

*National Museum of the Pacific War*

*Nimitz Education and Research Center*

*Fredericksburg, Texas*

Interview with

**Mr. Harry W. Borst, Sr.**

Date of Interview: April 1, 2019

# **National Museum of the Pacific War**

## **Fredericksburg, Texas**

### **Interview with Mr. Harry W. Borst, Sr.**

Interview in progress.

Ed Metzler: This is Ed Metzler, and today is April the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019. I am interviewing Mr. Harry Borst in Fredericksburg, Texas at the National Museum of the Pacific War. This interview is in support of the Center of Pacific War Studies, archives for the National Museum of the Pacific War, Texas Historical Commission, for the preservation of historical information related to this site.

So, let me thank you for spending the time today to share your World War II experiences with us, Harry. Let's start by having you introduce yourself. So, give us your full name and date of birth.

Mr. Borst: Okay. I'm Harry Walsh Borst, Sr. I was born December the 31<sup>st</sup>, 1924.

Ed Metzler: Well, they ... you just got in under the wire, didn't you (laughter) on that, a New Year's Eve baby!

Mr. Borst: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: So, let's see, twenty-four, so you are ninety ...

Mr. Borst: Ninety-four.

Ed Metzler: Ninety-four, and you'll be ninety-five at the end of the year.

Mr. Borst: The end of the year, this year.

Ed Metzler: Congratulations! (laughter)

Mr. Borst: Well, that's (laughter) ... I hope I'm not here.

Ed Metzler: Yeah (laughter), you'll be here!

Mr. Borst: Yeah, it just ...

Ed Metzler: You'll be here. Alright, well so, where were you born?

Mr. Borst: Turtle Creek, Pennsylvania.

Ed Metzler: Turtle Creek. So, is that eastern Pennsylvania?

Mr. Borst: Uh, no, it's in a ways, just this side of Pittsburgh.

Ed Metzler: Okay, so it's over on the western part of the state?

Mr. Borst: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: So, were you living in the country, in the city, what?

Mr. Borst: Uh, it was in town.

Ed Metzler: Okay, well you were living in a small town?

Mr. Borst: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: What did your dad do for a living?

Mr. Borst: He worked for Westinghouse.

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Borst: And I was maybe six or seven ... we moved to New Jersey 'cause Westinghouse (unintelligible) going on strike.

Ed Metzler: Uh huh.

Mr. Borst: So, they came back ... we came to New Jersey.

Ed Metzler: Okay. So, he worked what, in a Westinghouse factory or ...

Mr. Borst: The factories, yes.

Ed Metzler: So, I guess they're making electronic equipment, electrical motors and ...

Mr. Borst: I guess so.

Ed Metzler: ... and that kind of stuff. And your mother was a housewife/homemaker?

Mr. Borst: Uh hum.

Ed Metzler: I guess we can call them that.

Mr. Borst: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: And did you have brothers and sisters?

Mr. Borst: Have a sister and a brother.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum. Were you the eldest?

Mr. Borst: I'm the eldest, yes.

Ed Metzler: Okay. Alright. And so, did you go to public schools there?

Mr. Borst: I went to the public school, I guess, kindergarten and then we moved to New Jersey and I finished going to kindergarten in New Jersey (chuckles).

Ed Metzler: (Laughter)

Mr. Borst: And then ...

Ed Metzler: And tell me again why your parents moved to New Jersey.

Mr. Borst: Because of Westinghouse constantly closing down for so long, you know?

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Borst: For strikes and whatever.

Ed Metzler: There was a strike and ...

Mr. Borst: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: ... labor strikes and ...

Mr. Borst: Yeah, and my father ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Borst: ... tried to get away from that; he had a hard time.

Ed Metzler: But he was still with Westinghouse?

Mr. Borst: Well ...

Ed Metzler: When he went to New Jersey.

Mr. Borst: No, he quit.

Ed Metzler: He quit Westinghouse?

Mr. Borst: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: So, what did ... where ... who did he go to work for?

Mr. Borst: I don't know. I ... I was young, you know.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, you were only in kindergarten (chuckles).

Mr. Borst: Uhm, I think he worked in a ... in a tavern.

Ed Metzler: Oh okay!

Mr. Borst: And then, where we lived, a grocery store there.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Borst: The owner of the grocery store got my father to drive the truck 'cause he would go to the farmers' market and buy up all the stuff.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Borst: And then drop it off in different grocery stores.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum. So, you went to ... so, did you stay in New Jer ...

Mr. Borst: New Jersey.

Ed Metzler: ... did you grow up in New Jersey ...

Mr. Borst: Yes.

Ed Metzler: ... all through your ...

Mr. Borst: Yes, yeah.

Ed Metzler: ... formative years?

Mr. Borst: I stayed in New Jersey till I was ten years old.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Borst: And we went back to Pennsylvania, or to ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Borst: ... yeah.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Borst: And he went back to work for Westinghouse.

