

Ruben Clayton Davis Oral History Interview

MARK CUNNINGHAM: This is Mark Cunningham, today is November 13th, 2014. I am interviewing Mr. RC Davis from his home in Apple Springs, Texas. This interview is in support of the Nimitz Education Resource Center archives for the National Museum of the Pacific War Texas Historical Commission for the preservation of historical information related to this site. First off, Mr. Davis, I want to say thank you on behalf of the National Museum of the Pacific War for doing the interview with us. And more importantly, thank you for your service to your country. And I'm delighted to be able to record your story. Let's start right off at the beginning. When were you born?

RUBEN CLAYTON DAVIS: Nineteen twenty-six, July the 5th.

MC: You were a young one.

RD: Yep, I'm 88 right now.

MC: OK. Tell me about where you were born.

RD: I was born at (inaudible) Prairie.

MC: And where is that? Texas?

RD: That's about 10 miles west of here.

MC: OK. So, you're basically --

RD: A rural community.

MC: You're a hometown boy here.

RD: Yep. Those days, you were born at home. And I was born at my mother's parents place.

MC: OK. And what was your mother and father's name?

RD: My mother was -- her maiden name was Nash. She was Ruby Nash. And my father was Earnest Clayton Davis.

MC: All right. Now, did you have any brothers and sisters?

RD: I'm the oldest of the group. I was the first born.

MC: And how many?

RD: Two sisters. My sister next to me was born in '31. And then my baby sister was born in '46. Forty-six, yeah.

MC: All right. Now, where were you and what do you remember about Pearl Harbor Day?

RD: I was a junior in high school in 1941, December the 7th. Right here in Apple Springs. And I suppose, when we got to school that morning, there was news that that we knew about the bombing in Pearl Harbor. Most of us really didn't have much of an idea of what Pearl Harbor was, you know, but we knew it was something bad. We knew.

MC: Right. Now, did you finish high school?

RD: Mm-hmm. I went ahead and finished my junior year, and then I finished my senior year. And I still wasn't old enough,

you know, to go into service, so I went to Houston and worked a while in Houston until I was 18.

MC: OK. When did you go -- well, first off, let me back up. What made you select the Navy?

RD: Well, I suppose because I had older buddies, you know, that I used to run with that was -- some of them were already in the Army. And the letters that would get from them, I decided I didn't want to be in that branch of service.

MC: You'd rather sail than sleep in a ditch.

RD: So, when I got my greetings, and got down that induction center in Houston, got our physicals and all that, you know. And they would run the -- I stood in line there, they were wanting to know what branch of service you wanted. Well, down the line, I could hear them, some of them would say the Navy. And they'd say, "put him in the Marines." Some would say the Army or something. They'd say, "put him in the Navy." Very seldom did I ever hear one pick a branch that they said, put him in this, you know. Well, we got up -- it come my turn. That lieutenant or whatever he was -- I don't know -- asked me, said, what branch of service you want in? I said, "Well, if I'm gonna have to go, I want the Navy." Said, "put him in the Navy." I, like, fell over. (laughter)

MC: So, you got what you wanted.

RD: Yep.

MC: All right. Now, when was that? When did you --

RD: That was in September, the 9th of September, '44.

MC: Forty -- 9th of September, '44. So, you had a year left of war, right?

RD: Pardon me? Well, that war had been going on, you know, since -- pretty strong a couple of years. Yeah.

MC: OK. Now, where'd you go for boot camp?

RD: They load us up on a train.

MC: Now, did you leave that day? From the day you got inducted to -- you left that day?

RD: Yeah.

MC: OK. Had you ever been away from home before?

RD: No. (laughter)

MC: What'd you think of that?

RD: Well, that was a longest train ride. I guess, I'd ridden on the local train a time or two when I was a kid, you know. It used to come right through here, you know. But it took us three days to get out of Texas. At least most of three days. I don't know whether it took all of the three days or not.

MC: Were you heading for California?

RD: Yep. San Diego.

MC: San Diego.

RD: Yeah.

MC: I guess that's where most of the Houston guys (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) --

RD: I suppose, yeah.

MC: Because most of them --

RD: When we got there, they unloaded us --

MC: Back a minute. Tell me about that train ride. What was that like? In those days, that was pretty rough.

RD: Well, it was just slow. That's all I --

MC: Was it all military?

RD: Pardon me?

MC: All military?

RD: Well, I don't think so. I don't really think so. I don't really think so, because we had -- you know, they designated one of the older recruits to kind of keep our little group together. I don't recall just how many of us was in my particular group, you know. But we had one of the guy that was probably -- well, we were 18. He was probably 21 or 22, you know. And of course, 18-year-old, 21 or 22 is a guy a little older than you are, you know.

