time. Nobody else did either. And they said, "If you need anything from in 60 days," they said, "call this number." Well I'll tell you I wasn't home a month and I got a check. Now you tell me what's happening today with these guys. This was right -- the war was almost over then, there were a lot of guys getting discharged --

EM: And they still managed to get it done.

RC: With a pencil and paper, they didn't have computers.

EM: No computers or anything.

RC: Now what's wrong with these guys today waiting over a year for anything.

EM: For anything. Even a letter back.

RC: I can't understand this. What's going on? You've got all these computers and all that stuff?

EM: I don't know.

RC: That's the difference than it was. Snail mail and --

EM: And pencils and erasers and typewriters and --

RC: Yeah, I don't understand it. But anyhow, they've treated me well.

EM: So you went to a hospital ship, the Mercy? Is that what --

RC: The USS Mercy.

EM: Mercy R-C-Y Mercy?

RC: Yeah.

EM: I'm going to get that name down. So what's it like being on a hospital ship. I know it's not fun but --

RC: It was an adventure getting on it. They put me in one of these baskets and they threw a line over to that hospital ship and I went over there naked as a Jay bird.

EM: Naked? How come they don't let you bring --

RC: Never. Never. I went from hospital to hospital and every time I left the hospital they'd take my pajamas away from me. They didn't want to lose them I guess. You know what I mean. They had trouble getting them and they weren't going to --

EM: They weren't going to let you leave with one.

RC: No, they never did.

EM: That is amazing.

RC: So naked as a Jay bird, they pull that over the ocean and it's going up and down and onto the hospital ship. And like I said, naked as a Jay bird and here's all these nurses waiting.

EM: There were no secrets, huh?

RC: No. No. But anyhow, I was on there --

EM: But you are all bandaged up. Did they put you in a body cast or what? When you were hurt?

RC: Yeah. My leg was in a cast and --

EM: And your arm was --

RC: No, no. At that time, it wasn't. We got on the hospital ship and they got me in the bunk, they were three high. And they brought me -- they brought us our food, you know to our bed. And I couldn't eat. I couldn't use my hand. The nurse came and I hadn't eaten my food and she said -- and I said, "I can't eat it. I can't use my hand." And she said, "Well, nothing wrong with your hand." And I said, "Something's wrong with my hand. I can't use it." And she looked at it and she ran and got a doctor or somebody and they came and looked at it and they came and hauled me down to x-ray and they found it was broken.

EM: Oh, they didn't know it at that point.

RC: No, DuPage missed it. With all the other --

EM: Fixing other parts of you. I mean --

RC: And so then they cast that --

EM: It started working again.

RC: Then I was out of business with that. There was a young doctor somewhere, I think maybe it was in California in the hospital, he told me that was the best I could do. He told me, "You'll never be able to do any better than that."

EM: And looks to me like you can.

RC: And then there was another doctor, he gave me a tennis ball and he said, "You keep squeezing that. You are not doing anything anyhow; you are in the hospital. And I start squeezing it and I've used it all my life.

EM: So you have full use of your hand then?

RC: Yeah. One guy said --

EM: So which would you say was the most serious of your injuries? Probably bothered you the most?

RC: Oh my leg, definitely. The other thing that they missed completely is that heel bone. That was broken.

EM: Oh, on your left leg?

RC: On my right leg. On the same leg. And it was cast and when they took off the cast and told me to start putting weight on it, it drove me up a tree, boy, stepping on that.

RC: It hurt?

EM: Yeah. And they said, "It's nothing -- your -- I don't know if there is anything wrong with it." And I said, "It hurts." So they x-rayed it and they found out it was broken. They never did do anything for it.

RC: Really. So the timing then on when you got injured, wounded, was late '44 I guess. Or maybe early '45.

EM: January the 10th, '45. The 9th or 10th. We were cross the international date line.

EM: Who knows what day it was but you are close. So that was the end of your war experience but you were -- how long in hospitals, hospital ships?

RC: Oh, the hospital ship took me to Manus island and they put us ashore there and they had quite a nice hospital there in the Quonset huts, you know how -- and we stayed there several -- several nights I know I was there.

EM: So how long were you on the hospital ship? Just a few days, weeks or what?

RC: The hospital ship, I don't know how long. I am sure it was a week at the most.