Ed Metzler: Oh he ...

Mr. Borst: Oh, he worked there for a year, went right back to New Jersey.

Ed Metzler: (Chuckles)

Mr. Borst: He ... when the war started, he worked for oh, god, I can't think of the company. It was a factory, and he worked his ... as a machinist of some kind.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum, uh hum. And was that in the same location in New Jersey as you were before?

Mr. Borst: Yeah, we came back, yeah, we came back to the same area.

Ed Metzler: Same area.

Mr. Borst: When we came back, we moved to Newark.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Borst: And ... and we moved one, two, three times; we were still in Newark.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Borst: And ... and that's when we went back to Pennsylvania; I went back to school there one year. We were back (laughter) in New Jersey again.

Ed Metzler: Boy, between Pennsylvania and New Jersey, you burned the roads up!

Mr. Borst: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: I see (chuckles), okay. So ...

Mr. Borst: (Unintelligible).

Ed Metzler: ... you went to high school, I mean, elementary school ...

Mr. Borst: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: ... and high school mostly in New Jersey.

Mr. Borst: Yes.

Ed Metzler: But every once in a while, in Pennsylvania.

Mr. Borst: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Yeah. And so ...

Mr. Borst: I went to kindergarten to uh, fifth grade, and from there you'd go into ... to the twelfth-grade school.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Borst: And ... there ... oh, they said I should go and take a vocational course.

Ed Metzler: So, let's see, if you were born in December of '24 ...

Mr. Borst: Uh hum.

Ed Metzler: ... then you were seven ... you were not quite seventeen when Pearl Harbor was attacked.

Mr. Borst: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Yes. You turned seventeen a few weeks afterwards.

Mr. Borst: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: So, you're still in high school.

Mr. Borst: Yeah, yeah.

Ed Metzler: So ... so, what ... what do you remember about how things changed after the war started and Pearl Harbor was attacked?

Mr. Borst: Well, I was interested in getting into the Navy; my parents weren't too anxious to sign for it.

Ed Metzler: Yeah?

Mr. Borst: So, I finally got their permission, and I enlisted in the Navy on December the 30th, 1942.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, you were just coming up on eighteen.

Mr. Borst: At (unintelligible) I enlisted the 31<sup>st</sup>, I became eighteen.

Ed Metzler: Right! But let's see, if you weren't eighteen, they had to sign for you, right?

Mr. Borst: Yeah. That's ...

Ed Metzler: So that ...

Mr. Borst: ... that's what held me back (laughter).

Ed Metzler: (Laughter), I get it (laughter).

Mr. Borst: Yeah, they had to sign it.

Ed Metzler: So, Mom and Dad didn't necessarily want you to go when you were seven ...

Mr. Borst: Mom didn't want me to go.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, it's all about Mom, that's the way it often is. Yeah, yeah.

Mr. Borst: And ... and ...

Ed Metzler: So, why the Navy?

Mr. Borst: I just thought I had ... my mother's brother was in the Navy, my father was in the Navy, and I always wanted to go in the Navy.

Ed Metzler: Makes sense.

Mr. Borst: Well, and of course, in the Boy Scouts I was always five-waver (?), signalman, and that's what I wanted to do when I went in the Navy when I signed the papers when you get ... says, "What you want?" And I says, "Signalman, signalman, signalman."

Ed Metzler: Your first three choices, huh (laughter)?

Mr. Borst: And that means a fire control (unintelligible).

Ed Metzler: Of course (chuckles). We're talking the military here, so ...

Mr. Borst: Yeah. Yeah, I proved them wrong.

Ed Metzler: You ... you worked your way around that though, didn't you?

Mr. Borst: Yes.

Ed Metzler: Tell me about that.

Mr. Borst: When I went in the Navy, seaman, deck force, and they had an opening for a baker. So, I went for that; I said, "Well, I'll see what happens and try baking for a while. Right after that was an opening for a ... a signalman. I switched right away and went ... went into signalman, and I went through it.

Ed Metzler: So, where did you do basic training?

Mr. Borst: Pardon?

Ed Metzler: Where did you do basic training?

Mr. Borst: In uhm, I was in Sam ... boot camp in Sampson, uh, upstate New York.

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Borst: And then from there, they sent me to Newport, Rhode Island, a fire control school, and I got my grade out of that. And from there they sent me to Boston, Fargo Building, and was waiting for the ship to be completed.

Ed Metzler: So, had you been assigned to DD-650 at that time?

Mr. Borst: Yeah, yeah.

Ed Metzler: Okay, so you knew that was going to be your ship? She just ...

Mr. Borst: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: ... wasn't ready yet?

Mr. Borst: No. It ... almost I think, I ... I may have spent a week at the most ...

Ed Metzler: Up hum.

Mr. Borst: ... up in Maine in the shipyard up there.

