

Troy Edward Shakles Oral History Interview

MIKE ZAMBRANO: This is Mike Zambrano, and today is March 19, 2015. Today I'm interviewing Mr. Troy Edward Shakles at the VA outpatient clinic in Austin, Texas. This interview is in support of the National Education and Research Center Archives for the National Museum of the Pacific War Texas Historical Commission for the preservation of historical information related to this site. Good morning, sir.

TROY EDWARD SHAKLES: Good morning.

MZ: Can you tell me where and when you were born?

TS: I was born June 3, 1924, in a little black community. And sometimes I get confused whether it's Bastrop County or Travis County. I think back in those days it's Bastrop County. It sits between Manor, Texas, and Elgin, Texas. Off of 290, going east. There's a little black community. Used to be big. It had three churches: Baptist, Methodist, and [the Holiness?]. And those churches, during those days when I was a pre-teenager and a teenager, stayed full all the time. It's my number one on the [calendar list of?] church believers. It was fortunate that during my stay in the service, I never ran across a non-believer. All the

guys I've met or worked with, fought with were believers. They belonged to one belief or another.

This little black community's still there. I think the population [today?] now is about 20 maybe. It's been there. I have a leaflet in the car at home. If I had known what this was gonna be, I would've brought it in here. [Lake?] was established in 1987. And the black few men, one was a relative on my mother's side, established Lake. It was a big community there. I started in elementary there after my parents moved back to Texas from Oklahoma, and I started elementary school there. Sixth grade, I think it was. Seventh grade. Eighth grade, then moved to Austin by myself and went to Anderson High School in Austin in ninth grade and tenth grade. And I was catching it pretty hard out on my own. Had a little job. It paid me very, very good. I worked Monday evenings, Tuesday evenings, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday from 10 o'clock in the morning till closing at 9:00, and a couple of hours Sunday morning. I made good. I think I made -- my salary was \$1.65 a week.

MZ: Wow (laughs).

TS: That was good money then. My rent, I had a beautiful room. Two story. I met the guy that owned it, good friend. It's

still down there in a big condo there now. I had a room. My rent was 50 cents a week. One day he approached and said, "Do you have a radio in there?" Something like that. I said, "Yes, sir." "You know, you've got pay extra for that." I said, "I didn't know," which I did know. I said, "How much, Mr. Gray?" "That's going to cost you \$0.10 a week more." "Oh, OK, I'll try to afford it." That's how back then, how far that was back in the '30s, before the war. Interestingly enough, I finished Lake High School June '42. February '43 I got papers. You know we went in the war, declared war December 7, 1941. Finished high school June '42. A few months after I finished high school, had to go register. Then that's when the story began, got going into a big World War II. They sent us to San Antone. We were over there in groups, in groups seeing doctors and everything. And when we got through with the physical, walking around there with our shorts on, "Keep marching. You're in the Army." Guys were hollering, "I don't want to be in the Army." "You're in the Army. Keep walking." Navy, Army, Marines. Very seldom they would pick anybody for the Air Force. They got to me and I said, "I want the Air Force." "You're in the Navy. Keep marching."

MZ: Just like that?

TS: Just like that.

MZ: And where was that? Was that here in Austin?

TS: No, San Antone.

MZ: San Antonio.

TS: San Antonio.

MZ: Before we go on, I just want to ask really quick, what were your parents' names?

TS: My father was James [Hewlett?] Shakles, originally born in Manor, Texas. Manor, Texas, as it stands now. My mother was Maude Esther Armstrong. She was a native Cherokee. My grandfather on my mother's side was Cherokee, so that made me have a mixture there like we all in this country are. A mixture of black, white, red, yellow, and brown. And the beautification of that, what's going to make us better now, and it will be great in the years to come. We call children born from black, white, red, Native American, brown, Orientals, and we call the offspring from these five colors interracial. In this country now, that is what we call this new generation, interracial. Some have a black father, Oriental fathers, brown Mexican. It's all mixed up there, what makes it beautiful. If you go to a predominantly black church now and you look, just take a look while you're seated there. Or we'll say go to a --

pick a big, any church in Austin, whites, and you look and you see all of these colors there. Where if you're in China, you're going to see one color and one grade of hair. If you're in Oriental, in Mexico, all South America, you'll see one color and all grade of hair. But in this country, when you go to a predominant black church or white, you're going to see that mixture, what makes it a beauty. White, black, brown, yellow, and Orientals -- it's five colors in there.

All of the offspring is what I just told you, interracial. You'll see the black man with a white wife, black man with an Oriental, black man with a Native American Indian, and all these beautiful colors.

And sometimes when I go to church or look at television and you see -- I can't think of the name of the big one there, the Stafford Brothers, and you look at the choir, it's like one of my churches that I used to belong to since before I moved away. And you look at the choir. Be 70, 80, 90 people in this choir with their colored robes on, and you'll see that mixture of color which makes these colors the most beautiful colors on this planet. It's all mixture. White, black, brown, Native American, yellow Orientals, all of that mixture of colors. If you can go --

used to, when you'd go to a white church, let me make this clear. We're all what we call now integrated in this country. Integrated, all mixture, except the whites go to black schools. We're all together there. I'm a government major. (Inaudible) I like to talk about this because God has let me live to being a hateful teenage boy all in the military because of the way blacks were treated in this country. From day one, that has always bothered me.

I didn't want to major in government. I wanted to be a business major, but I majored in government. Did graduate studies at Texas Southern, but GI Bill ran out. And that still concerns me now because when I first came out of that war, the VA Hospital was all white. Everything all white. Now when I walk in the VA Hospital and I go there where they're seated at desks and they know me, everybody's "Good morning, Mr. Shakles," I see black and white. A mixture. That makes me feel good because I grew up in that atmosphere. "Get back, boy. Get back, nigger." Even when I went in that service. We were all going in the service after we got drafted. They had a special car waiting on us in San Antone from Austin, Texas. We were all drinking. "Glad we don't have to pick that goddamn cotton no more. Hallelujah. Glad we're out of them fields." Labor was 50

cents a day back in those days. I used to work in those fields a whole day and make 35, 40 cents. Go to hot sauce and barbecue on Saturdays. Can't wait to get there. I've got 75 cents in my pocket. That was big.

MZ: Seventy-five cents?

TS: Found a hot sauce in Elgin which is \$11.99 a pound now. Back then, they were 30 cents a pound.

MZ: Big difference.

TS: Big difference, but (inaudible) you get a pound of sauce and a bottle of soda water. Soda water was a nickel. That's 35 cents. Your stack, your money's going down because you started out with about 65 or 70 cents. That's how it was back in those days. And growing up as a nigger back in those days, God has let me live to see that I was a nigger at first; now I'm a man. I go to this VA, and I can see everything. Go to the Capitol building and walk in there. Downtown, I remember when I was in high school at Anderson, a civics teacher sent us down on Sixth and Congress. It was the Woolworth, if I'm not mistaken, on the corner of Sixth and Congress. Right downtown, Austin, Texas. We seated in there, and they made us get up and leave because we were the wrong color. The climax of this is I can walk into any place now in this country. School,

Capitol buildings, anywhere I want to go, I go there and I will see an interracial family where it used to be all white. Used to have to go around to the back door on the side to get away. "Hey, get out, boy, go back out where you belong." Now the police department, you see, it makes you -- we have problems, and we always will have problems. One of the problems that concerns me today, this morning. I've been watching the state Congress, United States Congress, and the vote is heavy on this legalizing teenagers to carry their guns. And Republican party wants that. "Well, teenager, you can carry your weapon." To me, as a 91-year-old war veteran, that don't make sense at all. That's a big problem. So I have lived this age where I can walk down, start at the bridge on Congress Avenue, First and Congress, and I can walk up Congress. On either side, regardless of the retail outlet, on into the capitol building, all over the capitol building, I can go anywhere I want to. And I can speak to people, and they'll speak to me. But when I was a pre-teenager and a teenager and fought a war, I didn't want the Navy. I didn't want the military because I was angry. Being drafted into the service, same damn thing. Blacks over here, whites over here.

MZ: You said that you basically selected to go in the Navy.

TS: I didn't have a choice.

MZ: What happens in San Antonio for that moment where they say, "Navy"?

TS: They had like we're [seated now?] and twice this length in the military. Army sergeant, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard. This is after you're going through your physical and all the men are walking with their drawers on. And you're in the service. You don't know which service you're in. You've passed your physical and you're walking. "Keep walking. Line over there. Line over there." "I'd like the Air Force." "You're in the Navy; keep walking." That's the way it was. Segregated. I went in, served my country proudly. I'm a proud man. But the only division that I am disappointed with -- (inaudible). I don't understand this. I've been writing the president of the United States a letter for the last three months. Little by little, take this and redo this, and I guess in a week I'll probably be able to send it off. When I came out of the military with a -- when I was called, I was up in the mountains, up from Guam. Think of the Mariana Islands. And since then I have my little office in my home. I bought a map, and sometimes I look it and see all of the

water that we have on this earth, under this earth, we're only 25% on top. Ground, land we call it. But up under all of this land that you see now, nothing but land, but this whole earth is just only 25% land. And down there is 75% water. And then there comes a time in the year also where you can't cut your water on to water your lawn because of a water shortage. It's down there. I've seen it on television once. They haven't put it on since. Something to try to find and put on there. It shows a group of men down there with their suits and the cameras. Water. Very clear. Down, down, down. And all you can see is water and mountains of water down there. Down, down. As far down, I imagine, to the bottom of the Earth down there. Let me take a ball now with a map. Blue water. Spin it around. You don't see nothing but water, but still we run short of water. We can't sprinkle our lawn. Things like that bother me by being a government major because being a government major in college, which still segregated then, that's after I came back out of the war. And being a government major, you see these things, "Why? Why is this happening? This should not be. This should be changed." I started on a few minutes about my teeth. When I came out of service, they passed what we called the

greatest GI Bill that the United States Congress has ever passed in this country. The GI Bill. Pick any trade anywhere in this country that we want to learn, which mine was meat cutting and meat market management. The government, what you call on-the-job training where they teach you, they pay you, and the government pays you. The GI Bill. I learned meat cutting, meat market management. Started college, finished, got a bachelor of arts in government. I wanted to be in business. I changed it, which was a mistake. Majored in government and taught this one thing. "How come? Why not? Why is this?" Not only ask questions; try to do something about it. I switch around here off and on [with these?], going in the service and coming out of the service. Going into the service, still [racial?], all blacks. Sent us to Illinois, [at which time?] --

MZ: Oh, I'm sorry. That's where you go to Camp Robert Small [sic].