EM: OK, so a few days to a week.

RC: Somewhere around there. And then they flew me -- they put me on a plane, that was an experience. That was a real experience. They used these old planes and the windows in there -- they had little round thing that they had broken out the glass or the plastic or whatever was in there. But you on that hospital ship about four high. Plane. Pack you in there with all this cast on me and leg and that and they had a nurse on there and she said, "Now don't worry. If anything happens, this will float for" -- I don't know how many minutes.

EM: Five minutes.

RC: Something like that. And I thought, "How the hell is she going to get us all off, these 700 guys are a lot worse than I were."

EM: How fast are you going to move with all that casting on?

RC: And anyhow, and --

EM: And she was a little thing to right?

RC: Yeah and in those days, the planes couldn't get over 10,000 feet because of the air and you'd hit these air pockets and here we were laying on there and we'd go -- I'd tell you, when we got to -- they flew me to Guadalcanal. And when we got there I think -- when we got there, I had a urinate so bad and I couldn't. I was so scared, they had to put a catheter in me. I was so scared.

EM: They had to catheterize you. Is that what they mean when they say scare the piss out of you?

RC: Probably was because it was funny. And it was really funny. And I'd -- And I was in Guadalcanal for quite a while. And I hadn't --

EM: Are you able to get up and get around at that point or are you still bedridden?

RC: I was still bedridden until then. But they put me in this Quonset hut. They put me in the bed and there was some guy come up there and he's laying off in a wheelchair. And he got up and he jumped up in the bed beside me?

EM: And he was a paraplegic? He'd lost his legs?

RC: Just one, he'd only lost one.

EM: Lost one leg.

RC: And he was in that wheelchair and I said, "Where did you get that wheelchair mate?" And he said, "I got it" -- and I said, "Where you've been?" And he said, "Down the head" and I hadn't been to the head or anything up to that time and using bedpans and that's a mess.

EM: Oh yeah, I understand.

RC: And I said, "Lend me that will you? Where's the head?" And he says right down and shows me how to go and I got that wheel chair and oh boy I was happen then. I got down there and got on the john. And when I came back -- I hadn't been registered in there yet and they were looking for him when I got back. The coreman says, "Where've you been?" And I said, "Oh, I was down the head." And he says, "Are you allowed to do that?" And I said, "Sure I can do that."

EM: As long as I've got a wheelchair.

RC: And from then on I could go to the bathroom. That felt good. I remember a lot of nice things. I had a good time. It was overall.

EM: What's the best thing you remember. What makes you the happiest when you look back there? What's the biggest smile event?

RC: Well, there was one thing I pulled on my buddy Bryant. I told you this Lieutenant Commander Swadersky was on the boat. He was -- and I'd be on the radio and we were floating around out there and so Chuck Williams, he told Bryant, he said, "Go down and relieve Bob." There wasn't much going on. He said, "Go down and relieve Bob and come up top side for a while." And so Bryant, he come down and sit on my radio and we had a thing up there where you could -- you've seen them, these round things on the boats -- they had them all over. On the PT boats, you could yell down in them and get air. So Swadersky or any of those guys used to yell down there messages they wanted me to send or something. So Bryant was sitting on the phone down there and I yelled down, "Radio." And he said, "Yes, sir." And I said, "Take this message." "Yes, sir." He thought it was Swadersky. I told him a whole bunch of stuff. And I said, "You got that." And he said, "Yes, sir." And I said, "Read it back to me."

EM: You are doing on purpose.

RC: Yeah. And I said, "Bryant, you got that." And he said, "Now what do you what do you want me to do with it?" And I said, "Shove it up your ass."

EM: Put it where the sun don't shine.

RC: And come flying up out of there and he said, "I'm going to kill you, I'm going to kill you Bob." He said, "I'm never going to relieve you again."

EM: Now is he the one that you did see after the war?

RC: Oh yeah, we were --

EM: So I bet you relieved that situation several times with him.

RC: Yeah. His wife would visit us and we'd go down and visit him in North Carolina and he died four or five years ago. Yeah, oh Alston. That was funny.

EM: Now that's one of the funniest events and it makes you laugh. Now what causes you the most sadness or what's the worst thing you remember about your experience, the other side of the coin?