Ed Metzler: That's right; she was built in Bath probably.

Mr. Borst: Bath maybe.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Borst: I can't remember (unintelligible) was.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, yeah.

Mr. Borst: And we came from there back down to Boston 'cause the ship was finished. I got sea sick on the way down (chuckles).

Ed Metzler: (Laughter)

Mr. Borst: (Unintelligible).

Ed Metzler: Well, get it out of your system.

Mr. Borst: And I didn't go ... I didn't go on liberty force, so I didn't ... I wasn't drunk; I just got sick from (unintelligible).

Ed Metzler: You were sick (laughter).

Mr. Borst: Yeah (laughter).

Ed Metzler: So, what ... what did you ... what kind of ship did you ride down to that you got sea sick on?

Mr. Borst: The [USS] Caperton.

Ed Metzler: Oh, it was after you got ... when ...

Mr. Borst: Well, it was ... finished working on it up there.

Ed Metzler: Oh.

Mr. Borst: We ... you come down on the ship up there.

Ed Metzler: So, how did you feel about being on a destroyer? Does that ...

Mr. Borst: Fine.



Ed Metzler: ... that felt good to you?

Mr. Borst: Yeah. Not a whole lot of people.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Borst: Small group.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Borst: I can't name all the guys, but you know ...

Ed Metzler: Of course not.

Mr. Borst: ... you see them, and it was good.

Ed Metzler: So, what'd you think the first time you saw the Caperton?

Mr. Borst: Good, I felt good.

Ed Metzler: She looked like a worthy ship?

Mr. Borst: Oh yeah, no trouble.

Ed Metzler: She was Fletcher class, right?

Mr. Borst: Yes.

Ed Metzler: Right. And I guess launched in '43 I believe.

Mr. Borst: Uh hum.

Ed Metzler: So, you were aboard how long before she was launched or had she already been launched when you joined her?

Mr. Borst: No, I was there for the (pause) ... commissioning or ...

Ed Metzler: Commissioning, yes.

Mr. Borst: Yeah, and right after that, we took our shakedown cruise down to Bermuda. I was sick from the time we left till I could see Bermuda (laughter) on the horizon.

Ed Metzler: (Chuckle)

Mr. Borst: But on the way back, no problem. I never got sick again.

Ed Metzler: I guess you just have to get your sea legs.

Mr. Borst: Yeah, yeah.

Ed Metzler: Hum!

Mr. Borst: It's something. I used to play tricks on some of them.

Ed Metzler: Like what?

Mr. Borst: Well, when we were at sea, once in a while we'd take on new ... new crew members, and they were young kids like me. When I went through bakers, I (unintelligible) became quite friendly with all the cooks and bakers in here. You get these new fellows that come aboard ship, and they would come up on the bridge to stand watch, and I'd go down in the bakery and I'd ask them for a nice big piece of fat with a little bit of meat (laughter).

Ed Metzler: (Chuckles)

Mr. Borst: And ... and I'd be short on the meat and they'd say, "What's that?" "I think it's ham." "Oh, I'd like some of that." "Here, take a bite."

Ed Metzler: And they got ...

Mr. Borst: I'd give them the fat and ...

Ed Metzler: Yeah, and then ... and then they'd get sick, yeah (laughter).

Mr. Borst: (Laughter), well, you got to have some fun (laughter).

Ed Metzler: Well, that's right, you've got to smile through all of this.

Mr. Borst: (Laughter)

Ed Metzler: Absolutely right. So, the Caperton, after she was commissioned, she went on a shakedown cruise to Bermuda?

Mr. Borst: To Bermuda, yeah.

Ed Metzler: And that's when you got your sea legs.

Mr. Borst: Yep.

Ed Metzler: So, then she came ... what? Back to the States?

Mr. Borst: Back to Boston, back up to Boston.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Borst: We stayed there a short time, and from there, we were in Pearl Harbor and Tarawa.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Borst: And we had to wait; they was going to organize the fleet.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum. So, you've got to go down through the Caribbean, through the Panama Canal ...

Mr. Borst: Yep.

Ed Metzler: ... across half of the Pacific Ocean ...

Mr. Borst: Yep.

Ed Metzler: ... just to get to Pearl Harbor.

Mr. Borst: Yep.

Ed Metzler: So, tell me about that little part of the cruise. Was that memorable or anything you ...

Mr. Borst: Just anxious.

Ed Metzler: Anxious?

Mr. Borst: To ... to get anywhere, everything's happening.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, you wanted to get into the action.

Mr. Borst: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Is that the way everybody else felt on ... aboard ship?

Mr. Borst: Most of it, yes.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, yeah? Now, when you went down to the Panama Canal, was she going alone or did she have other ships with her?

Mr. Borst: Uh ...

Ed Metzler: Do you remember?

Mr. Borst: I think we went alone.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum. Well, usually a destroyer can take care of themselves, so ...