And he kind of kept roll call -- kind of kept check on us, you know.

MC: Did you eat in the dining car and all that stuff?

RD: Yeah, yeah. You had to eat on the train.

MC: Right. You didn't have a berth -- I mean, you were just in your seat, right?

RD: We slept in our seats, yeah. (laughter)

MC: How many days?

RD: Well, most of three days.

MC: Three days to get out of Texas, huh?

RD: It seemed like. We probably got there the end of the fourth day or something. Because it didn't take too long after we got out of Texas to get to San Diego, you know. Yeah, but we got there, and it was sometime early before daylight in the morning. And they carried us over to the mess hall, but we didn't have breakfast. We had navy beans and something else. I forget what it was, but that's what we had. (laughter)

MC: Early in the morning.

RD: So, it must have been what they had left over from the meal that night. But I don't know what time of the night it was. I thought it was early in the morning, but I mean, 3 or 4:00 in the morning, you know. Well, I thought it was.

MC: Now, when you got there, what was your base like? What was San Diego like? The base?

RD: Well, it was just a bunch of barracks. I --

MC: Is that it?

RD: Yes. That --

MC: But did you make some friends during that period that you stayed to close to?

RD: Whether or not we were put in the same company, I don't really recall that. Whether some of the guys I was with that we were put in the same company. We probably could have been, you know. We probably could have been. But I can't right off say that I got well enough acquainted to remember the names.

MC: Well, tell me what stands out in your memory about boot camp. What stands out the most?

RD: Well, what stands out the most whenever -- if you want to get -- if you want to make it without making it too hard on you, whenever you're told what to do, want to do it the best you could and not goof around.

MC: Now, did the physical aspect of it bother you?

RD: Pardon me?

MC: Did the physical aspect of boot camp bother you?

RD: No, because I was used to working.

MC: OK.

RD: Yeah, that part didn't faze me. You know, that part didn't. You know --

MC: And that lasted what, six to eight weeks?

RD: Probably about eight weeks. Yeah, probably. I saw, you know, a number of boys make it hard on their self, you know, goofing around. Not half trying, stuff like that. Whenever say they say fall guy leaps, you know, I -- far as I could. (laughter)

MC: Once you finished boot camp, what'd you do then?

RD: Well, finished boot camp, and we got to leave. We got to leave --

MC: Did you come home?

RD: -- I believe to come home. But it took --

MC: And when was that?

RD: -- most of it to come and go.

MC: That's what I was thinking.

RD: I think I got to spend about four days at home.

MC: But at least it was a break.

RD: Pardon me?

MC: At least it was a break.

RD: Yeah, yeah.

MC: Was that the only time you got home during your service?

RD: Yeah. I got back, of course they dispensing us out. First one place, then another. And finally, I ended up in amphibious training program.

MC: Was that in San Diego?

RD: Yeah. We were stationed on Coronado Island. Coronado. You've heard of Coronado Island.

MC: Yes, I have.

RD: And that was training on LCVPs and LCMS, landing boats.

MC: What was the first one you said?

RD: LCVPs. They are landing boats that are about -- well, the LCVP was about -- I can't exactly say the measurement of it. About 20 foot in length and maybe more. Maybe more than that. And about eight or 10 feet wide. Maybe not quite that wide, something like that. But with a ramp and all the -- you just run them right up on the beach.

MC: And the other one was a --

RD: LCM.

MC: LCM.

RD: They're a little bigger.

MC: That was a bigger boat?

RD: Mm-hm.

MC: OK.

RD: But anyway --

MC: Now, what did you train for in those boats? What was your job? What did you train for?

RD: We were training to land troops on the beach.

MC: Yeah, but what did you do on the boat?

RD: I was trained to be coxswain, to operate the boat. Operate the boat.

MC: You operate the boat.

RD: Mm-hmm, yeah.

MC: OK. Was that your primary function?

RD: Yeah, yeah. So that --

MC: How long did that training last?

RD: Well, it was -- you trained how to operate that boat, and trained how to come alongside -- hold that boat against the side of the ship for the troops to climb down the ladder and get in it -- rope ladder.

MC: So, were you going out --

RD: We were out on the ocean.

MC: Going out on the ocean and pulling up -- I mean, it wasn't any -- it was a real life deal. It wasn't mocked up. You pulled up beside a ship (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) --

RD: Yeah. We go out every day, and come back in every night to the base. They go out to the ships [sinking?] out there, and come back in.

MC: Now, how many --

RD: Pardon me?

MC: What was the size of the crew on one of those things?