TS: Camp Robert Small.

MZ: Great Lakes.

TS: Great Lakes, Illinois.

MZ: And then it says here March of '43.

TS: Correct.

MZ: Can you tell me what your experience was like there?

TS: OK. Got off the train and the buses and got to Great Lakes. There's a little town up there, right close to -- out of Chicago. You leave Chicago and go about 25 miles. It'll come to me in a minute. A little small town, beautiful town. And across the street, we'll say that it's a couple of hundred yards, there's a white Navy base, Camp [Lonas?] and Camp Moffett. Two naval bases, white. And here we go on the bus, way back in the woods, as Camp Robert Small. Camp Robert Small was supposed to be named after some black chief, Navy chief, I think, back in those days. That's where we were at Camp Robert Small. All black.

MZ: So it was set away from all the white bases or all the white camps?

TS: And the little town, back in the woods. I can't forget that.

MZ: What were the facilities like?

TS: They were great. Barracks, canteen, drilling hall, everything was great. Beautiful camp, everything. We [leave there, where?] we trained. Three months of training.

MZ: What kind of training?

TS: Learning the drills, learning the march, learning to shoot, learning to kill. Cold, snow and ice. When it was too cold to drill outside and icy, we had what we called a drill hall where we drilled on inside. Would be three, four, five companies at a time drilling. That's how big and long that drill hall, and a company drilling was always better than -- a little under, a little more than 100 men. A two-story barracks, all two stories. Company downstairs, company upstairs. [Locks?] on the door. Lights out, no talking, no nothing. We dreamed. Then one or two guys were going to make an ass out of himself, then the whole company the next day get punishment. Instead of you going to bed at night and the lights out at 9:00, you're gonna drill till two o'clock in the morning. Cold. Punishment. The training was three months, but then they cut it down to two months. They gave us tests doing the training. Let me back up a little bit. When I went in the Navy, all segregated, got off the bus, Camp Robert Small. Get back a little bit. And I saw these black guys with these beautiful black suit uniforms on, white shirt, black tie, all of this red. The guy training us, he was already -- been in about three months ahead of us. I said, "That's for me." He said, "What do you mean?" I said, "The guys in

the red suits and all that red up here," I said, "what are these?" He said, "Some of them are cooks, and the rest of them are steward's mate." "Which one in the suits?" "That's a steward's mate." I said, "That's what I want. If I'm going to be in this Navy, I want what I want." "You know what a steward's mate is?" I said, "That's what I want." I said, "What is a steward's mate?" He said, "You cook, you clean up for white officers." I said, "I'd rather go to prison first." That stopped there. But during this time, in the middle of training, President Roosevelt, who was the president of the United States then, elected for four terms -- they changed that. At the middle of our training, he changed it that Negroes were just as much Americans as anyone and that's the way it was going to be. And I think the Navy was one of the first to change that, went through that change of segregating. "You're black, you stay in the back." You didn't live through that, but being a Negro that lived through that as a pre-teenager, growing up, going through a war, teenager, fighting for your country, going through all of that, a lot of anger built up.

MZ: I can imagine.

TS: A lot of anger built up. With the VA, police department, that was my last dream because I was going to change

everything. I got a DWI, and that DWI way back then followed me all of my life where I could not get into any law enfor-- and that's the bottom line that goes between there. Knowing cops in Austin, grew up with cops, most of them all of my life, white and black, drank more than anybody in the state of Texas. But that happened for a reason because to go in being a police officer with the feelings I had, the way whites were [doing?] blacks, it wouldn't have worked, and my God knew it. That's why he really fixed it so I couldn't be an officer. But come out of the service, trained. President Roosevelt broke it down that Negroes were just as much citizens as anybody in this country and were to be treated as such. And they had about, I'll make a guess, 200, a list of 200 different in the United States Navy choose what you wanted, if you passed, to choose. And I took communications. We stayed in training school, service school I think we called it, for four months.

MZ: Do you remember where that was, that service school?

TS: Camp Robert Small, still there.

MZ: I'm curious, but are all the officers at Camp Robert Small white?

TS: Definitely. Still all white. I'll comment on that. I transferred to Treasure Island to make that [paragraph?]; 1944 on Treasure Island I witnessed the first blacks to be commissioned in the 200-year history of the United States Navy. It was -- I don't remember the month -- 1944 on Treasure Island. And I think it was 12. Eleven were commissioned as ensigns; one gold stripe, one gold bar. And that other one was commissioned as a lieutenant junior grade, one whole gold and one half. They all had college degrees. That was the first -- say make it 12. That was the first 12 black Negro men, or women, men to be commissioned as a United States naval officer in a two-year history.

MZ: I think they're referred to as the Golden Thirteen.

TS: Went through the service school, earned my stripe. One gold. You only got three in the Navy. And then you go to chief, change uniform. [A pleat?] there, then you're a chief. Only four grades.

MZ: Before we go on, you say you go through communications school. Can you tell me a little bit about that? What did you learn? What was your experience like?

TS: OK. It was quartermaster and signalman. The same thing, but later they cut out the quartermaster. It used to be a

ship's wheel on your insignia and then a stripe. But quartermaster and signalman were all the same duties. You learn visual communication. That was the main thing, visual communication. I think I learned, and I won't ever forget that Morse code. I've got it now, where you learn to send 35 words a minute. Ships come in, I'm on a signal tower, and I give them double-A, double-A, double-A, "Who are you? Who are you?" And they'll reply back, "We're Aircraft Carrier CV or CVE so-and-so. Request parking." And we were on the signal tower there at Treasure Island, and everything before they got to the Golden Gate, we knew they were coming in. And when they come up under that bridge, signal tower -- three, four stories high -- all black but white chief and a white warrant officer, second floor. At that time, when I got put on this tower, it was still segregated. That bothers me today. I don't get angry, but the least thing that goes wrong, like at the college here, these guys, they expelled them.

MZ: Oh, at Oklahoma University?

TS: OU, yeah.

MZ: OU.

TS: [In fact?], that bothered me. I can't understand, the kids, the teenagers growing up these days, they don't have

that racist mentality because I think the last school to integrate is a little town way up in Louisiana somewhere. A couple of years ago, they were the last school known in this country to integrate. And they had a junior and senior prom where they integrated.

MZ: Uh huh, I think I remember that.

TS: Yeah. And they saw the mixture there. That long to integrate, keeping blacks in the back, "You're a nigger," and right now they say -- this bothers me. They won't say "Negro." Say Negro. The Negro was 5,000 years before Jesus Christ was born. Negro. Africa. My memory comes and goes. It's pretty good to be 91 years old. There are some things you don't forget. Been through basic training. Came out with the stripe with the service school. Service school, four months. For eight hours a day, you're on it. Then you go to the barracks and you practice. You learn. You get stationed.

MZ: Did you learn the semaphore (overlapping dialogue; inaudible)?

TS: Semaphore, learned the semaphore. A, B, C. I can remember it, but I never will forget that Morse code. For four months, you go to your barracks. You've got it.

Everywhere you go, you can get on that key and you learn it. You had to be good.

MZ: Were you pretty good?

TS: I was good. I'm a second-class signalman. I was up for signalman first. That's the three stripes, three red stripes. And then that's when they transferred me, put me on a ship.

MZ: Can we go just back to Treasure Island really quick?

TS: OK.

MZ: Because I'm curious. You were in the tower, and you were telling me about signaling ships before they entered the Golden Gate. Was your job just to confirm what ships were coming in or what?

TS: Down on Treasure Island on what we call Patrol Force Headquarters, operated mostly by women, Navy, WAVES. WAVES, what I'm trying to think of. The sailors, we were sailors, they're sailors but they're WAVES. We communicated with them down on Treasure Island. We were up on this island that was Yerba Buena Island. Y-E-R-B-A. Buena, B-U-E-N-A. Island. Treasure Island, like on the map there, Treasure Island in your left corner way down there, that's Treasure Island. Have the ports there. Then there's the Bay Bridge on top, running through San

Francisco over to Oakland and all ports of Oakland. But they all ended up coming back to San Francisco. Then you got off the trains, and catches your bus also.

The signal tower was four, five stories high. There was something not long as this room but wider up. Well, straight up. First floor as you come in, office -- no, first floor bunks for sailors. Little bunks and everything.

MZ: Like a sleeping area?

TS: Yeah. The second floor was for officers (inaudible). One was a chief, and one was a warrant officer. All white. We're all black. They would send white sailors up there for us to train two or three months. If they couldn't stay up there with us, they had to go back to Treasure Island. But we had this four-, five-story building. They built a new one there. And it was about 15 or 16 of us blacks, and we operated that old tower. Every ship coming in from all over the Pacific, they had to come in under that Golden Gate. Before they got there, Patrol Force Headquarters would notify us who they are. Aircraft carrier, one aircraft carrier, CV, one aircraft CVE. And then a task force of six destroyers, a couple of heavy crews and light crews. Sometimes a task force would be on their way in

from down under, as we called it. Then, after they come under the Golden Gate Bridge, that's what we called a net vessel. And the net vessel knew who they were; but the net vessel, through lights, would notify us who was coming in. And when they'd come up under that Golden Gate, if it's an aircraft carrier and a couple of crews, heavy crews and a task force, they had to get permission from us on this tower before we notified the net vessels or let them in. That's how strict it was. Submarines also coming in, they had to get our permission from all ships coming from down under. Some of them would be in bad shape. Been in a war zone. Some of them, after we would give them permission to come in through that net vessel, then starting from the net vessel -- this is San Francisco over here. Starting from the net vessel, "All piers, all piers, [get to your?] train." We way up there, Treasure Island way down there. Trains going into San Francisco, coming back all parts of Oakland. But everything, every happening, they had to get permission from us blacks up there. And I just wondered -- we would all laugh about it, joke about it sometimes. Wondering, all of these ships coming in, if some of them knew that they were talking to nothing but blacks up on that signal tower. That's how racist it was, man.

MZ: Interesting.