RC: I guess this guy I told you -- Joe Zalinsky. Joe was a coalminer, real coal. He was big and tough. But he was real religious and I mean -- he lived his religion and he was really religious. He should have never been in there. He should have never been in there. He should have been exempt for religious reasons.

EM: For his religious beliefs?

RC: Yeah, he got hurt -- well he got killed. But Joe, he said that he would never -- we'd have watch on the boat because them Japs would be floating around in the water at night you know, under a box and everything when we were -- while the invasion was still going on. We'd have a watcher on the boat. And Joe said if one of them would get on, I wouldn't shot him. He says, "I'd talk to him and try to make him understand." One of those guys. He was that way, really. And anyhow, I guess maybe a week or two before we got hit, he had a brother that was in the army over in Europe and he got word that his brother had been killed over there in that army. And we felt so bad you know. And he was such a nice fellow. He really was sincere about -- and now my radio shack -- they pin up girls and Joe, he put up pictures of babies, pretty babies and stuff. And he asked me if he could put them down on my -- pin up on my radio shack. So I let him pin them up. So --

EM: Isn't that something? He was from where?

RC: Pennsylvania.

EM: And you say he was killed?

RC: Yep.

EM: How did that happen?

RC: When we got hit.

EM: OK. The Kamikaze hit that did --

RC: Yeah the Kamikaze hit him and they said he looked like Swiss cheese.

EM: That's the one. OK.

RC: Now Bryant that's from North Carolina, he told me something -- in several of these pictures of there. He gives me the boat, how it was all banged up. He had pictures of that. You know. But they said, Joe looked like Swiss cheese. And he wasn't going to hurt anybody. He really was sincere.

EM: So did this situation where the Japanese would sneak around in the water under boxes and stuff, did that happen very often?

RC: Well there was many alarms about it. I couldn't say that I ever saw one of them but they said, there were reports they were under boxes, floating up and throwing stuff onto the boats. At night time.

EM: Now you were wounded in action, did you receive a Purple Heart?

RC: Yeah. At Guadalcanal had the funniest -- it wasn't funny, it was just sad. I had a good friend, a priest from Cincinnati, Father [Smener?], he's dead now. And he was in the Navy, he was Chaplain in the Navy and the day that I got

my Purple Heart, he said that he and the protestant Chaplin at Guadalcanal there -- that the Chaplin always came along with them when they give -- the general or admiral or whoever it was -- I don't know who give me, it was some admiral. He told me to lay -- I tried to sit up and he said, "Lay down."

EM: This is back when you are still bedridden.

RC: Yeah. He -- they read that stuff off and give me the Purple Heart but Smener said that Quonset hut was like a T and he said that I went to one wing and if he'd of went to my wing he'd saw me and he could've told my mother and told everybody about it.

EM: He was close but so far away.

RC: Yeah, and it was funny.

EM: So there was a letter sent to your parents saying you'd been wounded.

RC: That was a mess too.

EM: Tell me about that.

RC: I told these guys before they put me on the ship, I told them to write to my mom and just tell her I sprained my wrist, I couldn't write. I'd write her soon as I could. So there was a couple of them that wrote to her and told and then she said she started getting official messages from the government. I don't know what it is. "Sorry to

tell your son..." So the poor lady didn't know what was going on.

EM: She was getting one line from you but another from the official. So she must have figured it out after a while.

RC: And then I -- I started getting mail from home. I guess I was down in New Hebrides then. They flew me down there. That was the end of my flying down there.

EM: The what?

RC: That's the last flying I did.

EM: That's the end of the flying.

RC: After I got down there, one morning they woke me up, said, "Come on Connelly, they are going to evacuate you to the states." And I said, "How am I going?" And they said, "By plane." And I said, "I'm not going." And that coreman, he come back a little later and said, "You better get up and go." And I said, "I'm not going." And he said, "You're going to get court marshalled." And I said, "So be it but I came out here one a ship and that's the way I'm going back." I was scared to death of riding on those things. You know I never rode another airplane until 20 years ago. My wife and I went to Europe and stuff like that. But I'd never gone on another plane. But anyhow the doctor came around, bed call in the morning you know like he did. And he said -- he looked -- and he said, "Weren't you supposed

to be evacuated today?" And I said, "Yep." And he said, "What happened?" And I said, "I'm not going. I came out here on a ship and that's the way I'm going back." And he said, "You might be here a while." And I said, "So be it. I can't do anything anyhow. Lying in that bed."