RD: Well, actually, there'd be probably three or four of us on that -- we'd have a mechanic and two operators. And I was one of the operators. And that went on for six weeks. Six weeks. And we were -- you know, at the end of the six weeks, you can come alongside and back them away from the ship and stuff like that pretty good. And then you train on making the beach landings and backing off the beach. Which was a pretty good maneuver, because you're gonna stay wet most of the time. You can't turn them around. If you turned them around in that surf, you know, you'd get swamped -- if you turned them around. So, you got to drop anchor and go in and land on the beach, and let the ramp down. And then pull the ramp back -- winch the ramp back up, and then back out, you know. And you do that all day. And at the end of the day, you're gonna be wet.

MC: You're gonna be tired too, aren't you?

RD: Yeah. (laughter)

MC: All right. Now, the training for this lasted -- now, did you --

RD: Well, you learn -- in that training, you have sessions where you learn blinker signal, you know, with the blinker light signals. You learn semaphore with the hand --

MC: What is that?

RD: -- hand flag signals. You know, the alphabet.

MC: Was that Morse code or?

RD: Pardon me?

MC: Was that Morse code or was it --

RD: Yeah. Morse code. Morse code on the blinker light, and the semaphore flags. You learn that, you know, along with -- you're operating the boat, and getting back off of the beach and all that coming alongside. But during the latter week or so of that training, making those practice landings, I guess this was in -- see, I went in September, and went through boot camp. And came home, and then went back and then went into that program. And this was probably in February that --

MC: February '44.

RD: Yeah, '45.

MC: Forty-five, OK. Oh, OK. Yeah, that's right. You went in in September of '44. OK.

RD: We were making landings up the coast. Probably up near San Francisco. Practice landing, you know. And it was pretty

cold, and so I took pneumonia. And they put me on a hospital ship, and that I don't remember too much about how long I was on there. Because I guess I did get pretty sick, you know. But whenever I got off of that hospital ship -- I don't have any idea how long I stayed on it, probably -- I don't really know.

MC: OK, so you were on a hospital ship, not a hospital on the -
-

RD: No.

MC: And you're still in the US, right?

RD: Pardon me?

MC: You're still in the US?

RD: Oh yeah. Yeah, the hospital -- it was [lurking?] out there somewhere from when we were making the landings, you know, and maneuvers. So, after getting off of the hospital ship and getting back at Coronado, now the boys that I'd remembered that was training with me weren't there. They'd already left.

MC: So, you're starting all over with friends and everything, right?

RD: Yeah.

MC: You obviously got a new assignment, right?

RD: Yeah. And they loaded on an AKA, I believe it was an AKA.
I don't believe it was -- they had an AKA and an APA.

MC: What's an AKA?

RD: It mostly hauls cargo. APA --

MC: Is this this going overseas?

RD: Yeah. And an APA hauls personal. I'm not real sure, but
it was one of those type ships.

MC: Was it a troop ship?

RD: Some of us on there that was going to get an assignment, I
guess, because it carried us to Pearl Harbor. And I
remember --

MC: What were the accommodations like on that thing?

RD: Pardon me?

RD: What were the accommodations like? Was it one of these
things that the bunks were stacked 10 high or something
like that.

RD: Well, we were bunked down pretty low on the --

MC: In the whole?

RD: Yeah. (laughter) Definitely, definitely. So we really
didn't have any duty assignment on that except to go eat
chow. That's all the duty assignment that we had on that.

MC: Now, how was the food?

RD: Well, I suppose it was edible. That's all I can say.
(laughter)

MC: Now, I'm still confused. Were these US Troop ships or were they merchant ships?

RD: No. They were Navy ships.

MC: They were Navy ships. Yeah, OK. Some guys went across -- they pulled in merchant ships.

RD: Yeah. I came back on an American ship from overseas (inaudible). I finished up my -- but anyway --

MC: So, your first voyage was to Pearl Harbor.

RD: Was to Pearl Harbor.

MC: Ok, now --

RD: Yeah, yeah. I didn't know whether I was gonna be -- what I was going to be assigned to. At that time, I knew that the ones I had trained with on the beach landings had probably already on over, you know. But anyway, at Pearl Harbor, you know, I remember sailed into the Pearl Harbor. And I remember, you know, the super structures and so forth that you observed as you sailed into the harbor, you know.

MC: So, that's the damage from the bombing?

RD: From the attack, you know.

MC: And it was still there in 1945?

RD: Yeah.

MC: Yeah. I've heard that before.

RD: Yeah. Well, some of it I put -- to some extent it was still there, you know.

MC: How'd you take that first sea voyage?

RD: Pardon me?