TS: They would come in. Then we would tell them what pier that they go park in and anchor in. The piers would go all the way down what we called Hunters Point. Way down there, and then nothing but ocean out there. We'd tell certain ships where they could anchor. Then they would have to get permission from us for liberty. (inaudible) in an aircraft carrier is carrying 3,000 men, the heavy one. Then they'd have to request permission for men aboard this ship for liberty. And you've got 3,000 men wanting to go to town for alcohol and women. So then we would have to by teletype to Treasure Island, Patrol Force Headquarters, and they would give us an OK. Then we'd fire the light. That's how strict it had to be because you leave the Golden Gate -- they never would print this and never after today, I don't think. Japanese submarines would come in as close as three miles to the Golden Gate. Japanese suicide subs, we called them. I think they were operated with two or four men. They would come in and lay mines, these big mine, so far below the surface. Our ships coming in which had never had no bother, but ships going out would hit a mine and that's it. So operating that signal tower, I was

up there for over a year and had my first class coming, and I got a transfer.

MZ: And that's to the --

TS: The minesweepers.

MZ: The minesweepers.

TS: Five of us. AMC 101, 102, 3, 4 and 5.

MZ: And yours is 102?

TS: One-oh-two. The USS... *Annabella*? I think the name was *Annabella*.

MZ: Could it have been *Glory*?

TS: It could have been, but I think --

MZ: That's OK.

TS: But these -- we should have been out there. They were old. And my signal light would be on the starboard, which is the right. I had two duties on the signal light. I mean on the signal light on the starboard, on that side, where we could communicate with each other. We see a ship coming in, and we would be notified who they were.

But we would be out there after they put [me off the tower?]. They put us out there, and the water was rough. We would take -- and later I found out -- we were taking rolls which, if the swells are hitting you from the port to the starboard, you go into starboard like this. Back like

this. The way the swells are hitting the ship. And they later let us know that we were taking 20-degree rolls. And how in the hell? Only by the grace of God. A 20-degree roll, I found out, was like that. Almost gone.

Then we'd come back and we'd go to the port. That's when the swells are hitting your ship a certain way. Now if they were hitting you from the bow, it's raising your ship up. And then your ship, when it gets ready to go down, the water's not there and you go way down, and that's when everybody gets sick. And it's very dangerous then because even a little ensign who would be the commanding officer, he would be so sick on these ships that -- they shouldn't have been out there, but they had us out there cutting mines. And believe it or not, I go back there sometimes now. We would cut those mines loose. We'd have three or four men on the stern doing what they call a fish. And this fish would go down way below water where it was equipped. And we would [tow them up on the wheel?], and they would go way down. And when they'd come across a cable, they'd cut this cable, and that mine would come to the top. They would come to the top. And we had a district mine sweeper come. Only guns were allowed. The skipper would wear a .45, and I wore a .45 and that's all.

And these mines would come to the top, and we'd have a district minesweeper. I mean a district -- hell, I can't think of the name. He would shoot, blow up these mines, which the mines would be there to catch our troop ships coming out, going down under, which would be loaded. Hundreds and thousands. That's what these mines would be for.

But we weren't allowed to -- I think one of us had a .50 caliber. [I'm one of two?] But we were just ducks. Cuts these mines loose, and here comes a mine. It's big around, coming to the top. And if one hits you, it wouldn't be an eyeball of us left because that's how big these mines were. But we couldn't shoot them; we couldn't blow them up.

MZ: Because you weren't allowed to?

TS: We weren't allowed to. We would cut them loose, and they'd come up. And we had one, I think it was some kind of flagship. He would be the only one. I've been thinking about this. But us five wouldn't blow them up. We didn't have nothing to blow them. We'd cut them loose, and then -- oh, yeah. The biggest thing that we had to do is when there were big mines, and the water is rough, they got -- I've been trying to think of that, why that water would be so rough when you leave the Golden Gate for the next five

miles coming out. Then OK, but a story about some foreign ship which sunk there loaded with something. It's some kind of story. You might look it up. Because that water, when you leave the Golden Gate, coming out for about three miles, it's rough. Sometimes [if I was up] and we're looking, I'm on the wheel and we can't see our mates' ship. That's how bad, rough that water was. And most of them would stay sick as I don't know what.

MZ: Did you get seasick?

TS: Hell, yeah, I got seasick.

MZ: (laughs)

TS: I'll tell you how sick I got. I didn't put that on there. When I was on the tower, I had just gotten married. This coming up, you can't put that on there. She was my girlfriend at home, and we courted for three years in high school, and she would never let me kiss her but once. And when I got [trip?] that night, for three years, when I was leaving, I was in charge of 19 men. Picked up six men in San Antone to train, waiting on the ship. I sent for her, not knowing that they were going to ship me way off, particularly off the tower. And she was a virgin, still was a virgin. Because when I got married in '44 when I went home, it took me three days to come home and three

days to go back to Lakes, so I had one night with her right there. Just like a little six-year-old baby and nothing could happen. I said, "I'll be damned."

So then when I sent for her to come to TI [trip?], stayed with [me a month?], got pregnant. Then that's when they took me off the ship and put me on one and sent me down under. But that was the hardest, roughest duty. I messed up my back on that wheel. My back used to be, before I had surgery, I had colon cancer, but my back would lock on me. And after I got off the ship, this little boat, 102. Then they shipped me to Pearl. Pearl, they shipped me to, I think 12 miles north of Pearl to Pearl City. And that Pearl City was just a little town or something.

Then we had a Navy base there, Manana. Starts with an M. Manana Barracks.

MZ: Manana?

TS: M-A-N-N-A-N-A [sic]. Manana, something like -- be banana; instead of the B, it starts with an M. Manana.

MZ: Oh, OK. It said Banana here, so I'm trying to find something (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

TS: Yeah, Manana Barracks. That's where they were. And my back would lock on me, and six or eight of my shipmates would have to take me out of my bunk and take me to the

doctor. And I remember he was a black JG, so he had to be one of those that I witnessed. The first officers black to be commissioned in a 200-year Navy history. That's how bad it was.

When I was on the -- let me go back to this. When I was on the tower, and this still bothers me, I don't know where Duke is now. He's my buddy. We two were always together. He's from Rhode Island. We were getting ready to go on liberty, that's when I was on the signal tower up there, and a big blast came. Boom! And I guess the people of San Francisco and Berkeley and Treasure Island and everywhere else figured we'd been invaded. But when you come in under the Golden Gate and you make a left -- and they would always be notifying us by light which way they're going, and we'd tell them to go. And that big blast was up, up. As you come in under the Golden Gate, you go to the left, and you go way up by Alcatraz Prison, on up north. And that's where we had 500 blacks, sailors, doing one thing: loading ammunition ships. And (inaudible) that's where we were going on liberty. We turned back to base, and up in [Maryland?], 500 blacks would load those ships. I think the number was about 30 or 35 survived. That bothers me. All of these blacks blown up loading these ammunition

ships. Nothing but blacks. And within so many weeks or so many days after this, I guess, because they were blown to smithereens, then they drafted -- I mean got more blacks, and 35 refused to go. I think the number's 35. Refused. They said, "You're obeying orders in a wartime. That's the death penalty." They said, "We're not disobeying. We're afraid. We're scared. We can't." That was the 35 survivors of that 500 blown up.

I remember seeing that on TV one time. They won't show that. But these 35 that refused to go back, I'm going to just say this, got life. Prison life sentences. And I think it was Clinton, it was a few left in prison. Maybe it was one before. Maybe it was Johnson, I don't remember, but got those 30-something men that had been in prison all these years and got them out, and I think most of them from the Chicago area up there. They'd been in there. They say they did not refuse to obey an order; they were too scared to go back. They were too scared. And they got court-martialed. So that still bothers me. It's been too many years. They had how many of them and showed the picture of them. They were up in age. They did not refuse to obey orders. They were just afraid to go back to load these ammunition ships. All black. So when I left there, they

put me on a destroyer. When I left Pearl, they probably [had that there?]. This bothers me.

MZ: Wasn't that called -- was that Port Chicago? Is that what they called it?

TS: Yeah. That was it. Back there then they couldn't. Thirty minutes after [I'd leave you and got down the hall?] I said, "Port Chicago." I thought of it. You know, memory. I think I'm doing great, because some things you won't forget. My serial number, 8412937. Some things are stuck in there, but a lot of things, a lot of bad things that happened to me over there is gone. But I can wake up two or three o'clock in the morning and go empty my bladder, and I think of this, and I won't go back to sleep. And then I come to the VA and they say, "No, no, no, no, no." It's got no business, me being a World War II veteran. The Navy won't touch my teeth because I don't draw disability. I mean the VA

MZ: Because you don't draw disability?

TS: I'm classified -- OK, you and I serve together on the same ship. When I was up in the mountains, when the enemy coming down on us at night. Me and you serve together. You in the foxhole over there, we in the mosquito net. We had tents up there. It was a deserted Army camp. Khaki-

top tents and mosquito nets all around. That's it. Either you dig in -- and them boys were still up there.

All black. [The unit?] called us the next morning to clear that we can come out and take roll call to see who don't answer roll. We're up in the mountains in an old, deserted Army camp. There's something coming to me. And up there, I was allowed to carry my weapon, a 45. We had about three or four miles from where we were up in the mountains to go to a big (inaudible) down on Guam, down there somewhere.

MZ: This is on -- you said Guam?

TS: Yeah. That's when we --

MZ: Oh, but this is close to the end of the war.

TS: Yeah, in '45, 1945.

MZ: Can I just go back a little bit because I want to (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

TS: Yeah. You have to take me back. I'm [going to come to this?] up here. Some of these things will be here. They won't ever go away.

MZ: So you go from Treasure Island.

TS: OK, from Treasure Island, when they put me on the district minesweeper then --

MZ: You mentioned in your letter here, Operation Minesweeper.

TS: Yeah. That's it. Yeah, that's it.

MZ: Is that what they called it?

TS: I think. I think so. I think so. Operation Minesweeper.
I can remember there was five of us.

MZ: So it was from here when you hurt your back.

TS: Yeah. On that wheel.

MZ: And then you go to Pearl Harbor. From there, you were assigned to a destroyer.

TS: Yeah.

MZ: Destroyer (overlapping dialogue; inaudible)?