Mr. Borst: Yeah. I'd have to look in the papers I have.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Borst: When we had ... group ... there was going to be four tin cans, would be one group.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Borst: I think it was ... I've been trying to think of all the names.

Ed Metzler: So, I'm looking here and ...

Mr. Borst: I know, one was the [USS] Knap, K-n-a-p [s/b Knapp?].

Ed Metzler: Uh huh.

Mr. Borst: One was the [USS] Ingersoll, and the name [USS] Bremerton comes up, but I don't know whether that was one of the others.

Ed Metzler: But they all ... so they were all destroyers?

Mr. Borst: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: All tin cans, huh?

Mr. Borst: That, yeah, there was four tin cans in this group.

Ed Metzler: What was it like going through the Panama Canal?

Mr. Borst: Terrific.

Ed Metzler: Really?

Mr. Borst: (Laughter), yeah.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, I'll bet that was a sight!

Mr. Borst: Yep. And we stopped on the east coast side, and then I guess the next day, we went through the locks.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Borst: That was interesting. I think ... at that time, some of the natives come out in row boats and that and they even had fruit and (unintelligible).

Ed Metzler: Yeah, stuff for sale, huh?

Mr. Borst: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Baskets and fruit and ...

Mr. Borst: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Did you buy anything?

Mr. Borst: Probably.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter)

Mr. Borst: (Chuckles)

Ed Metzler: But you didn't get shore liberty, huh?

Mr. Borst: Not, not in the east. When we went on the west coast side, we got liberty there. But when you come back, you had to take, in case, you had (unintelligible) in some of the houses there.

Ed Metzler: Yeah?

Mr. Borst: I didn't.

Ed Metzler: Yeah?

Mr. Borst: And I was p.o.'d because I had to take it anyway (laughter).

Ed Metzler: So, they made you take pills, did they, for ... for ...

Mr. Borst: (Unintelligible) right in.

Ed Metzler: Potential diseases (laughter).

Mr. Borst: (Chuckles), yeah.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, well you got all the ...

Mr. Borst: (Unintelligible) and after that ... then after that, they ... we went through Tarawa, and we (unintelligible) figure eights outside the island.

Ed Metzler: Now, did you go to Pearl Harbor first or did you go straight to Tarawa?

Mr. Borst: No, we went through Pearl Harbor first.

Ed Metzler: What do you remember about Pearl Harbor? Was there any damage still obvious from the attack?

Mr. Borst: No, not too much.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Borst: I don't remember too much about Pearl Harbor.

Ed Metzler: So, you must not have stayed there very long and then you headed out.

Mr. Borst: No, no.

Ed Metzler: So, first stop was Tarawa?

Mr. Borst: Uh hum.

Ed Metzler: And I think you were telling me earlier that Tarawa had been secured.

Mr. Borst: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: So, tell me ... tell me what the Caperton did and what you did down there?

Mr. Borst: When we got there, like I say, we did the figure eights outside the island. And in case of aircraft coming in, protected the islands, right, shoot them down.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Borst: I don't think we got any ships that knocked down there.

Ed Metzler: So, did you see any enemy aircraft at Tarawa?

Mr. Borst: No, not too much, no.

Ed Metzler: So, thing were pretty calm there then?

Mr. Borst: Yeah, yeah it was pretty much so. I guess the Japanese was a little shocked because the other islands, you always had trouble afterwards.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Borst: They would send planes in at night.

Ed Metzler: Now, after Tarawa, did you go ... what was the next step in your experience?

Mr. Borst: (Pause), I guess it was the Marshall Islands. I can't ... like I say, they printed papers up and I ... (unintelligible) back.

Ed Metzler: Yeah. That's fine. Yeah, I'm just looking at the notes here with regard to the Caperton, and it said that you delivered explosives to Funafuti?

Mr. Borst: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: In the Ellice Islands?

Mr. Borst: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: That's hard to pronounce, isn't it? Funafuti.

Mr. Borst: Funafuti.

Ed Metzler: And then covered the Gilbert Islands.

Mr. Borst: Uh hum.

Ed Metzler: And then joined the fast carrier task force which ...

Mr. Borst: I thought we ... we met up with the task force at Tarawa.

Ed Metzler: Oh, you did!

Mr. Borst: And then we continued on from there.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Borst: But that's (unintelligible). I don't know whether it was the Third Fleet or the Fifth 'cause he ... he jockeyed (?) with them.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Borst: It was the [USS Enterprise], ole Bull Halsey.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Borst: And ...

Ed Metzler: So, Bull Halsey was your ... was your admiral, huh?

Mr. Borst: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Did you ever actually see him?

Mr. Borst: No.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter)

Mr. Borst: And I think ... I think the reason ... at New Jersey was where the ships come out with (unintelligible).

Ed Metzler: So ...

Mr. Borst: It was in [USS New] Jersey and the [USS] Washington.