MC: How did you handle that first sea voyage? Did you get sick or was it --

RD: The thing about it was, some of the boys I can remember being on there with me going over there probably hadn't had as much joshing around out there in that water as I'd had in my training. And being that I had already gotten used to that in the training that I'd had, I didn't get sea sick. But some of the guys got bad sea sick, you know. But it didn't faze me because I'd been joshed around a good bit out there in one them LCVPs (laughter) (inaudible). You know, I'd already gotten used to that. And --

MC: OK. Now, they take those LCMS over on ships, right?

RD: Yeah.

MC: OK. So, you didn't go across the ocean in (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

RD: Yeah. That's not an oceangoing vessel. But anyway, see they're just landing craft, you know, is what they are. But now went I get to Pearl Harbor and they put us on a

base -- tents, a bunch of tents and stuff like that. And I'm probably there, I don't know, a couple of weeks or three, I don't know. And I get assigned to a LSM. Now that's a landing ship medium. That's a ship. Now --

MC: OK. They're all kind of the same. Now, you got an LCM, which is a landing craft medium.

RD: Craft, yeah.

MC: Now, you got a landing ship medium. Now, that's bigger (overlapping dialogue; inaudible). Oh, OK. Yeah, OK. Now that's a medium.

RD: Yeah. That's the ship I was on right there.

MC: One seven one.

RD: It's a floating bathtub. (laughter) You'd ride that thing right up on the beach. See, it's got a crew about (inaudible) 30, 35.

MC: OK. Now, what's all this stuff up here? Is this --

RD: Those are [guns?]. That's --

MC: Where was your position?

RD: Quad 40 there. And it's got .50 calibers all on down the side, and .20 calibers on both sides. Yeah. Well, that's my station there. That's my duty station there.

MC: OK. That's what I was asking. Where were you positioned? But was it the rear of this thing?

RD: Yeah.

MC: OK.

RD: Yeah, yeah. But anyway, see this landing ship medium is an oceangoing vessel, you know. And you haul in -- we only hauled supplies and stuff like that is what we --

MC: What kind of supplies?

RD: Well, it was food reefers and fuel, and we hauled those big -- I don't know. I forgot the name of them now. But anyways, it was just different kind of supplies.

MC: OK. Just day-to-day stuff?

RD: Pardon me?

MC: Just supplies you needed to fight the war.

RD: Yeah. And just lay them out on the beach, and unload them.

MC: Now, did you take any people ashore?

RD: Mm-hmm.

MC: OK. All supplies.

RD: I never did get off the ship. I didn't (inaudible) -- yeah.

MC: All right. From Pearl Harbor, you got assigned to this landing craft ship -- or landing ship medium.

RD: That's right.

MC: OK. LSM. OK.

RD: One seven one. Yeah.

MC: OK. When did you leave Pearl Harbor, and where did you go?

RD: OK. We were loaded -- well, those pontoons, that's what we were loaded with when I got on that ship. We were loaded with pontoons.

MC: Pontoon boats or just pontoons?

RD: No. They're just the flat pontoons that you construct bridges out of. Just that's --

MC: OK. I understand.

RD: -- what they were. Well, it could have been -- we was talking about January and February, and maybe it was March, I'm not real sure, of '45. Somewhere along there. And we were in a convoy. We made up a convoy, quite a number of different vessels or destroyers. Destroy (inaudible). Could have been a number of LSMs, some cargo ships, some APAs, AKAs. But anyway, it was a pretty good convoy that we were going on over -- farther over in the Pacific. And as you go on deeper into the Pacific there, the route we probably -- I'm thinking we were probably going to Saipan - - is where we were probably going. And would be my thinking then --

MC: Is the battle going on there then?

RD: Pardon me?

MC: Was the battle going on there?

RD: No, no. It already cleared everything at Saipan and Guam and in the Marianas. And I figure that's probably where we were headed. See, because they -- once everything was cleared at Saipan, that's where they constructed their airfields and stuff like that, see. So that's probably where we were heading. But somewhere on the route -- of course, you're on general quarters off and on. And you're rushing to get topside, not telling what time of the day or night it might be. Well, in the scramble to get topside somewhere out there in the Pacific, I ran into the hatch. Trying to get up on the (overlapping dialogue; inaudible). My general quarters station was up here on these 40s here, these twin 40s as a loader. And I ran into the hatch and busted a place on the head. Well, after some few days, I don't know how long it took it to get infected. But it got infected, and the side of my face swelled up and closed my eye.

MC: Did it put you in the hospital again?

RD: Well, yeah, they swung me over onto a hospital ship. They rigged up some kind of -- rigging on me, and pulled me --

MC: So, you went across between two ships?

RD: Yeah. (laughter)

MC: Swinging over the water.

RD: Yeah. (laughter) So --

MC: That must have been a pretty good ride.

RD: Well, yeah. So that over there on that -- that was a hospital ship that time. I don't know what number or name it was. But they put they put the penicillin to me, you know, and got that infection under control.