EM: Yeah, just depends on where you are going to be laying.

RC: So finally he -- one day he came and told me, he said, "There is a ship out there but they don't want any -- they want to take ambulatory patients. If you think you can hobble up on that ship and then once they get on the way, tell them you can't move around."

EM: Flop back down.

RC: He said, "They'll have to feed you." So that's what I did. So I got back. I told them I wasn't flying any place anymore.

EM: So that was a hospital ship that you took back to the states?

RC: No.

EM: Just a transport?

RC: Just a transport.

EM: Just a transport. So that was a lousy ride I bet. Better than an airplane.

RC: Took a long time. Yeah.

EM: Was the war over by then? Still going on?

RC: No. You know what I was doing when the war ended? I was hitchhiking down here?

EM: Is that right? So you got stateside --

RC: I got stateside, I think I got discharged in May of '45 and then I was home for a while. I know it was August -- whenever they dropped the bomb.

EM: That was August.

RC: My nephew was born that day. That lived down there. But no, I hitchhiked from Cincinnati down here and I got a ride on a truck right outside of Cincinnati. You know these pickup trucks, they ride piggyback and got pulled over and stopped. And he said, "Where are you going?" And I said, "I'm going to Texas." And he said, "I was going to Dallas." So we got in there and we'd stop at night time, he'd sleep in one seat and I'd sleep in the other. Piggyback. But we stopped. The war ended. Truman announced it, rationing and everything. Somewhere, we were some little town and everything shut down. And he said, "Jezz, I'm going to have to -- we are going to have to lay over here. I need gas." And the gas stations, they were shut down so we went, stayed there and we were in a little restaurant, sitting up at the counter at a little restaurant and he looked out and he had rationing stamps that you need for gas. And he said, "I don't know what I

am going to do with these." And the guy sitting alongside him, he says, "You ought to sell them." He sold them those stamps and rationing was over.

EM: And the guy didn't know it, huh?

RC: The guy didn't know it. This truck driver sold them. I said, "We better get the hell out of here." We better get out of here. But he took me down to Dallas and then I came on down to --

EM: So where did you when you came back to the States, where did you come in? To San Diego? San Francisco?

RC: No. LA. What is it? The Long --

EM: Long Beach.

RC: Long Beach. I came in there. Actually there was some young Jewish doctor told me there, he says, "You know you can go back to duty." And low and behold, the guy, the doctor that I met out on Guadalcanal -- I got yellow jaundice while I was in the hospital -- I forgot to tell you that.

EM: Hmm, that means liver problems.

RC: Yeah. And they -- it was like a bowling ball in my stomach. And this one doctor was an orthopedic doctor and I was in that ward but he diagnosed it. But he said he'd have a medical doctor come and make sure but they did. And he said, "I'll try to keep you here. If you stay here and

treat you in this ward." So they did. They let me stay there and they gave me, I remember, they come around and they say -- they'd look at the nurse and they'd tell the nurse, "Tincture Belladonna, grams one and half or something." And Bill my son in law told me that's the way they treated -- they keep you sleeping, it makes you sleep and it rests your liver. But I'd wake up and there'd be all kinds of mail on my bunk that was catching up with me.

EM: Yeah, that's right.

RC: And I couldn't read -- I'd fall asleep. And then I'd wake up again, fall asleep again.

EM: So you are doing a lot of sleeping, that's what they wanted.

RC: Yeah. But anyhow, that doctor -- he was the head of the Naval hospital in Long Beach and I met him after this guy told me I was getting ready to go back to duty. I met the doctor [Durul?] or something his name was. And he knew me well because his wife maiden name was Connelly and that's -- and he was from down South somewhere and he asked -- I said, "Well I'm going to go back to duty." And he said, "You are not going back to duty." The war is coming in and he said, "Before you can go back to duty the war will be over." And he said, "Where do you live?" And I told him Cincinnati and he said, "Why don't you put in for a

transfer to Great Lakes?" He said, "I'll sign it." So I did and they sent me back to Great Lakes.

EM: Is that where you discharged?