Ed Metzler: Battleships.

Mr. Borst: Yep. And (pause) ... what other (pause).

Ed Metzler: Yeah, so you were actually ...

Mr. Borst: The [USS] Princeton was one carrier.

Ed Metzler: Okay, so that'd be a cruiser.

Mr. Borst: That's a cruiser?

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Borst: Or ... no, it was the Princeton. Uh, oh, it's a lot of years.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, I know. So, let me ... let me ask you a question. What was your duty station on the Caperton?

Mr. Borst: When I first came aboard?

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Borst: Just a seaman.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Borst: Deck force.

Ed Metzler: So, you scrubbed decks and ...

Mr. Borst: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: ... did whatever they told you to do?

Mr. Borst: Yeah, yep. And then ...

Ed Metzler: And what about battle ... what about battle station? What ... where did ...

Mr. Borst: Battle stations? I handed the ammunition to the men that was firing them, forty-five millimeter.

Ed Metzler: Alright. So, you're ammunition handler.

Mr. Borst: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: On the forty-five millimeters?

Mr. Borst: Yep.

Ed Metzler: So, if you're doing anti-aircraft, then you're going to be busy.

Mr. Borst: Yeah (chuckles).

Ed Metzler: (Laughter)

Mr. Borst: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: So, on the forty-five millimeter, the ... the ammunition comes in a set of ...

Mr. Borst: Yeah, you ... in ... like ...

Ed Metzler: ... like a half a dozen or something (unintelligible) ...

Mr. Borst: ... rack, yeah, and hand the rack up to them.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Borst: And put it in the ... the position to fire.

Ed Metzler: So, were you on the ... on the stern forty-five millimeter or bow or ...

Mr. Borst: No, right in front of the bridge.

Ed Metzler: Right underneath the bridge?

Mr. Borst: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: So, you're right in the heat of battle.

Mr. Borst: Or on the starboard side.

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Borst: And ...

Ed Metzler: So, who was your uh, your officer that you reported to? You reported to what, the chief executive officer or ...

Mr. Borst: No, I think it was a junior officer.

Ed Metzler: A junior officer of some sort?

Mr. Borst: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Was he a good guy?

Mr. Borst: Yeah, he didn't treat us much ...

Ed Metzler: Treat you all fine?

Mr. Borst: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Let you do what you had to do?

Mr. Borst: Yep. And like I say, I wasn't ... I wasn't on that that long. I (pause) got to be like a mess boy for the chief petty officers – make sure they had their meals and everything, kept their quarters clean; they were a good bunch. That was only for a short time. And then, for some reason, they put me down in the fire control, and that's all ... I'm not too bright for that. You're below decks for one thing.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.



Mr. Borst: And I says, "I didn't make out at the school, so I didn't want to be in here; put some place else."

Ed Metzler: So, did they?

Mr. Borst: Yeah, they got me out of there. I ... I guess I went back on the deck force.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Borst: And then an opening came for a baker striker; I applied for that and I got it, but I only had another short time. And finally, there was an opening on the bridge for a signalman.

Ed Metzler: Yes, finally a signalman!

Mr. Borst: Yeah (laughter), so, that's where I went and what I got.

Ed Metzler: So, you ... you held several positions?

Mr. Borst: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: So, the ... after you ... after the Caperton joined the fast ...

Mr. Borst: Fleet.

Ed Metzler: ... the task force, fast fleet task forces, where did she go at this time? Where ... where did you guys end up going?

Mr. Borst: I guess we went straight from the ... for the Tarawa assignment to patrol outside. And so, the fleet was going to organize.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum. And I'm just looking here. It says that the invasion of the Emirau Islands that you guys supported that and ...

Mr. Borst: Marshall.

Ed Metzler: I ... yeah, and the Palau, Yap ...

Mr. Borst: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: ... Ulithi ...

Mr. Borst: Peleliu.

Ed Metzler: ... yes, and then Peleliu and, I'm always amazed at how the Caperton got around. I mean, you guys were in the action everywhere.

Mr. Borst: Yeah, yeah. Like I say, we made every action from Tarawa to Japan, Yokohama. But (pause) one time, you know, we got liberty. We came back to the States and we had liberty and that and then back out again. So, we missed one island of all the groups.

Ed Metzler: Iwo?

Mr. Borst: No, we were at Iwo.

Ed Metzler: You were at Iwo?

Mr. Borst: Yeah, it was all outside Iwo.

Ed Metzler: You guys were everywhere! She as she came ...

Mr. Borst: Kwajalein.

Ed Metzler: Kwajalein, yeah.

Mr. Borst: Uh, (pause) ...

Ed Metzler: And there was the Battle of the Philippine Sea.

Mr. Borst: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: You were there.