MC: How long did that take?

RD: Again, it was just a timeframe there that I don't recall how long it was. It probably wasn't all that long because it could have been that we -- I didn't get off that hospital ship before we got to Saipan. I'm not real sure about that -- on that part of it. But anyway, that was one of the deals that happened on --

MC: When you went you back to your regular, ship --

RD: I got back on my regular ship.

MC: You went back to 171.

RD: Yeah.

MC: Same old crew.

RD: Yeah, got back on that. And that -- yeah.

MC: I was just gonna ask you, now when you were on these things, did you have the same crew all the time?

RD: Pretty much, yeah.

MC: Same guys were on that? OK.

RD: Yeah, pretty much. Yeah, yeah. But as we moved back and forth picking up carrying here and there to those islands - - let me -- I've got a --

MC: Hold on. Let me pause. We're stop here for a [break in audio]. Now go with the recorder back on. And we're recording again. Just for the purpose of the -- let these guys who are gonna transcribe this know what we're doing. We are looking at a book, a map of the Pacific area. And he's gonna tell me where he went from Pearl Harbor, right?

RD: Yeah.

MC: OK.

RD: Here's Pearl here. Right here. So, we probably were all in this portion of the ocean (inaudible) in Pearl --

MC: And that would be the Marianas and --

RD: Yeah.

MC: -- and did you go to Iwo Jima?

RD: No. I did, but not on that particular run. We were going here to Saipan. See that's Saipan right there. But I could have gotten off of this hospital ship before we got to Saipan. See, there because that's Saipan down there on the map. And then, of course, after getting back on my ship, we came back down into these -- down through the Marianas, and back down to Eniwetok.

MC: Eniwetok.

RD: Mm-hm. We were picking up supplies and moving them one place to another. And then we moved on up toward Iwo Jima right there, and made a landing up there with some supplies.

MC: This was after the battle.

RD: Yeah, yeah. Iwo Jima was taken --

MC: OK. So, you were landing supplies for the airfields and the bombing.

RD: Whatever they wanted to stock up on.

MC: Right. Right.

RD: So --

MC: Now that was just your first trip. I mean, that was the --

RD: Well, probably we didn't move up to Iwo Jima right away. We probably moved back and forth between Eniwetok and some through the Marianas, you know. But then we moved on up to Iwo Jima. And then from there, we were in a convoy that was going on up to Okinawa. Here's Okinawa here. See here?

MC: Yeah, I see it.

RD: So, that's quite a way from Iwo Jima over to Okinawa. And I remember in going over toward Okinawa that we were -- there was quite a number of ships in the convoy. And we

got into -- well, there was typhoons that kind of separated us up. Whenever you get into a typhoon, you got to get away from one another.

MC: Were you on this thing?

RD: Yep. (laughter) Yep. Because when those waves are coming in at 50-foot high, you know --

MC: I'm surprised one of those things can handle something like that.

RD: Yeah. You have to strap yourself on your bunk. And so we had definitely had to kind of get away from one another on that convoy. And it kept pushing us. What you do, you just turn and head into that thing. You got to head into it. You can't go with it. You got to go into it and just try to hold your ground.

MC: Well, obviously since you're here today, you held your ground, right?

RD: Pardon me?

MC: I said, obviously since you are here today, you've held your ground pretty good.

RD: Yeah. Because we didn't want to be blown over closer to Japan than Okinawa, because it still hadn't got -- Okinawa was still going pretty strong, you know. But anyway, and we held our ground on trying to keep from getting blown to

where we didn't want to go. Then you get in the eye of thing, and it's real calm. And then you're waiting for the back part of it, you know, it what -- but anyway, after riding it out, we regrouped. I do remember one of the LSMs -- the center ship is ours -- of seeing it a time or two, and it had lost its bow doors. Now, how it managed to survive getting sunk, I don't know. See, those bow doors opened up like that, but that ramp is closed up -- and those bow doors.

MC: How in the world would they keep from getting sunk?

RD: The only thing I can see that kept it -- this ramp comes up and kind of sealed that well deck. It's got a well deck there.

MC: Yeah, but it wouldn't --

RD: (laughter) I don't know how it kept from getting swamped.
(inaudible)

MC: All right. So now, what time of year was this? Where were you when the war ended?

RD: This would have had to --

MC: Was this -- maybe back up to the first question. What period of time was this when you were in this area?

RD: In going up toward Okinawa and going to --

MC: And going all through there.

RD: Going to Okinawa?

MC: Yeah. Was that late '45?

RD: The war was over --

MC: In August.

RD: -- in -- well, in September of '45 was when the --

MC: The surrender was in September.

RD: -- the atomic bombs were dropped. We were there. When the atomic bombs were dropped, we were out at Okinawa.