RC: I discharged from Great Lakes. I got -- well that was odd too. I got there and they said new guy's coming in, could get a 36-hour liberty. And I could go home in 36 hours from there, to Cincinnati.

EM: Right, you are close.

RC: So I asked for liberty, pass for liberty. And I had my ditty bag and I was hobbling out the door and it comes over the speaker calling me to report somewhere. And I said, "Oh Lord." Because, well they had talked to me and examined me and all that stuff and I said, "Now what are they going to do?" So I went back, thought they were cancelling my liberty and the guy -- they took me in and they asked me, "How would you like to be a civilian?" And I said, "I don't know, what's wrong with me?" And they said, "The war is going to be over before you..." And I said, "Well, I don't know about." I said, "I'm going home." And he said, "Go on home for the weekend and he said, "Let us know when you come back what you think, we'll decide." So I got on and I went on home.

EM: So was that the first time you'd reunited with your parents?

RC: Yeah.

EM: How was that reunion? How did that go?

RC: That was pretty big. That was pretty big.

EM: Tears were shed by everybody?

RC: Uhuh.

EM: You were still pretty beat up?

RC: Oh yeah, I was on crutches then. I was still using crutches then. And that was hard too because I had to use --

EM: Oh yeah, you had that bad hand.

RC: But then when I went back to Great Lakes -- you know in all this time I didn't tell you, I told you that guy on the LCI got hurt and was on the --

EM: Right, right.

RC: He went with me every hospital. He was Cincinnati.

EM: What was his name again?

RC: Alamo Juit Patten. He was from down in Kentucky. J-U-I-T his middle was. Alamo Juit Patten.

EM: Interesting name.

RC: Yeah. And anyhow, up at Great Lakes, I had to go before some kind of board. They had orthopedic doctors and psychologists and, I don't know, there was three guys up there. They'd ask you questions and one of the questions they asked me was if I wanted to be a civilian, if I wanted

to discharge. Because I had been home a couple of times on weekends. And I said, "Really don't make much difference to me." There wasn't anybody at home, all the fellows were gone and everything. I said -- and so anyhow, that's why my answer was I didn't care. So I went out and Alamo, his name was there too and he said, "What did they ask you in there?" And I told him and he said, "What did you say?" And I told him what I said and he said, "You damn fool." He said, "You'll be here," -- I forget, Company Q was it, the guys with brain problems?

EM: Post-traumatic stress?

RC: He said, "Your name is going to be on that list. You damn fool." He went in there and they asked him that and he said, "Hell yes."

EM: Get me out of here. So this man's sane.

RC: You know I was home a month or six weeks before he got home, before he got discharged.

EM: Oh really.

RC: Yeah, he was a long time. Funny.

EM: Did you ever have dreams about the war experience after you got back home?

RC: Yeah but not too much. You know -- I spend about 18 months down here in Johnson City and then my nieces and nephews, they laugh. They still laugh to this day. They were just

little kids. But me down there, trying to ride horses and falling off.

EM: That could be tough considering the condition your body was in.

RC: I was young and foolish then. About 24 or something like that.

EM: And what about aftermath of your war wounds? Did they ever take shrapnel out of you?

RC: Yes, yes they did.

EM: Really?

RC: Yeah, in Cincinnati. They -- when I got discharged and then after the war, they didn't have a VA hospital in Cincinnati then but they had an office downtown and you'd go see a doctor there and then -- like an orthopedic -- they sent me to an orthopedist specialist. They'd give me a voucher to go call him up and make an appointment and they took care of you that way. And that doctor told me it was my ankle -- my heel -- he could operate on it but it's 50/50. He said it might be better and it might be worse. And I said, "I think I am going to try to leave it the way it is." And that's what I've done and since then I've had doctors that have given me inserts to put in my shoe and stuff like that. I got by all my life. I worked all my life. I worked at Proctor and Gamble for 34 years.

EM: Yeah, did you ever have circulation problems or have your legs turn black or anything like that?

RC: One time but I know why.

EM: Why?

RC: I was playing ball.

EM: Now you are not supposed to be playing ball.

RC: Now I still got a brace on this knee.

EM: Do you really?

RC: Just an elastic thing.

EM: Right, right.