Mr. Borst: Yeah. When ... when we would go ... the fleet would go into ... anti-aircraft ... aircraft carriers in position, they could launch planes and bomb whatever islands they were going to go to. We would go in towards land more (unintelligible) we'd go there, and you ... planes got shot down, we would pick up the ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Borst: ... pilots and that.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum

Mr. Borst: We did that a couple of times. One time we brought the ... the pilot back and he says ... it was a ... some kind of tanker or, not a tanker, but a freighter or something in the harbor, says that it is an easy target. And we went after it. It's funny because we kept going in and drop, you know, shoot the five millimeter, turn around and come back and load again, and they were firing back at us.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Borst: But their shots were short.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Borst: And one time, they went a little bit further than us (laughter), and the captain said, "Let's get the hell out of here," and so we (laughter) pulled back further. And one of the pilots said that we did sink it, but I ... I never ... can't honestly say yeah. I'd have to look at my records, but I don't know whether we were

credited with sinking the ship. I know we had all the airplanes. I think we did eleven of them.

Ed Metzler: Eleven aircraft?

Mr. Borst: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Did any of those ... credited to your battery?

Mr. Borst: Yeah! We had the numbers all on there.

Ed Metzler: Yeah? Yeah, yeah.

Mr. Borst: And so, I know that's ... that's (unintelligible). But the [USS] Houston, that was a cruiser ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Borst: ... it was damaged and was being towed back to Pearl Harbor.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Borst: We were assigned to that as protection.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Borst: I was up on the bridge on my watch and I seen the airplane, Jap airplane coming behind the Houston. I saw him drop the fish, I watched the fish go right into the back of the Houston, lifted it up and sat it down; it didn't sink it.

Ed Metzler: Is that right?!

Mr. Borst: (Chuckle)

Ed Metzler: So, you were an eyewitness account to that!

Mr. Borst: Oh yeah!

Ed Metzler: Yeah!

Mr. Borst: I ... I have that written down; I put the date and everything.

Ed Metzler: So, they continued to tow the Houston back to ...

Mr. Borst: Yeah, Pearl Harbor.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Borst: That was the second Houston.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, the first one was sunk quite thoroughly.

Mr. Borst: Yeah, yeah.

Ed Metzler: At Coral Sea, I think.

Mr. Borst: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Borst: Before my time (laughter).

Ed Metzler: Yeah, right (laughter).

Mr. Borst: It's strange (unintelligible) got attacked by airplanes and they would go along going for the bigger ships trying to get past us; we were on the other.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, you were on picket duty.

Mr. Borst: And ...

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Borst: ... you'd see the Japs in the plane (laughter), you could see them and everything. We shot a few down.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, in fact, later on the ... the destroyers became primary targets for the kamikaze like in Okinawa.

Mr. Borst: Yes, that's right.

Ed Metzler: So, we're working our way to that part of the story.

Mr. Borst: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: But I don't want to jump ahead just yet. The ... the Caperton went back all the way to the States for repair or did ...

Mr. Borst: No, it was just, I guess, general maintenance and that and ...

Ed Metzler: But back stateside or ...

Mr. Borst: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: ... just to Pearl or ...

Mr. Borst: Yeah, stateside. I think it was stateside.

Ed Metzler: So, it was ...

Mr. Borst: Uh, no, I went home. I ... I flew home 'cause you take the train, it takes five, six days.

Ed Metzler: That's right 'cause your home is way on the east coast.

Mr. Borst: Yeah, and ... and all the meals (unintelligible), "To hell with that, I'm going to see if I can go by plane (chuckles). I flew home and flew back.

Ed Metzler: So, flew home on what, a military aircraft of some sort?

Mr. Borst: No, it was a commercial.

Ed Metzler: A commercial flight?

Mr. Borst: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Hum!

Mr. Borst: I paid.

Ed Metzler: You paid good money for that!

Mr. Borst: (Chuckles), yeah.

Ed Metzler: So, was it good to see the family?

Mr. Borst: Yep.

Ed Metzler: They were glad to see you, I guess.

Mr. Borst: Yeah, and I guess that's when I met my wife to be.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum. So, how many days did you get before you had to go back?

Mr. Borst: I think ten.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, that's ... that's not much (laughter), is it? So ...

Mr. Borst: (Unintelligible) to Boston.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Borst: For general repairs and that.

Ed Metzler: Oh ...

Mr. Borst: And ...

Ed Metzler: So, she went through the ... back through the canal then, huh?

Mr. Borst: Yep.

Ed Metzler: Okay. And so, then general repairs and maintenance?

Mr. Borst: Yeah, yeah.

Ed Metzler: And back aboard ship and then back to the Pacific?

Mr. Borst: Yep. Yeah. I don't know which island it was that we missed.

Ed Metzler: Well, I know you hit a lot more than you missed!

Mr. Borst: (Laughter), yes.

Ed Metzler: So, did you ... how ... the Caperton involved in the Battle of Leyte Gulf? Was she or ... or was ... says here that you screened Task ... Task Force 38 in the air strikes.