MC: Wow, OK.

RD: Well, we had arrived -- I don't know, probably --

MC: By that time, the battle was over.

RD: Pardon me?

MC: By that time --

RD: No. We got there while they were still [shelling?]

Okinawa. And we got there on the closeout of the kamikaze planes. It was still -- occasionally, one or two of them would come on in. And so we were laying -- when we got there, we started laying smoke screens. We had smoke generators.

MC: This was in Okinawa.

RD: Mm-hmm. We started laying smoke screens to kind of obscure the view. The main barrage of the kamikaze planes had been prior to us getting there, you know, but there was still

that threat. And in fact, we were involved and happened to bring down one of the kamikaze planes. I saw that fall.

MC: This was fire from your ship?

RD: We were firing. I was loading on the 40s, and the 50s were firing and the 20s were firing from our ship. But there was also other fire coming from other vessels also. But --

MC: So, you actually got one.

RD: -- it was right there. I could see the plane very easily. It was just right there. And when it finally went down, you know, I -- it hit the water. I saw it hit the water, but I never did see -- know that the pilot survived. I'm sure he didn't. I'm sure he sunk with the plane, you know. But we got credit for -- or, sharing credit for --

MC: A shoot down.

RD: Yeah. No, I watched the shelling from the tower. Yeah, the gunning tower on that ship over on the land. Well, it's back here, the tower. But my duty station's back there, where I was a while ago. Yeah, from this here. Right here. I watched the shelling from there through my field glasses. You know, I could watch the big guns firing over us, and listen to all that noise. That maybe what's wrong with my hearing. I don't know.

MC: Could be. Could have an impact.

RD: Yeah, yeah. And that's where we were.

MC: OK. Now, you mentioned that you were at Okinawa when the big bomb was dropped. When the atomic bomb was dropped.

RD: Yeah.

MC: OK. Did you know what an atomic bomb was?

RD: Well, not immediately.

MC: OK. So, you didn't have any indications to what --

RD: No. I'm sure we learned it within just a very short period of time, you know.

MC: Right. Now, where were you when -- were you at Okinawa when the war ended?

RD: When the atomic bomb was dropped, we were at Okinawa.

MC: OK. And the war ended about a week or two later.

RD: Yeah. Yeah.

MC: OK. And that's where you were. What was the reaction amongst the troops?

RD: Well, that would have been in September, wouldn't it?

MC: Well, the surrender was September.

RD: Well, then we headed back to pick up the artillery and all from the island that we had bypassed. And so, I remember one of the first ones that we got back to -- I don't see it listed here, but it's somewhere between Okinawa and Iwo Jima. Truk. T-R-U-K. Truk Island.

MC: Truk Island, OK.

RD: Yeah. And they wasn't aware that the war was over. And I don't know how many ships was in the convoy we were with. But as we approached the island, it became evident that they didn't know that the war was over, you know. So, we had to wait a while. All they had was -- the communications were between the people that were letting them know that the war was over.

MC: Did they shoot at you?

RD: Pardon me?

MC: Were they shooting at you?

RD: They were firing off -- yeah, but none of our ships were hit. We just backed away.

MC: OK. Now, did you take these LSMs up and pick up their weapons? Did I read that?

RD: Once everything settled down, they got the word that the war was over, then we went on in and landed. And some of the ships -- some of the LSMs and other vessels had vehicles that hauled the weapons back to our ship and others, and then unload them. And we'd carried them out to sea and dump them in the ocean.

MC: OK. How long did that go on?

RD: Well, that part of it lasted for the rest of the time I was at different islands. Now, we made different islands, we didn't only make that one. We came on back into the Marianas there. Down in here. And we were making different islands, picking up weaponry and dumping them in the ocean. And then we went on down to the Solomons. We went on down --

MC: You went all over the South Pacific.

RD: Pardon me?

MC: You were all over the South Pacific.

RD: Oh yeah. We went on down to through the Solomons. Down here.

MC: OK. Wow.

RD: And picked up a bunch of stuff, and carried it out and dumped it in the ocean. We also was involved with the sinking some of the smaller oceangoing vessels like, well -
-

MC: Japanese vessels.

RD: Well, some of them were Americans. Most of them were American ships that we -- they didn't want to come back to the States. They were smaller-type vessels, but they were oceangoing vessels.

MC: All right. That's the first time I've heard that.

RD: And we just -- the crew would just take them out there, and we'd pick up the crew off of the ship, and back off out there and fire into it until we sank it. (laughter)

MC: OK. Now, this was obviously after war.

RD: Oh yeah.

MC: This was after the war.

RD: Yeah, yeah. See --

MC: Now, did I also get a note that said you went to Japan?