RC: I just felt it when you said that. But yeah, I was playing ball one day at work, noontime, and told them, "I can't run, I can catch, I'll catch but I can't run." But the guy they had in the outfield but he couldn't play out there so I thought, "Oh, I'll go out there." And that thing turned all colors. And --

EM: Oh my gosh.

RC: It was just -- I went down to VA and showed them what happened and he said, "Oh, you bumped that or something, that's just bleeding in there, that will go away."

EM: You didn't tell him you were playing right field, chasing line drives.

RC: No, no. I didn't tell him that. But my boss at work, he told me I better not play anymore because I missed a day's work.

EM: Well yeah.

RC: I was on salary so I didn't get docked or anything.

EM: You get paid where you were there or not.

RC: He said, "You better not play ball anymore Bob."

EM: Wow.

RC: Yeah, that's the only time that it did that. I was married.

EM: So what do you think about the Japanese after all these years?

RC: You know; they are just like I am. They were there because their government told them to be there. And I was on the volunteer fire department in little village we lived in and one of the fellows on there come home and we used to have parties and stuff like that and he came in one day and he says, "Bob," he says -- he was some kind of a salesman -- he says, "This Japanese guy's in town, I've been doing business with or something. I'd like to invite him out to the firehouse, the party." We had a club room and stuff like that. And he says, "I didn't want to do -- I didn't know how you'd feel about it." And I said, "No, no, that's all right. Bring him on out," I said. He was just like I

was, he was there because he had to be and so he did and I met the guy and talked to him about the experiences and we got along fine. I hold nothing against them really. I really don't.

EM: That's good.

RC: One time I was up at Dayton, that airshow up in Dayton, and we were looking at these pictures of the Philippines, they got them real big lined up there and there were two Japanese couples came there. Two fellows and their wives. And he got talking to me and he said he was one of those spotters that were in contact with the United States. You know they had spotters in the Philippines. And he was one of them.

EM: So he was a Filipino. So one of quote "natives" that -- yeah -- the Filipinos played a big role. They were big allies. Well it was their nation that had gotten steamrolled, their country.

RC: Yeah, so I met him up there.

EM: So this may sound like kind of a strange question but I'll ask it anyhow. How do you feel like the experiences you went through in WWII changed you as a person and the way you look at the world?

RC: Well, I always said that's the best thing that ever happened to me.

EM: How so?

RC: I think I grew up. Here I was in Cincinnati, a close-knit family, never been off on my own. Well I'd been camping with the kids and that but I'd never been out of town, never seen anything and I got to see how other people live and all that stuff. And I think it -- I guess I grew up is what I keep saying. That's the best thing I'd say. But I think it was the best thing that ever happened to me. Now actually that war -- the fighting -- that wasn't good but -

EM: But what happened to you physically wasn't good and what happened to mankind wasn't good but in the bigger picture it helped you become a much worldlier person.

RC: Yeah.

EM: I guess you look at death differently and the value of life differently.

RC: Yeah. That's all different. I don't hold anything against the Japanese. I've got a Japanese automobile. I can't drive it anymore. You know this leg now is shot on me. It's dead.

EM: Really?

RC: I can't feel the gas pedal.

EM: You're still getting around pretty well.

RC: I hobble around. But Peggy drives me.

EM: But given what you were put through, your body got pretty well beat up --

RC: I just -- I can't -- if you can't feel the gas, if you're right leg goes bad, you're out of luck. I never thought of this until this happened to me.

EM: Your right leg is more important than you're left one when you are driving.

RC: I couldn't feel -- I can't tell the brake or anything. So I had --

EM: You could drive a stick shift but you couldn't feel the gas or the breaks. Oh well. Well it's time to let someone else do the driving.

RC: I guess it's been about 18 months that I haven't driven.

EM: Really?

RC: I came home one night and I told Peggy, I said, "Peggy, I can't drive anymore. I'm going to kill myself or somebody else."

EM: Yeah. Well what else do you want to talk about while we got you on the air here? Covered a lot of territory. Got some fascinating stories.

RC: I guess I want it understood that it wasn't all bad. We had some fun.

EM: Well you made some buddies.

RC: Made good buddies.

EM: You had a band of brothers.

RC: It wasn't all bad.

EM: You had some fun. And you did the job.