TS: That's when my back was real messed up. And so I was in the hospital. Well, a little hos-- sick bay, we called it. And I had this black doctor, lieutenant JG. So I think he had to be the one that I witnessed being the first black officer to be commissioned in the United States Navy on Treasure Island. I had him as a doctor. OK, Manana Barracks, and then the news was coming to me that we were going back to Treasure Island. So I talked to my doctor. [He said, "I hear a murmur"?]. In school, we called it gossip. Gossip, you guys might put a percentage on it. Ninety percent gossiping, it's not true. But there's a small percentage in it that is true. In the Navy, we called it scuttlebutt. The scuttlebutt the guys bring back

to me laying in this sick bay with a lamp on my back 24/7 that we were going back to Treasure Island. Good.

I told my doctor about it, he said, "That's scuttlebutt. Forget it." He's black. A couple of my buddies come in and say, "We're going to ship out of here, man." So my doctor said, "I'm not going to release you. Only way I will release you, you have to request it, because I don't want you out of here. Your back is messed up. I can't do no surgery." I'm going back to Treasure Island. I can get the medical attention I need." "So the only way you get out of here, you have to sign yourself out, because I'm not going to release you." I signed myself out. The next day, I was on the destroyer, going down under.

MZ: Do you remember the destroyer's name?

TS: I've been thinking about this. The destroyer escort -- I think I saw it on TV here a few months ago. Put *Ebert*, E-B-E-R-T. USS *Ebert*.

MZ: E-B-E-R-T?

TS: I think so. E-B-E-R-T. USS *Ebert*. The destroyer escort - - see, destroyers -- the same thing as a destroyer only destroyer got two stacks and escort got one stack. But they're down there [same as?] 300 crew on the escort, a little less on the two-stackers, 350-400 crew. But

practically the same thing. Minesweepers, 50 calibers, [4-5 H?]. He said, "The only way I'm going to let" -- I signed myself, signed out, going to Treasure Island. And the next day I was on that destroyer, going down under.

MZ: What's your duty on the destroyer?

TS: I was on the wheel. On the wheel, on the signal light. It was a task force of us. I would say a couple of destroyers, three or four escorts, and one minesweeper. Fleet minesweeper. When we go into these islands during invasions and these minesweepers, these destroyers working with the minesweepers, we'll be clearing the mines when we go in these invasions. And we were on our way out to Eniwetok when I signed myself. No, I was on Eniwetok then. That's when I signed my-- it's coming back. Wait. The USS *Ebert*, seven -- you may put seven. You can look this up, 786. Put USS *Ebert*, E-B-E-R-T, (extraneous noise; inaudible) 70 years ago.

MZ: (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) Go on.

TS: Put *Ebert*, E-B-E-R-T. Destroyers are named. All ships got a name now. Aircraft carriers are named after Navy generals, I think. USS *Nimitz*? What was the *Nimitz*?

MZ: *Nimitz* is admiral, fleet admiral.

TS: OK. What ship?

MZ: I think that's [768?].

TS: Carrier? A carrier?

MZ: Mm-hmm.

TS: OK. All carriers named after admirals. All battleships are named after who?

MZ: States.

TS: States. The same thing with destroyers. I can't think, but I think *Ebert* was a -- I think it's *Ebert*. I think I saw it on TV not too long, a year or so, ago.

MZ: Was it 7-6-8? You said 7-8-6. That's pretty close.

TS: Pretty close. Hey, man, it's working pretty good for 70 years old.

MZ: Or 90.

TS: I mean it's 70 going back that far, yeah. But those hard things, I --

MZ: Well, they're not the best pictures.

TS: Yeah. Right on the money, man. Whoop.

MZ: (laughs) Now DE 768.

TS: Yeah. There's been a -- you got on there when I left Pearl, you got on there what happened to me on there.

MZ: Yeah. You were saying, in the letter it states that -- well, first, you said your bunk was in a little hole.

TS: OK, I'll take it from there. We'll say like this tablet, this is the ship here. This is the destroyer here. OK, this is the bow; this is the stern. Starboard's on the right --

MZ: Port.

TS: Port's on the left, OK. Back here are the ash-- we call them rotten eggs. Ashcans. When we've got a submarine warning down under there, close, we can fire these. We call them rotten eggs, these ashcans. And they go down, down, down. OK. My bunk is right back here, way down. Way down on the bottom of this goddamn destroyer. That's how goddamn racist it was. That's where my bunk was. It was just big enough for me to crawl in there, way down here. Way down here at the bottom of the goddamn ship. That's where my bunk was. So that's when the skipper one morning called to me to move my bunk up on -- because all my duties were on the bridge. I don't remember whether I was on the fifty caliber or forward five inches on the bow way up there on the bow, way up there. [Half a dozen of us?] worked that baby like a -- oh, they were great. But told me to get my mattress and my sea bag and move it up on the --

MZ: To the --

TS: Bridge.

MZ: Bridge.

TS: Whew. That's hard words, man. And I say, "OK, sir." When I'd eat on the destroyer, I'd eat by myself because there weren't but two blacks on there. One was a cook, and one was a steward's mate, and I was communications petty officer, and they did not want me on there. That bothers me. So the skipper went, "Bring your mattress and your sea bag up on the bridge since you do this up here." So "Yes, sir." But I wasn't thinking about nothing bad happening to me. I just didn't like where my bunk was way back up under that rotten egg down up under the ship. He said, "Bring it up here since your duties are up here." I don't know if I was on the 50 caliber or forward five inch. "Your duties are up here, and you can just sleep up here." Like that. So-so-so. So I did that. I don't know long that happened. That was about, I would say, three weeks. And finally, one morning, I don't remember the time, (inaudible) sometime. And he told me that he had been in touch with Pearl to get me a transfer. "Yes, sir." A duty. I wasn't afraid of the task force. We're going out, and so it's war. Finally, he said, "I've been in touch with Pearl to get you a transfer, and the transfer has come through."

I said, "Transfer?" I said, "Yes, sir." He said, "We're just a few hours from where I'm going to put you off." And I wish I could keep you, you're a good sailor, and I hope you the best. You're a good man, but I've got to get you off of this ship" because it got back to him what in the Navy called the scuttlebutt that whites did not want me on there. And when you're in a war zone aboard ship, no lights on top at night. You can't see this far. But you got -- I forgot -- red lights way down under where are your bunks are and everything. They're not showing for the -- they don't come out to the top. And he told me that it was just a few hours from putting me off. "You're a good sailor. You're a good man. I wish you luck. I wish you the best." Put me off in the Marshall Islands at Eniwetok because the news got to him, the scuttlebutt had got to him, that I was gonna be shark bait if I stayed on that ship.

MZ: They would actually -- some of the sailors would actually throw you overboard?

TS: Goddamn right. That's how racist it was. Up in the mountains, on Guam, we had to go way down to the chow hall. We had a little chow hall up there on top, but we still had -- when we took Guam back, there were -- they made -- I

don't know. The last week they made up [after they're] always getting -- it's just like if Austin was invaded and the enemy would take over, they never would get all of us out. So anyway, they would put me off. He was going to put me off because I was going to end up shark bait. So he put me off at Eniwetok in the Marshall Islands. And I was out there with my sea bag all that day, and finally I saw a jeep coming with several blacks on there. And they picked me up, and we went out to a spy ship. And this was the US -- I never got a name down there. It was big, about 350 crew on there, all blacks. They're seamen with just white stripes. They weren't rated. I was rated, and I was in charge. I was anchored out there in Eniwetok, of the Marshall Islands.

MZ: You say in the letter your new station was a 503rd Logistics Support Company?

TS: That's it, logistics support. Logistics Support 503.

MZ: And you mentioned spy ship.

TS: That's actually what it was. We were anchored out, out in there. And anything happened, I had a -- aboard ship, aboard the tower, we had what were called 24-inch lights, signal light, up out --

MZ: (overlapping dialogue; inaudible)?

TS: Yeah, something like that. But on this vessel, the signal light, 48 inch?

MZ: So it was like (overlapping dialogue; inaudible)?

TS: Yeah, it's big. It's like this. It's big. And there was my ways of communicating. Mostly I'd be on top side. That's where they gave me permission to sleep. It's 110, 120 in the day and cooled at night. I'd just take my mattress up there, and that's where I slept because I [had?] a big light, and I had a gun up there. I don't remember what it was. But [we saw all those other islands?]. You look on a map, the Marshall Islands, but the main one was Eniwetok. There was an air base just long enough for fighter planes to be there and take off and us Navy. Aboard this ship, I was in charge. I could sleep on top side. But all those islands out there, and we see boats. People on these islands, we could see them through a spy glass. We had a big spy glass, and we could see people on these islands. So finally, a couple of boats come up. They were long as that wall over there with two men to three men, one in the bow and one in the stern. About this wide, I guess. And they would come. Didn't speak English too well but beautiful black people. Beautiful, beautiful, people. Beautiful black people.

Finally, one day -- they'd come too close. They'd come close enough [for me to do?], I guess. Finally, one day, I'm looking at one of the guys. "Mr. Shakles, there's some women on there." And we got all these men, and they see -- some of those guys hadn't seen women in two years. Only thing they were doing was doing was going on invasions, picking up dead bodies and all this kind of mess.

And [see?] two of them coming, two boats were coming. One on the bow, one on the stern. In the middle there was a woman. Had to be 18, 20 years old. And some of these guys had been out there two years and had been going on invasions, doing the dirty work. Women? And they wouldn't have on nothing up here, and little tights down here. You can imagine what it would draw. [The skipper was there?] and asked him could they throw candy bars over.

Man, these women were beautiful. And you could imagine, some of these guys had been on that ship out there for over two years going on invasions and coming back and anchoring out there. They weren't nothing but a spy ship. We'd mostly have 24 hours watch with submarine periscope and any planes coming because there was an air base, a fighter base.

MZ: Were you actually on a ship?

TS: Yeah. I was aboard ship.

MZ: What was the name of it?

TS: I think about that all the time.

(extraneous conversation omitted)

MZ: We had to change our location before continuing our interview with Mr. Shakles.

TS: OK. [Where did we stop at?]

MZ: We were talking about Eniwetok, the spy ship.

TS: Yeah, Eniwetok. E-E-N-I-T-O-C-H or something like that. It's in the Marshall Islands. And that's what it was, a spy ship. I had a big -- I don't know how many inch lights it was up there. I mostly would be on guard. I had a big spy glass, about this big around as I can remember.

(inaudible) about this long. It'd be about that big around. And I could look on that baby, and I could see people on them islands. And one island I remember, P-A-R-R-I-E. Parrie? Look on the map over there. In the Marshall Islands, see if you've got a Parrie.

MZ: A Parrie. Parrie Island.