RD: Pardon me?

MC: Did you go to Japan?

RD: No. My son went to Japan.

MC: Oh, OK. But this was all after the war. How long did all this --

RD: Yeah. See, that's quite a journey from Okinawa back down through these islands. I don't know how long it took. I do that some went down in here. I had come across one LSM that had a school buddy of mine on it. And we were anchored there, and I got my field glasses and got to looking by my duty station up there. And I spotted his -- he was on a LSM too. I spotted his ship, and I got permission from my petty officer, and I guess he got permission from the OD that I could catch me one of them boats that was running back and forth to different places -

- smaller craft, just a small craft -- and go over to his ship, you know, which I did. And I got over there, well, he was on KP. And so then I -- he was peeling potatoes. So, I helped him finish peeling that sack of potatoes, I remember that very well. And then he got permission to -- we went over the on the island and just messed around, looked around. You know, that's what you normally do, you know. But anyway, one of those islands -- and it could have been with him -- there was a couple of guys that lived there on that island. And they lived there all through the Japanese occupation of it. And they real friendly guys.

MC: Were they planters?

RD: Pardon me?

MC: Were they planners?

RD: Well, they lived there. I don't know what --

MC: I've heard of some of the people who were on some of those islands --

RD: But the Japanese didn't -- you know, they didn't bother them, you know. But anyway, we visited with them there on the beach, and then we went back to our ship. But coming on down into the Solomons -- picking up that stuff -- you know, there's a lot of natives down there. And some of them looked to be cannibals. Cannibalistic-type people

too. (laughter) They'd have their skin carved up in different designs, and bones in their nose. (laughter) But we couldn't communicate with them.

MC: Nor would you want to, huh?

RD: Pardon me?

MC: You probably wouldn't want to anyway.

RD: No. Very seldom did I ever have to load anything. I don't know how I got out of it. I'd help unload it, but I'd be over there on the island with -- and that's where I was. Most of the islands, I'd go with them over on a truck. I might have helped them load something, may have not have. I don't know that the Japanese load up what they was gonna load up. And --

MC: Now, tell me something, how long were you over there after the war ended? When did you come home?

RD: I was discharged April 3rd. I left sometime -- we went back up -- I was gonna tell you. We went back up -- I don't know for what purpose -- but we went back up to Guam. And I don't know how many times I was at Guam, I don't know about that. But during one of those times -- and I think it was this trip back up to Guam from the Solomons -- that I took appendicitis.

MC: OK. That's three -- that's another hospital --

RD: And we didn't have a -- we had a medic, that's all we had.
And he pulled my -- packed my side, and I asked him -- we
was three days out of Guam. Wherever Guam is here.
Somewhere along there.

MC: Did you go another hospital ship?

RD: Yeah. No, it wasn't a hospital ship. I didn't get on a
ship that time. When I got to Guam, they unloaded me and
carried me up to a base, temporary base.

MC: Were you in pain?

RD: Guam.

MC: But were you in pain?

RD: Pardon me?

MC: Was this hurting? Your appendix.

RD: Well, once I got that side (overlapping dialogue;
inaudible) I wasn't. And they operated on me just as soon
as I got there.

MC: Now, was this in a tent hospital there?

RD: Mm-hmm. Tent hospital.

MC: So, you were in with other wounded?

RD: Yeah, yeah.

MC: OK. Wow.

RD: And then, of course --

MC: Now, when was that?

RD: That was probably about a couple of months or so before I was discharged, probably. So, I think I left --

MC: Now, did you recover on Guam in that tent?

RD: Mm-hmm. But I still got over that. I remember the next morning after the surgery, I laying down on that cot, and the Lieutenant -- the doctor came in. And said, how you doing, Davis? And I said, I'm doing OK, doc, but I just can't get up. And he said, oh yeah, you can get up. Said, here, let me help you. And he got my arm around my shoulder someway another. I raised up, and he helped me get off of that cot, and I was all over like that. And I went to the (inaudible) and came back, and took a few more steps. And he said, now, I want you to get up again today. And so I laid there, and I got up another time or two. And the next day is a little bit easier to get up, move. And probably about the fourth or fifth day -- maybe not that long -- but I was moving around pretty good, you know. Well, then started having me bringing chow to the other guys that wasn't doing so well, you know. And I don't know from what, some of them -- I guess from different things. I can't really tell you. I know they lost one of the guys that was right next to me there. They lost him; he didn't make it. But --

MC: Now, once you recovered from that, what did you do?

RD: Helped carry the lunches to the rest of them.

MC: OK. But I mean, when did you start coming back to the States?

RD: Well, that was probably, like I said, a couple of three months before I headed back to the States. So, if I headed back in March, which I did, that would have been in February, probably. Somewhere.