Mr. Borst: Uh hum.

Ed Metzler: ... at the Battle of Leyte Gulf.

Mr. Borst: Yep.

Ed Metzler: Says here that strikes flown from the carriers of the Caperton's group inflicted the final losses on the Japanese central force.

Mr. Borst: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: So, did you actually see Japanese surface vessels at any time?

Mr. Borst: Oh yeah.

Ed Metzler: Tell me about that.

Mr. Borst: They were (unintelligible) ... (pause) we fired at them, but we didn't sink ... we didn't sink any of them. They ... they turned and left; they figured they were going to ...

Ed Metzler: Yeah, my recollection is in the Battle of Leyte Gulf, they turned around and left ...

Mr. Borst: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: ... because they thought ...

Mr. Borst: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: ... it was a much bigger ...

Mr. Borst: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: U.S. Navy force ...

Mr. Borst: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: ... than there really was.

Mr. Borst: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Now, what about typhoons? Did ... did your ...

Mr. Borst: Yeah, we had more and terrific storms.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, and that's tough on destroyers.

Mr. Borst: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Tell me about that.

Mr. Borst: It was ... we were going to fuel the next day, so they ... the bigger ships fueled up first. The tin cans (chuckles) I hope had enough fuel to keep up until the next day. But while they were fueling at sea that day, the larger ships, finally they stopped the refueling and says well ... started to get the next day ... I knew we were cruising along for a while and I happened to be on watch up on the bridge, and I heard one of the destroyer's captains call over to (unintelligible),

“Could you cut the speed a little bit? We’re running out of fuel.” He said, “You’ll just have to keep up.” And during the night, they let us fuel and they lost steering and over they went.

Ed Metzler: That’s right ‘cause that ... that fuel is ballasted. And so with empty fuel tanks ...

Mr. Borst: Yep.

Ed Metzler: ... she’s not as stable.

Mr. Borst: Yep. I probably ... probably had the name of the destroyers in the squadron or whatever it was in my files, but I can’t remember off hand.

Ed Metzler: So ...

Mr. Borst: But that was ... that was ...

Ed Metzler: ... Admiral Halsey didn’t have a lot of sympathy for the ... the tin can that couldn’t keep up because it was running out of fuel?

Mr. Borst: Yeah. When we came back to the States, it was uh, the wintertime, and they were having a football game at the stadium; Admiral Halsey was there. I can’t remember ... Admiral Halsey ... that was after the storm.

Ed Metzler: Yeah? So, which football game was this?

Mr. Borst: I ... I don’t know ... college.

Ed Metzler: Back in the States?

Mr. Borst: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: So, were you there, too?

Mr. Borst: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Did you go up to him?

Mr. Borst: No!

Ed Metzler: (Laughter)

Mr. Borst: I’d been put in lock-up (chuckles).

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Borst: But that’s fortunes of war. But it’s something. When we refueled at sea, we’d always ... also get mail.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Borst: And they’d give the mail to the destroyers and then the destroyers would go running and drop it off to the different ships in the fleet. And one time, I forget

which ... which cruiser it was, you only tied one end of the rope on one ship; the other one you'd leave room to go 'cause (chuckles) you can't just go straight. And the mail ... and the rope broke and the mail bags went in the drink.

Ed Metzler: Oh no!

Mr. Borst: So, they says we have to pick them up. So, they took the whale boat and a signalman.

Ed Metzler: (Chuckles), which was you!

Mr. Borst: I volunteered, and I went and was ... (unintelligible) 'cause when you're in that whale boat in the sea, you're up and down. You really can't see too good. And they ... they would tell us which way to go to pick up the next bag.

Ed Metzler: So, you got most of it back?

Mr. Borst: Yep, and ...

Ed Metzler: But it was ...

Mr. Borst: ... it was (unintelligible), and we dropped it off at the other ships.

Ed Metzler: Slightly damp, but still (chuckles).

Mr. Borst: Was in a mail bag, but ...

Ed Metzler: Did you get letters from home?

Mr. Borst: Oh yeah, we got ... whenever mail came, we had ... we had letters from home.

Ed Metzler: And did you write letters home like a good boy?

Mr. Borst: Yeah, yep.

Ed Metzler: Did you ever hear Tokyo Rose on the radio?

Mr. Borst: Wow! Yes, she was on the radio all the time.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter)

Mr. Borst: What were we talking about?

Ed Metzler: Always wondered how she ...

Mr. Borst: She ... the stories she would come up with, you know? "We know where you are, and we're going to get you, yeah (chuckle)."

Ed Metzler: Always wondered how she knew as much as she did.

Mr. Borst: Yeah. It was always a little interesting, but most of it was a lot of bull.

Ed Metzler: Yeah (laughter). Yeah, yeah, I think that's probably right. So, did the Caperton go at all to the Philippines?