TS: P-A-R-R-I-E, I think. Parrie Island. There were several of them. Eniwetok, Eniwetok where they were.

MZ: What was it that you were looking for or watching?

TS: Women.

MZ: (laughs).

TS: Oh, that was just -- look. [What we'd be is for periscopes of?] Jap submarines. We was right at the end, out there in all that water, and be looking for planes, any planes coming over. They would let us know on this boat, but never would be any planes coming over. Never. I never experienced any. We had fighter planes, and we would know when they were taking off and when they were coming back. So we were just a big spy ship sitting out there with a bunch of men that done the dirty work, going on invasions, doing the dirty work and cleaning up and all that stuff. But the islands, my glass, and I could see them, people over there. So one day, two of them come up alongside. The skipper would let them throw candy bars. They were beautiful people. The men (inaudible) and women. Finally, one day, come up with a couple of women aboard, and [them guys like they had a fit?]. Some of them had been out there over two years and hadn't even seen a woman. So I experienced that. And then one morning -- about two or three times a week, sometimes twice, I'd have to take roll call. That would take a long time. And then we showered. Had a shower down there. Wasn't quite as big as this room. Well, get 30 men in there (laughs). Sitting out there, and

I was in charge. I had the highest rank. And I put 30 men in the shower to take a shower. I said, "OK, you have soap and your towel. The towel you're going to bathe with and your bar of soap. And it's 30 of you in here." Just figure 30 people in this room here. I said, "I'm gonna turn the water on two minutes. Wet down real good." I said, "OK." Then I turned the water on. And they're just wetting down, wetting down. I said, "OK, cut it off. Soap down. Soap down." Everybody was soaped down. Then we turned it on again, leave it on about three minutes. You get all this soap off. That's it. But it would be a joke to that skipper. I think the skipper started that or something. If you ever drop your bar of soap or your towel, don't ever try to bend over and pick it up (laughter). I remember that one, man. So nothing ever happened.

But anyway, two or three times a week -- a couple of times, it used to be three, anyway got down to once, twice a week -- I'd have to call roll. It'd take a long time. I had about two -- I'm going to just say 240 men aboard, 200-something men aboard. Two white officers. We were all black. One of the officers was a lieutenant. Lieutenant JG, I think. That was up in the mountains, Lieutenant JG.

I don't remember; I think there was a lieutenant and an ensign aboard the ship. I don't remember. Sometimes I get it mixed up. But you've always got a commanding officer, and other ships you've got a (inaudible) second in command. But these ships would come up alongside. He'd allow us to throw them candy bars. So finally -- some of these men had been out there over two years, and they hadn't even seen a woman. And it's pretty rough to go that long without ever seeing them; you're just going on invasions.

MZ: Do you remember what the name of the ship was?

TS: No. I've tried. I got it wrote down, I think, in my -- I've got an office this side, from here on back with desks, about three sets of encyclopedias. I've got a lot of stuff in storage. I've been trying to think of that. I used to communicate with a couple of guys. One lived in Marshall, Texas, up until about 30 years or 20 years ago. I might think -- I'm going to look for it.

I remember on the minesweeper, I told you I think it was Annabella. You said Gloria. I think it was Annabella.

Our destroyer was Ebert, 786 or 8--

MZ: Seven six eight?

TS: Yeah. Try that, 7-6-8.

MZ: How long were you on Eniwetok?

TS: OK, Eniwetok? We were (inaudible) going [on an?] invasion somewhere. I would say January, February. Pearl City, February, March. March. Eniwetok. [You left Pearl out?], Pearl City. Manana, Pearl City. January, February. This is '45. Left Pear City February, March. March, April on into Marshall Islands. April.

MZ: Here it says, "We transferred to Guam April, May 1945."

TS: OK, that's what I was -- April, OK.

MZ: To an abandoned Army camp?

TS: Up in the mountains. Man, the closest I can get to that is Guam. At either end -- Guam is in the -- Eniwetok is in the Marshall Islands. Guam -- Marianas. Marianas. Mariana Islands.

MZ: Marianas, OK.

TS: That's Guam. So we were up in the mountains. Mariana Islands or either Guam. Because I looked at my map and globe at home. This is China here, and this is Guam. And we're up in the mountains, so I was just sitting on the Mariana Islands. I don't remember that -- it was an abandoned Army camp is what it was. We had a name for that, man. I don't remember.

MZ: What did you do at this abandoned Army camp?

TS: Be on guard for the Japanese coming down on us at night. They were still up there. And I remember hearing this on the radio. I worked in Austin for -- its name has changed now. The corporation is a car -- where you park on these parking lots, car parking lots. What do you call it? In downtown Austin. Used to be classified parking. Where you put in your -- you park your car and pay. Well, I was in charge of several of those classified parking down in Austin, Texas. We had a bunch of them, several of them. But I heard one night, I was on duty and I heard on the radio -- I think this was in 1999 because I left there in 2000 and moved, left Austin. In 1999 I heard over the radio that the war -- OK, when I was up in those mountains in March, April, May, the war was over in when, May?

MZ: August '45.

TS: May.

MZ: Well, it was coming to an end in May, but August of '45 was (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

TS: August, that's right. You're right. OK, I was up there then with them boys coming down on us. August '45, and I don't remember how the point system worked. But one morning after they cleared us to come out and take roll calls if we had any casualties and all that stuff, they

called my name and told me I had over 41 points. I'd been trying to figure out, remember how you get points. But, see, I needed 41 points and I had over 41 points, and I could go home. And I can't repeat over here what I said, how happy I was, hollering. Then I had a [couple more going with me?], but the war was over in August, and this was October when they called me. I had 41 points, and I could come home. Forty-one points, August. They put me -- I had my sea bag. I had two sea bags. One was for the guns. I know that.

MZ: Really? (laughs)

TS: Yeah. And I came back on an aircraft carrier. Wait a minute. I think it was the Hornet. I used to know all of this. It was my field. I knew every battleship, every aircraft carrier. CV, every CV. Little aircraft carrier, destroyer, destroyer escorts, APAs, transport ships, I knew them all. I had to. That was my field. But they called me that I had over 41 points and I could come home. That was in -- war was over in August. We got the news August, September, October. I think it was October I had over 41 points. They put me on a flat top. No, they put me down on Guam, and I spent the night with our sea bags like a park, beautiful park there or something. And we had our

sea bags. We [were supposed?] to be called at any time, any minute, so we just took naps with our head on our sea bag. I had two sea bags. A lot of souvenirs I brought back, man. Half full of that and half full of liquor whenever we could get it. Then they called my name and put me on a flat top aircraft carrier. I knew them all. I think this was the Hornet. It might have been -- anyway, what have I -- have I got down the name of that aircraft carrier?

MZ: Yeah, you said it might have been the Hornet.

TS: Yeah, I think that was it. And I don't remember -- aircraft carriers were named after presidents? No.

MZ: That came later but (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) named after battles at first.

TS: Yeah. Anyway, I remember -- I think it was the Hornet. And we were going, headed toward Frisco, and we got news we was running into a typhoon. And they changed route and sent us to Seattle. So I stayed in Seattle. And railroads were on strike at that time in this country. On strike? Yeah. I think. Yeah, on strike, except the military. What we'd do, what the military would do, we had two cars, passenger cars full of leaving -- where did I get discharged at? Oh, yeah. When I got to -- oh, Seattle.

Yes. [Seattle?] called that we were running into a typhoon, and we had to change and go to Seattle. And I left Seattle to come home.

[When that happened?], the railroads were on strike then somehow. Whenever you see a railroad train, you see three or four or five passenger trains in there mixed in with the railroad pass-- one, two, three, four, five passenger cars. And in front was 10 or 15 railroad and 30, 40 -- I mean freight. Freight trains. So that brought us into Houston. Houston to a naval base 41 miles east of Houston, Camp Wallace. If I'm not mistaken, that's where I got my discharge after serving my country proudly and proudly serving my country, an honorable discharge.

I've got that discharge somewhere, but I've got two storage bins where I live full of furniture and stuff, where I served my country proudly and proudly served my country. Got out with two more buddies I went to high school with. That was Camp Wallace. Came on into Houston. And we had five sea bags, three of us. And there was a theater on Dowling. On Dowling Street there's a big theater, and there's a cab stand right next door to it if I'm not mistaken. And he let us leave our sea bags inside the cab stand.

We had gone and made reservations at the station, catching a train from Houston to Austin. And we had five sea bags, three of us. [Torrance B.?] Hunter was one name, buddy.

We went to Anderson High School together. Another (inaudible) [named Big Guy?]. But all three of us -- this is important -- when we got our discharge at Camp Wallace, then we had them five sea bags and we got on into Houston. And a cab, we're catching cabs. Catch a cab. And he took us to a cab stand next door to a theater so we could leave our sea bags and go to the train station and making our reservations and everything.

And I'd got my (inaudible) pay. I'd been overseas since January. The war was over in October. This is November, and we got paid at Camp Wallace that day. And I had back pay. We got in a crap game (laughter), took a chance. I took a chance on \$100, and I come out of there with about 5,000. I tore them up. We didn't have pockets on our Navy uniform. You didn't have a pocket. You got a little bit of a watch pocket right here. Had 13 buttons around here for some reason. Whenever you're getting ready to empty your bladder -- excuse me, take a leak -- you had to unbutton them holes. Thirteen buttons. Oops, oops, and down.

MZ: That's a lot of buttons.

TS: Oh man. For a unif-- oh, man. Anyway, we'll say seven o'clock at night or six o'clock [in the evening?]. The train didn't leave till one o'clock at night. We'll just put round figures; something like that. And we had a place to leave our sea bags at the cab stand there. We took a cab, took our sea bags to the train station. Oh, no -- oh, yeah. First [port of the?] night. Then we had some time to spare. There was a nightclub up about three or four blocks from the cab stand. They told us where it was. And we went up there and walked in. And it had a long table like this, about twice this long, as you walk in the door of this club.

We walked in there, fired up but nice, decent. And a big guy in an Army uniform sitting like you are and "Hey, you guys, come on over here" and a table just loaded with women. Big, long table. We walked over there, and I knew this guy. He's a sergeant in the Army. He said, "You're welcome, drinks on me. I'm buying everything, and welcome home. Glad to see you home. I got my discharge." We talked. "Who is that big guy?" [I?] said, "That's Joe Louis, man." I went over there and shook his hand. Joe Louis, heavyweight champion of the world.