MC: OK. But this is about '45.

RD: Forty-five, yeah.

MC: OK. I'm confused. I was confused. So, '45, you were coming back.

RD: But anyway, I did that for a while. My ship, you know, like I said, it was moving around to different places because it wasn't going out of that harbor. I could see out there that it wasn't out there. You know, so I told the doctor there one day, I said, I believe I'm well enough. If I see my ship out there, can I get off here and get back on it? And he said, oh yeah. Said, if you see it out there, you just let us know when you head out there. So, I spotted it out there one day --

MC: Back to the 171?

RD: Yeah. And so back on it I go, you know. But anyway, finally, you know, that came to an end. And I guess I was -- I don't know whether we had moved back up to Saipan or just exactly where, but they put us on the USS Wakefield.

MC: Is that what you came home on?

RD: Yeah. Come back to the States on that. But like I say, I don't have all that good of memory of how the schedule went of making different places. You just knew you were going and coming.

MC: OK. When you came back to the States, where'd you come in at? Where'd you land at?

RD: San Francisco.

MC: San Francisco.

RD: Yep.

MC: And when did you get out of the Navy?

RD: On April the 3rd.

MC: Nineteen forty-five.

RD: Forty-six.

MC: Forty-six. Wait minute, you came in '45, though, and then you were in the Navy for another year?

RD: But leave in '45, yeah.

MC: All right. So, April 6th, '45 or '46.

RD: April of '46.

MC: Is when you were discharged.

RD: Discharged.

MC: OK.

RD: April of '46.

MC: All right.

RD: Yeah. April of '46.

MC: Now, hold on a minute there. OK. All right, I'm --

RD: At that time, you know, the segregation was still real strong. Even though we had a black shipmate on the ship, which his duty -- he had a duty station -- a general quarters station on the same gun that I was on. Right near me, you know. But anyway, he happened to be in that group that was discharged, and was sent back to the -- you know, we got back to the States together, and then we were coming on back to Texas. And somewhere on our route back to Texas, we -- of course, there was a group of us together. However, we got off this train to eat, I don't know, but we did somewhere along the line. And we went in to eat and he was with us, and they told him that he'd have to go around to the back, and go in back there --

MC: Now, was this in California?

RD: I don't recall just where it was.

MC: OK.

RD: And he couldn't eat in there with us. This was at some kind of eating place right near the railroad track. So, the rest of us just decided, well, if he can't eat in here, we can't either. So, we just went --

MC: Now, this guy had served with you all this time?

RD: Yeah. So, we just went around to where he had to go, and ate back there with him.

MC: Well, that says a lot for you guys.

RD: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, he was --

MC: That happened while you were on the troop train coming back to Texas.

RD: Coming home.

MC: But somewhere between California and Texas.

RD: Yeah.

MC: Oh, OK. Well, that's a good story.

RD: Yeah, yeah. And he was from Oklahoma. That's where he was from. And that's --

MC: And what did he do? He was a cook? Did you --

RD: Yeah.

MC: He was one of the cooks.

RD: They called them stewardess. Actually, he was not a cook. He just -- his duty was to keep the officers' quarters, and to -- I don't know, just whatever they asked of him to do,

that's what he did. You know, that was his duty. That was his duty. Like, my duty was on the signal towers -- flag deck on the signal tower. That's what my duty was. And his duty was to take care of the officers' quarters, and provide whatever services they needed. Getting their uniforms laid out and stuff like that, I suppose.

MC: OK. Where were you when you were discharged?

RD: Camp Wallace.

MC: Where?

RD: Near Houston. Near Houston.

MC: Oh, Houston. So, you came home, and then you got discharged here.

RD: Yeah. Yep. Got discharged there, called up the bus, and got to Houston. And then called another bus, and got to Trinity. And got a taxi, and brought me to Groveton. That's where my wife was living, so that's where I -- yeah.

MC: All right. So, you got home.

RD: Yep. (laughter)

MC: All right. Now, back up a minute. You were married before you went in?

RD: Mm-hmm.

MC: OK.

RD: Yeah.

MC: And when did these two come into the picture?

RD: Oh, she was born in '47. She was the first born at
(overlapping dialogue; inaudible) right after I got back.
The oldest daughter was three and a half -- two and a half
years older than you was.

F1: Mm-hm. She was born in '44.

RD: Yeah.

MC: OK.

RD: And then after her was my son. Where is that picture?

MC: Oh yeah. OK.

RD: (inaudible) he was the one that went to -- served in
Yokohama. Yeah, yeah.

MC: OK. Well, I think I'm that ought to do it. And I want to
once again say thank you for doing this, and thank you for
your service to your country.

END OF AUDIO FILE