RC: I can't think of anything else funny that would happen.
(inaudible) Read that back I said.

EM: You even got me laughing on these stories. Well first let me thank you for the donation of all the photos and the documents that we'll be passing on to the curator.

RC: See this is the disk.

EM: Yeah, that's the disk.

RC: One of these is me in the gun. That's me.

EM: Oh yeah. That's you at the gun. OK.

RC: That was just taking a picture.

EM: That was a staged photo, huh? These are some great photos.
And what we will do is we will --

RC: Here's that burial.

EM: Oh yeah. And there's some grass huts. Where was that? In the Philippines?

RC: No, that was New Guinea. And you know there's little kids -- they'd build those out of the water. Somebody already told you that already?

EM: No.

RC: The headhunters were up in there and when they come in to attack these natives on the beach they had just a little

bridge going from the house that they built out over the water and they'd knock that down so that the head hunters couldn't get to them. And if you see how them ride over the water and they have little kids raise them out on there. Of course they swim --

EM: Before they walk.

RC: But they are walking around, you think, over that ocean, you think kids would fall off.

EM: And drown.

RC: But no. And the headhunters would -- them -- we'd get those native kids to take us out fishing and we'd throw hand grenades in the water and get the fish and the natives, the kids, and some of them would come up. They were poisoned or something. They said, "Don't eat that."

EM: Don't eat those.

RC: But we'd get other fish.

EM: Yeah, so you'd throw the grenade in and the concussion would stun the fish if not kill them and then you could get them. And they'd point out the ones that were poisonous so you wouldn't eat those.

RC: Yeah, down there in New Guinea.

EM: It was probably the Blowfish is I think what they call them. I'll be darned.

RC: Some we couldn't eat. They were poisonous. Yeah, we had fun with them.

EM: Yeah, well that -- and this is a photo of -- I see nine --

RC: That's the LCC after -- these are all -- after it got hit. Now Bryant that was from down in North Carolina, he gave me these pictures. I didn't take them.

EM: Well it did take a beating, didn't it?

RC: Yeah. He said they junked it over on one of them islands.

EM: Did they really? It never made it back home.

RC: No.

EM: I'll be damned.

RC: I guess it only cost a half a million dollars. That's what they said it cost them to build them. A half a million dollars.

EM: Yeah, they welded them together and put them out the door pretty fast. They really did.

RC: And they just -- he said they just took it and junked it over on the island. They got one of the other LCVPs to tow it over there and they said they left it on the island.

EM: Well OK. Thank you for the donation of the memorabilia.

RC: Well I hope you can use it.

EM: Oh I guarantee it.

RC: I'll tell you one thing that would be really interesting was that ship's log. I think that would be really interesting.

EM: Absolutely.

RC: This is it.

EM: I see it right there. I mean look at that. All typed out with an old typewriter.

RC: And then back there somewhere towards the end they got the day of the -- the hour that --

EM: Oh yeah here's a --

RC: See that's how they -- boat trucks. Our boat would sit right back in here.

EM: I see it. Yep. Right under the 30 ton pulling up that 40-ton ship.

RC: But that's the other half of the ship.

EM: There's cross sections. Yeah, that's a nice collection of memorabilia.

RC: This was a memorial they had in I think in Illinois or something. One of the guys --

EM: Peoria.

RC: Peoria.

EM: Men lost to Kamikaze attack in Philippines are honored. Yeah, that's nice. That's good. That's a good addition.

RC: By hour, you know how they had the 24 hour --

EM: The 24-hour clock.

RC: Had the alarm went off, all man your stations, you know and all that stuff. They got that all in there.

EM: It's amazing the records they kept, you know? Well, I'll tell you what Bob. Let me end this interview by first thanking you for spending the time with us and we will get a copy of this to you guys and they'll -- everybody will hear your stories again. Not only read them but hear them. And I want to thank you again for what you did for our country. We don't thank you guys enough.

RC: You know; there's a lot of people say that now. That even down here. Trips, Florida. Everywhere I go. What I always say it was worth it. There's a whole lot of nice people in this world and this country. Nice. And I think it was worth it.

EM: And a lot of people also say, "I didn't do anything you wouldn't have done and what everybody else was doing." But still, thank god you guys did it.

END OF AUDIO FILE