MZ: Joe Louis.

TS: Mm-hmm. And we sat down at the table, and a bunch of girls, good-looking girls. Oh, yeah. Man, I can't go no further than that. Train didn't leave till one o'clock, and she sat here.

So anyway, here's the part of that. Time for us to go catch the train. Train, with just round numbers, left at 1:00. We got to the station. We made sure -- we were drinking heavy. The train, we said, left at one. So we got to the station at night, 11:30, after 11:00. We knew we were drinking, and we had those sea bags. Two sea bags full of liquor and guns, weapons, and another one with our clothes and pictures and stuff. And we got to the train station. I had won, I don't remember, I'll say I had won a bunch of money. Three, four thousand dollars. And I hadn't been paid. In the Navy, you get paid every two weeks. And every two weeks I would draw \$5.00. That's enough. Cigarettes were a nickel a pack, 50 cents a carton. I smoked Chesterfield. I always smoked a carton. Drinking all that liquor.

And we say, "Let's take our sea bags and get ready to get out of here. we'll be early." We can drink at the station. I said, "I'll pay." That's where we carried our wallets, on

a chain around our neck and on the inside of this. See, you just drop it down here in your jacket because we didn't have no pockets. I said, "OK." No wallet. "Hey, man, I done lost my goddamn wallet." I don't remember how much money I had in there. I knew I hit the gambling. I shoot a hunch, bet three, bet two more, bet five on it. We're tearing them up, man. I don't remember. I think I had -- with my back pay, because I didn't draw no pay the year I was gone, I'd only get \$5 a pay period. [I would be able to?] get cigarettes. That's all we had to buy, cigarettes. Candy bars. Kept them aboard ship. So I lost my wallet. I said, "Man, let me" -- there was a cab unloading and I said, "Give me \$20 or something." The train didn't leave; we had another hour, over an hour. We were drinking, but when we were like that, we weren't drinking too heavy. We were watching ourselves because we all had guns and money. There was a cab unloading, and I caught the cab. Yeah, I caught the cab and told him to take me back to the cab stand and told the guy, cab guy in there, what happened because they didn't have telephones then in the cabs. So he said, "That guy hasn't got back yet, but I think he's coming in because he called me a while ago. We stopped -- later I bought my cab here and I owned my own cab for 20

years. He stopped at the closest pay phone you could get to to call back the stand. I called back the stand. I got back, told the cab to take me back to the stand. And he said, "Didn't I just take you guys?" I said, "Yeah, I lost my wallet, man." Not the same cab. At that time, he said, "Well, he's on his way; he just called in."

So he came in and he said, "Didn't I just let you off at the station?" I said, "Yeah. I lost my wallet." He said, "But I had people [in the whole?] back seat. I don't know." Went to his cab, and inside light and flashlight. I don't remember whether I was sitting in the front with him because [it loaded the seat back?]. Anyway, flashlight down there. I said, "Is that a wallet? I know it's empty." Hadn't been touched.

MZ: Really? Boy, you were lucky.

TS: I got home. We got on the train. Passenger car about -- I'm just making a figure up -- 10, 12 people on there, all white. I keep on dragging them sea bags. Got to, I think, about five passenger cars. Each one of them didn't have 10, 15 people on there. Big, whole coaches from Houston going to Austin. Got back to the last one. There was a sign in the middle, "For Colored Only." There was a couple of guys standing up. I said, "You got no place to sit?" He

said, "No, man. Where you from?" I said, "Austin's our home." "Well, where you live it's the same goddamn way now. For black, for whites only." I saw all them empty seats up there, coaches. He said, "You gonna have to stand up all the way." I said, "Yes, I'll be damned." So we drug our sea bags back up, picked us a coach with about 10 or 12, 15 people in there, put the seat together there and put our sea bags in other seats, and white people got up and left. Said, "Uh-oh."

Train started, about 10 minutes, here he comes. Big, white conductor. "Hey, what you all -- you ni-- you--." "What'd you say, man?" "Well, you all going -- you know you can't sit up here. You have to go back to the back." "Ain't no seats back there." "Well, you can't sit here." ["I'll be god--?"] We're going to sit here. All three, all four of us going to die right here." He got out real quick.

We figured he was coming back or something but he didn't, but we were drinking real heavy and ready. We just didn't give a damn, you know. Come on back to the state, got into Austin at daybreak. Nobody there. Thought we were going to meet some cops there but there weren't. I had to use the restroom. They had two restrooms. I won't forget this. For White Only. For Colored Only over here. And

the colored restroom looked like it hadn't been cleaned in a month for sure. [So I said?], "Use the white one over there, man." I used the white one. We were dragging sea bags, five sea bags, three of us. There was a cab stand right across the street. Train station in Austin [town?] was on Third and Congress. Daybreak. "Hey, man, we need a cab over here. Two of them." "Call your own goddamn cab." We're in our uniforms. What we call here, you remember? Ruptured duck.

MZ: Ruptured duck, right. I remember.

TS: Ruptured duck. We had to drag those sea bags. Third, Fourth, Fifth, Sixth Street dragging. Five sea bags. Couldn't get no cab. This is Congress this way. This is Congress going north and south. This is the capitol building over here. Across the street is a pharmacy there called -- name of the White Pharmacy. Bus stop over here [in the road?], then come across Congress.

We got on there with our sea bags, pulled a seat, pulled that seat back. I'm sitting behind the driver. Big Boy sitting over here. Torrance B. sitting in another seat with all our sea bags here. He sat there. We could hear him blowing wind through his nose. Bus took on a couple or three more colored then in the back. They've got one white

on the whole bus. He got up. "You all know you can't sit up here. You have to get your black asses back there where you belong."

I don't remember who hit him [when this was over?], but the back door to the buses stay closed because people get off but you couldn't get in. You come in those double doors on the front. And he had got up. I was sitting behind him. Anyway, his back was facing those two open doors, what you come in on. I don't know who hit him, but he went backwards through those two doors. And his whole back, bottom, hit the cement [in the street?] just like that. Bam. And blood came from [anywhere?]. So we say, "Well, we've done it now." So we just open the sea bags, pulled him out there on the sidewalk, and a crowd started gathering on Sixth and Congress. I guess that crowd got up to 200 real quick. Blood was everywhere. Seven black and white cop, police officers' cars -- police cars were black and white then -- coming down Congress. There's this whole thing. Just showed up about 30 minutes, 40 minutes after daybreak. "What the hell happened here?" And we told him. Big, tall, skinny guy. He's 6 feet 8 at least. And we told him what had happened since we got on the train there in Houston and we coming home. And we

didn't know -- and you'd be surprised what he said. He said, "Welcome home. Glad to have you, and sorry you had to go through all of this. And, well, you guys've done a great job over there, and welcome back home. We're glad to have you." They said, "Don't worry; we'll take care of you."

An ambulance had come and picked him up. He said, "I need your name and where you're living because if he dies, you guys are going to be in some trouble. But let's hope not." And he had us stand there on Sixth and Congress, and he called a black and white. And (inaudible) and called another one. Two cabs. And they picked up our sea bags. And we got off on (inaudible) on Sixth and Congress. I mean down on Sixth Street, by the club. We wanted to go in there and get a sandwich. The black-and-whites parked out there and waited on us. We went in there and got a beer or something and brought us on up on (inaudible) and suggested, "Let us off here. Take to my address, (inaudible) Cedar Avenue, (inaudible) Cedar, 12th and Cedar. Take me." That was about nine o'clock, 9:30, something like -- between 9:00 and 10:00. I didn't get home, I think, until two o'clock, drunk as a skunk.

And my sea bags were there. Had my wallet around my neck. Hadn't seen my wife, hadn't seen my child because she was pregnant and she left. We left, and she had to get back and make reservations to get back [all alone?] because when they took me off the tower, they shipped me out the very next day. And I didn't have time to go see her off or nothing. And we had a nice room with private citizens, two stories. Very nice. Four of us Navy guys stayed there with their wives. And they had to take care of her and send her back, and they shipped me out. That's when I left, but then she was pregnant.

And then when I got back home, I had a baby I hadn't seen. She said she was sick, and soon she got pregnant. Then I shipped out. Went to the doctor, and I shipped out the next day. Now I've got a baby. And I run in there drunk as a skunk. I sat on the bed. I said, "Where's my baby?" She said, "You're sitting on her. Get up" (laughter).

(inaudible) Jumped up and looked at her. We Negro people, I said -- my wife was about your color, a little -- my color, I said, "She just colored, just like me." And my wife said, "I was hoping she'd be my color." We were laughing and making a joke. I said, "But she got that pretty brown." I didn't sit on her; I almost sat on her.

She said, "Get up; you're sitting on her." I was so drunk, "Don't you drop her." I picked her up. I remember picking her up, I think that besides their calling me in that tent up in the mountains to come home, this is the greatest joy that I think I ever had in my life is picking up my daughter, my baby. And she married a guy, he drank, he's alcoholic. She's [drunk?]. Long story. I lost her, my daughter. She was 36. Me and my wife raised her two kids. I've been married four times. All three of my last wives are passed away. My first wife when I had my baby -- she passed away at 36 years old -- my granddaughter's still taking care of her now. She was 91 this past January. I'll be 91 June. She's six months older than I am. We were married over 45 years, and I just couldn't -- we couldn't get along because she was too jealous. I can understand that because I was wild. It was all my fault. And I couldn't stand the jealousy. And I go see her sometimes now to my granddaughter's house in Austin. I say, "Where's [Julie?]" "She's [sleeping?] on there. And she comes out and says, "Come in, Mom, somebody wants to see you." And she looks at me. She says, "You got one of your wives with you?" First thing she always says (laughter), right now. I say, "They all passed away." I

say, "Come on, sit with me, eat with me." She says, "OK."

And we eat together.

And "You single now, or you still got Ada with you?" That's one of my girlfriends I went with for 25 years. I say, "They all passed away, baby." "You got one at your apartment, your house now?" That's her. And I don't pay her no mind, but we had that one child. And whenever I see her, I go back to that child. And I've got pictures. I've got a suitcase at home. When you're born on this earth and when you pass on, you don't take nothing with you but what you've got on. And that sometimes, if you're in that coffin long enough, it's not there. So you don't take anything with you. You can take rings on your fingers, whatever, somebody's going to take them off and use them. But you're born in this world with nothing. You own nothing. And when you die, it's the same. You die in this world with nothing.

So I save pictures. I used to be tak-- since my last wife passed away, I haven't been taking any. I'm going to start back. I've got a suitcase like this just full of pictures. And the ones that I did most, my mother's home got burned up. They woke me up one morning when I was in college in Austin. Her home -- they woke me up at five o'clock that

morning and she was crying. My mother, she lived out there in Elgin on (inaudible). She said, "Our home burned down, and everything we had is lost." And I had two little brothers and sisters. Nothing happened, but all the house burned completely down, and they didn't [lose?] anything. So I had a lot of savings, and I gave it to them so they could get back on their feet, but they lost everything. But I brought that up because I take pictures. I love to take pictures. That's the only thing that you can pass on to the next generation. So I'm saving these pictures. So hopefully 30, 45, the year -- say 500 years from today, those pictures can still be passed on to the next generation, like I have my mother and my father's picture. And -- oh, and I (inaudible) this that I'd like to share with you guys. Ninety-one years ago, and my sister under me -- I'm four years older than she is -- I'm the oldest. She's still living.

MZ: How many brothers and sisters do you have?

TS: It was just two boys and two girls, but I had one stepbrother which is my brother. And I had two stepsisters -- three stepsisters. They were my sisters, not no step. That's how close we were. And the baby stepsister, my baby stepsister, and one under me. There's only two left living

in all of them. It's in my other book. Did I bring that book with me or leave it in the car? I better had left it in the car.

MZ: I forgot to ask you, but when you heard that the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor, do you remember where you were?

TS: Sure, I was in high school. I was a junior in high school. Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor December 7, 1941. I finished high school 1942. Yeah, 1942, and drafted 1943. First of '43. I have --

MZ: I'm curious. You experienced a lot of racism before you even go into the service. And you get drafted, and you go in. Do you have any conflicting feelings?

TS: Hell, yeah.

MZ: Fighting for a country that even basically discriminates against you.

TS: Hell, yeah. I grew up on it. Right there in Elgin where I am now, my mother's home town. She lived on [Morrell?]. My mother was Cherokee. I didn't know what it was too much when I was a pre-teenager. When I was nine, ten, eleven, I began to feel it with white boys throwing rocks at me and all that stuff and (inaudible). "You can't come in here; you have to go over there. You can't come in here, boy."

And now they use the "N" word. You know, back in those days, they were using the "N" word. Just say "nigger." We know what you're talking about. And when I read or hear people doing the news now, they say the "N" word, say it. They said "nigger," but say it knowing, but this is how they say it. But they use the "N word." Look, let me show you that. Ninety-one years ago, my mother brought into the world a good-looking, handsome dude.

MZ: (overlapping dialogue, inaudible).

TS: And this is my sister right up under me. We're the only two left. I'm four years older than she is. She's still living down in a little place called [Ledig?] now. [That's got to be?] enlarged now.

F1: But tell him why your baby picture's so important.

TS: Hmm?

F1: Tell him why your baby picture's so important, what you told Mike [Warren?] from 5-7. You remember?

TS: With my fists doubled up? I come in this world with my fists doubled up, fighting. Fighting. This is my little sister, the one she's living, right up under me. She's living out there now. She's 91; I'm four years older than she is. See, her hands are not doubled up. Her fists are not doubled up. Mine is. I'm still fighting. One thing I

hate right today is to come across somebody [throwing?] some racism and I'm around. God has blessed me that I haven't heard a white man use the word "nigger" in over 50 years. I go up to some of these right here, [right over here?]. And I come across one down there, [Mr. Beale?]. I said, "How old are you, man?" "I'm 84." I said, "I've got you" or something. I said, "Let me shake your hand now." "You're OK, veteran." Fifty years ago, he wouldn't have shook my hand. God has let me live to bypass all of that. Now me and her can go to the university campus. I can't find the rest of them, but I took my last wife. She said, "I want to take them out to UT where they, when you were in college, they ran you guys off of the campus." [We were 12 of us?] in suits and ties. Next time we went out, I was a freshman. Next time was February '48. We went out there in our uniforms and everything. Crowd didn't gather too much. Some of them shouted, "Nigger." When I brought my wife back here to live in 2009, she said, "Take me to the university where they ran you off the campus." She said, "Will you do that?" I said, "Sure, I'll take you out there." She said, "I just want to see it." So I took her there. When I found a parking place, I couldn't find -- been so long -- the registrar's office. Got us a seat.

She's saying, "This is where they ran you off the campus?"

I said, "Uh-huh." And I had my uniform, like she wanted. I put this on. I got another with stuff on it.

Them youngsters actually hugged us and squeezed us to death. Stopped and said, "Who you -- thank you for serving our country." And I saw that she was almost crying. I saw white, black, red, brown, and yellow. Those are five colors on this planet, and I saw interracial. When black mixes up with white, blacks mix up with Spanish, blacks mix up with Orientals or Indians, all blacks mixed up with these five generations, you've got a country full of interracial, what makes this country better and beautiful. Because say you playing [out there ball, same age?] and one of them might say, "Hey, nigger." "Man, what'd you say?" And you jump, talking to him. "What'd you say, boy? What word did you say?" And you, like you, I say you're white, but you've got a white father. You've got a black mother. So interracials don't use words like that. You don't hear these kids, very seldom like OU up here. Just last week. You very seldom see them using words like that among the younger generation. They don't -- you go to UT now, it's all interracial. You don't see nothing but all all colors

this country has. One high school, I think it was last year -- Oh, you were a handsome little rascal then.

MZ: (laughs).

TS: I was a handsome rascal. You know that? I didn't change, never. I still got these. I used to do these. I learned to do this good in the Navy. I beat up many guys. Came up and -- right quick a guy in Milwaukee. We were working together. White boy, Roy. His wife -- he was an ugly little rascal, but his wife won Miss Wisconsin. Beautiful girl. And we went to the ring one day, where we'd go work out, and he caught me a good one. Almost knocked me out. Had to stop him.

I never stopped training. I mean, he got me good. I didn't get it in good, fast enough. And about eight months later, I run across him. His name was -- what I called him? Roy? No.

MZ: I think you said Roy.

TS: That was it. He was a white boy. I forget what race. Milwaukee's all mixed up, really mixed up. And we went back to the ring and I got him. I beat him good. About two, three years later, straight back there. But I got him good. That's how good I used to be with this. He caught me good because he knocked me out. I think we worked

together in the meat department. That's what it was. We worked together. Roy, that's it. And I've already told how I used to spar and how good I was and he caught it. He knew and he caught me. He knocked me out, but I got him later.

So right now, Mike, I'm a proud man. Very proud. About the only place that I get my blood pressure go up -- and they take it out here when I see my doctor. I take it at home all the time, daily. It'll always be 108/60 or 40 or 119, 120 or something like that until I come out here. I can go down there now to the doctor's office. She'd take my blood pressure. It'd be 190, between 190, 200, [every?] time I come out to this place because I feel like I'm not being treated fair by me being a combat veteran, honorably discharged on serving my country, and the VA won't touch my teeth. Medicare won't touch it.

MZ: And why is that exactly? You said --

TS: Congress.

MZ: You said something about disability?

TS: I don't get no disability. They won't approve it. I think they just now approved a pension for me now, but I've got some paperwork I haven't finished filling out about my wives' birth, their deaths, where they died. Something

like that. And I haven't filled the (inaudible) yet, but it's been approved for my pension there. But for these last 50 years, 60 years, 70 years, no. No. No.

MZ: Let me go back a little bit. When you got out of the service, you said that you'd use the GI Bill.

TS: Mm-hmm. Well, the United States Congress passed a bill then. We said it's been rated the greatest bill that this countr-- the United States, United States Congress, has ever passed called the GI Bill. They gave us a year. For however many years we served in this war, they gave us free an extra year. So I was a few weeks under three years, they gave me a year. So I had four years of schooling I used to learn meat cutting, meat market and grocery management because I liked that because I worked in a grocery store when I was nine, ten years old. Yeah, that was my first job. He paid me 50 cents a week. Every evening after school, he taught me how to stock shelves and stand on a thing they had built to grind hamburger meat and make sausage. During those days, they called it the Afro. Pig feet, stomach, and all that they threw away. But today, hell, it costs you \$5 a pound to get oxtails or something like that. But I grew up working in a grocery store and I liked it, see, and I took it. So the

government paid for me to go to learn meat cutting, butcher, meat market. Government paid for it. And then after I got that, I came back. No whites would take me in Texas. They wouldn't take me. They were "We can't find you a place." So they found me a place in Oklahoma City, and I grew up in Oklahoma City as a little boy, so they did me right. Oklahoma City was great. Black lawyers, black physicians, black all. It was great. That was in '46, about.

MZ: After the war?

TS: After the war. The GI Bill. The bottom of '46, '47, and '48. Came back and registered for college September '48 at Tillotson College. September '48. January '49, it changed to Huston-Tillotson College because Sam Houston College was on 12th and (inaudible) now. That's where all that whole block, everything, was Sam Houston College. Then they merged. It was six months after I started college, went to Sam Houston College. Now I go over there feeling proud. It's the most beautiful school in the [states?], Huston-Tillotson University. It's a graduate school now. And they left the administration building, it's left as a -- what do you call it? The old building. It's not touched. It's just sitting there, painted and looking beautiful.

MZ: Oh, like a [state?] landmark?

TS: Yeah, landmark. That one and one on the hill up at the science building where I had chemistry and stuff like that. Those two buildings they left. Yep. They don't use them for nothing; they're just beautiful landmarks. They paint it and looks good. But I finished in -- they made me drop out a semester because I was carrying 20-something hours. Usually, students carry 12, 16 hours. I was studying hard. Studying, and I was overdoing it. I was making a lot of A's and B's. A lot of B's and some A's, a little A's. And my professor said, "You're overdoing this."

I went to my doctor on the campus, Dr. [Carney?]. So I dropped out a semester. And my mother-in-law and father-in-law and my mother and father took care of my wife and child. Had a little house, a new house, renting, small. And I got on the bus. I said, "I'm going to San Francisco. I'm going to move there maybe." And then I come out of San Francisco, and I went on up. Went on up into Wisconsin, Milwaukee, where I went as a sailor, and I later moved there. But I was born here, and somehow I came back here to stay.

And one other place that I'd love to live, and I'm not crossing it out, it used to be called the worst state for

Negroes in this country. Which one? The worst state for black people.

MZ: Mississippi.

TS: Mississippi. I went up -- I'd go to Las-- very quickly (inaudible). I used to go to Las Vegas every year for 10 years. Not a big gambler. I'd always take 100 bucks to gamble with. And I wouldn't gamble [with sailors?]. Hours before I'd get ready to leave, I'd always get them. That was one thing. You can always win if there's not but two coins or whatever. But everything that came down, I let it stay in there. Take it to the window and I leave, the last day. So I always won.

I was going to move to Las Vegas. So [I'm asking?] a guy here in Austin -- I was on the lot working one day. He said, "You getting ready to go to Las Vegas?" I said, "Yes, sir." He said, "Why don't you go to Mississippi?" I said, "You kidding? Man, black people die up there, lynch up. No way." He said, "Go up there and try it. They've got casinos up there." I said, "I didn't know that." "They've got casinos," [he said that?], "and the water's beautiful." I changed it from going to Las Vegas. And I got a ticket to go, I think three to five days, of Mississippi. Flew up there very quickly, and I walked in the airport there to

get my rental car and saw all these blacks, guys with suits on. I said, "Whew." I went to the office outside, got a rental car here. I said, "Hey, I've got something to ask you. I don't mean any harm." He said, "Sir, what's that?" Got a suit and tie, handsome. I said, "I've never been here before, Mississippi." I said, "How are the white people? You live here?" He looked at me. "Where are you from, fellow?" I said, "I'm from Texas." "Hell, you're the people who have trouble. We don't have no trouble here." He said, "You kind of offended us." I said, "I'm sorry, sir. I didn't mean it because, you know, I just" -- "Whoa, that's past. That's history."

He told me, "Drive, go out there and catch 49. It runs into (inaudible)." Got down there and saw the Walmart and hit the right route, 49. About three miles, four miles -- three miles up, runs right into the Gulf of Mexico. Go up on the right, Gulfport. On the left, you're going into Biloxi. I changed my ticket. I was supposed to be there five days; I changed my ticket to two weeks. Came back home, and about two months later I moved to Biloxi. I picked my grave-- cemetery. I was never going to leave. And I got some girl first-cousins that live in Oklahoma

City. And I'd been there, lived there, grew up there.

They said, "Come up here to live."

I got darn fooled and moved to Oklahoma City, and I regretted it all the days in my life. And I was going to move back with my wife I'd met in Oklahoma when I was there at this period. I married her and she said, "You love me?" I said, "Yeah." She grew up in Oklahoma City. Five years older than I was. She's 4 feet 10. And I've got two boxes of her shoes, heels. And I've been trying to find women in Travis County, Bastrop County I see. I said, "Lady, I don't mean you any harm, but you've got a small foot." I said, "My wife passed away, and she had a small foot." I said, "What size do you wear?" And I haven't found a woman yet in the last five years that wore my wife's size. My wife was size 4. (inaudible) she wore heels. Beautiful, beautiful, beautiful. Number 4 she wore, and I haven't found a lady yet. What size you wear, baby?

F1: I wear an 8.

TS: See that? She wore a 4. I carry one shoe of hers, a suede purple. I carry it in the car with me so when I go out, I'm trying to find -- I've got two cases of her sh-- I hate to get rid of any, any of her stuff. She had five minks; four of them are gone. I've got one of her minks. Can't

find nobody to wear it. She was neat, number 4 shoe, and 38 in the butt, but can't find nobody to wear her size. So I can go anywhere now. I'm a proud man. There's not but one place that my blood pressure comes up. It's whenever I come out here. It's the only place on this planet because they haven't treated me fairly at all. I've gone through a lot of stuff for my back and being a combat veteran in World War II. And they say no, they will not. I'm over 65.

MZ: If there was one thing you had to -- if there was one memory that you had that stood out most about your time in the service, what would that be?

TS: Memory? Good or bad?

MZ: Either.

TS: Two memories that I have, two of them, I can say one was -- there's three or four I'd like to, but one would be when I got discharged and got home and the cab had already took my sea bag home and walked in. I saw my wife and hugged her. Gave her a short kiss and said, "Where is my baby, my daughter?" She said, "She's in there, in the (inaudible)." And I went in there and picked her up. She was -- (inaudible). I picked her up. That's one of the greatest.

I think the next would be in Houston, Camp Wallace, Texas. And went to the chaplain's off-- wherever it was, we went to get our discharge. And "Proudly, you have proudly, Troy Shakles, have served your country proudly and proudly served your country. I issue an honorable discharge after having served your country. Thank you, sir, very much for serving your country." That's it. Walk out the door, goddamn it, and it's segregation. We're all, I think we're all -- one God we serve. How many Gods you serve? One? How many people down here [is there of us?]? One. We're all one people serving one God. But man has made this [now?]. I was looking at TV last night. The Pharaohs of the Bible back then, the black Pharaohs. And they had this white couple. White girl, coup-- women. They were youngsters. I think -- no, they weren't going to school, but they looked to be in their twenties. And they were over there in Africa, climbing up these tall mountains. The name of it, you can put it as "The Black Pharaohs, Africa's First Black Pharaohs." Something like that. And how these women were climbing all up in these mountains and going into all these holes and this [route?] and getting statues of generations. Two thousand years ago, all of these. They're doing that now. They're bringing that out

now [into this?]. The checkers here do not -- we're all integrated. We're all one people now. They're trying to do this.

But on Sunday -- you see, I've got my greatest pride for the black women. On Sunday, the Catholics, the whites go to the Catholic. And we're all working together like me and you here. You choose your religion, but the whites go and they segregate, Catholics. But the black women, your big churches, your big churches in this country now, predominantly white, you're going to see their choir filled with black women. Watch it on TV. So now, just watch it. You'll see all the choirs of this country. And if you've got cable, they show, on Sunday, different churches. And they show the Wilson Brothers, Stafford, Statler Brothers. Now look at the choir. They'll show you the audience, but look at the choir. And every one black man you see in their choir, you're going to see 20 black women and 75 whites. It's all -- pshew! But black women, they're going to the blacks -- going to all the churches of this country. They're going to the Catholic, they're going to all of them. Some of them I don't agree with. Jehovah's Witness. But you'll see the black women there. I say, "Well, I'll be damned." Now this last night, on cable, the black

Pharaohs, they're all out of Africa. Africa, God's first creation, Adam. It's great.

But now that's the greatest is seeing my daughter for the first time and holding her in my hand. And I think, besides being in them tents up there with Japanese coming down on us at night, is Camp Wallace, Texas. And they say, "After serving your country proudly and proudly serving your country." Those two come first. And it makes me feel good now. And I get -- I ask God all the time, "Don't let me get angry. Don't let me get angry." And I don't. I hurt. [See these?] white boys up at OU. I used to live in Okie -- I grew up in Okie [out of?] service. They sent me up there. I lived up there. Me and my wife moved there later. But to see them boys, college, OU University, I've been there. I took graduate classes there. You know, I wouldn't live in Oklahoma City, I mean Oklahoma, if they give me a million dollars a month. Oklahoma, the state of Oklahoma, is the tornado capital of the world. Not the tornado capital of the United States. The state of Oklahoma is the tornado capital of the world. It begins Tornado Alley all the way up.

MZ: Just before you go on, what rank were you when you got out of the service?

TS: Signalman second. That's probably it. Got to signalman first when they put me on that ship, but I wasn't at these places too long. And I missed my -- I had a baby, and I spoke to my wife about it after I got my degree of going back in and get a commission. She was against it. I talked to her, but I wanted to go back in after I got my commission and some graduate studies down at Texas University down in Houston. But she was -- I had a double minor of Spanish and English, and I was going to go study after I get my major finished in government, master's. Then I was going to go to Mexico with her and the baby and stay two years and then get me a degree in Spanish, and I had a choice of German or French, my languages. She OKed it, but she didn't want me to do it, so I didn't do it. I loved school. I live in this -- I'm trying to get me a house now. As soon as I get me a house and get married, I'm going back to school.

MZ: Did you finally graduate from college?

TS: Sure, I got -- I mentioned that. August 5, 1951. Summer school, 1951. Went on to Texas Southern in '52, and my GI Bill ran out in my first semester. And that stopped there. But everywhere I've gone, I've always took some classes.

But if I can get me a pension started here, I want to get back in school now and keep -- [it keeps me open?].

F1: [Tell the man?], what degrees did you achieve?

TS: Just a bachelor. Bachelor in government.

MZ: Government?

TS: Mm-hmm. Double minor, Spanish and English. I had the double minor, Spanish and English, and another minor in elementary. I got 30 hours in elementary and secondary education on that degree.

MZ: I just have one last question for you. Do you remember where we were when you heard that the war had ended?

TS: Yeah, I was up on foxholes, in them tents up in Guam, Mariana Islands. It ended August. I went up in January, February, March. Left the islands, Eniwetok in the Marshalls. And then from there, on this same ship -- or did they put me on another one? Anyway, they transferred me to Guam up in the Mariana Islands, up in an Army camp, abandoned. It had been an Army camp up in the mountains of Guam where the enemy was. We had taken Guam back and then, before I got there, they had made another sweep. Don't remember the dates. The Japanese were still up there, heavy. And then when they put us up there, I guess the brass, we called it, of the military, they figured this war

was pretty well ending to a close. And they really didn't have nowhere to put us. They had me in charge of these 200 men after I left Eniwetok in the Marshalls.

So up in the mountains -- oh, I said something a few minutes ago I didn't finish.

MZ: Oh --

TS: Go ahead.

MZ: Oh, no, I was just asking about where you were at the (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

TS: Yeah, I was up in the mountains of Guam. The war ended August '45. They called me to come home. I had enough, 41 points. I don't remember how you accumulate those points. October '45, I had over 41 points up in the mountains, and I could home for discharge. I was up for discharge.

MZ: Well, I think you've answered all my questions so far.

TS: Yeah. I'm glad I could help. Glad my mind is as fair as it is at my age, 91 years old, man. I've got a library. I've got about four sets of encyclopedias. I study sometimes. Damn, what time is it? Five o'clock in the morning.

MZ: It's about a quarter to one.

TS: Yeah, but I'd be --

MZ: I just want to say on behalf of the museum and myself, I wanted to thank you for your service and the time that you made to sit down with me today.

TS: Yes. Yes, sir. Duty and honor.

END OF AUDIO FILE