Mr. Borst: Yeah! We ... was on that also.

Ed Metzler: So, I know ... I know you were part of the Leyte ...

Mr. Borst: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: ... action, but what about on Luzon or Manila or any of that? Were you ...

Mr. Borst: I remember many (unintelligible) ... (pause). I know ...

Ed Metzler: So, tell me about Iwo Jima. You said ... you said the Caperton was there.

Mr. Borst: Yeah. You know, patrolling around ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Borst: ... outside. You didn't ... see, the ... the fleet would go in close where ... where the islands they were going to invade and planes would go over and bomb it and everything. And we ... destroyers were watching for Japanese aircraft, and ... and (pause) but I didn't see them raise the flag on Iwo Jima.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Borst: But we just know that this is what they did ... (unintelligible).

Ed Metzler: Well, there was a thousand ships there (chuckles), so ...

Mr. Borst: Yeah. I think (unintelligible) or something like that.

Ed Metzler: So, the ...

Mr. Borst: We ... we didn't go ... we went on the island of the Philippines, I don't know where, but part of it. But we ... we'd go ... but they had uh, iron gates like this. (Unintelligible) hands would be on one side, we were on the other; you didn't get to go in.

Ed Metzler: You didn't actually get to ...

Mr. Borst: Yeah, yeah.

Ed Metzler: Did you ever go to, uh, like an R&R, recreation and ...

Mr. Borst: No.

Ed Metzler: ... and rest? You never got a break except for that trip back to the States, huh?

Mr. Borst: Yeah, that was it. And you (unintelligible) we got on the islands for like liberty.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Borst: You could go on the island and you could drink some beer, come back. I know we visited Eniwetok, Okinawa (pause) uh, but most of the islands you ... you just stayed on your ship and that was it.

Ed Metzler: There really wasn't a lot of island left in some of those after you guys got through with it.

Mr. Borst: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: So, tell me about Okinawa. You ... Caperton had, I guess, picket ... what they call picket duty.

Mr. Borst: Yeah, yeah. It was like any other patrol, and kept watch and when planes were coming, you try to knock them down, try to protect the other ships.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Borst: I know one of the islands we went to, you know, the battleships (unintelligible) they'd fired over us.

Ed Metzler: Yep.

Mr. Borst: And the [USS] Washington fired one time, and one of the fellows on ... on our ship, he got a little bit of shrapnel, nothing real serious. He ... they took care of him on the ship and he recovered and that was it. And ...

Ed Metzler: So, the kamikaze was particularly rough ...

Mr. Borst: Yes!

Ed Metzler: ... in Okinawa.

Mr. Borst: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Tell me ...

Mr. Borst: It was ... when they finally took Okinawa, the fleet anchored in ... in the harbor there.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Borst: Destroyers were about to go outside of the circle and look for anti-aircraft coming in from Japan. The ... we were on (unintelligible) one day, and we ... we had some kind of trouble, and he sent another destroyer out to take our place before we got into the harbor.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Borst: That tin can was sunk.

Ed Metzler: By a kamikaze?

Mr. Borst: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Whoa!

Mr. Borst: And that was ... that was about it.

Ed Metzler: So, you were fortunate enough not to have a direct attack on your ship?

Mr. Borst: Oh, we shot the plane down (laughter).

Ed Metzler: (Laughter), they never got there, huh, yeah (laughter). Wow. So, in between combat, what did you guys do aboard ship to pass the time? There was always something to do or did you play a little poker or ...

Mr. Borst: Oh, there was always a card game going on.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter)

Mr. Borst: And they always had coffee in the mess hall in the big ...

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Borst: ... we would go down there uh, I didn't do too much. I didn't play cards.

Ed Metzler: Well, that's the reason why you had some money left at the end (chuckles).

Mr. Borst: I ... yeah, I ... I didn't waste my money (chuckles).

Ed Metzler: Did you smoke at the time?

Mr. Borst: Oh yeah!

Ed Metzler: Everybody did, huh?

Mr. Borst: Yeah, fifty cents a carton.

Ed Metzler: Man!

Mr. Borst: Six dollars (unintelligible).

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Borst: I quit smoking just before I turned fifty.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Borst: I'm Catholic.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Borst: So, Lent, I would give up cigarettes.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Borst: 'Cause (unintelligible) pipe also, but I didn't take any tobacco at all, all during Lent. The first time I did it, Easter Sunday I come out from Mass, went and got the paper and I looked at the shelf, "Ah, give me a pack of cigarettes." The second year when I gave up cigarettes, I gave them up for good.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Borst: I didn't have to take any pills or any of that.

Ed Metzler: Go ... go to any courses ...

Mr. Borst: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: ... or anything.

Mr. Borst: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: How was the food aboard ship?

Mr. Borst: I'm a fussy eater.

Ed Metzler: Yeah?

Mr. Borst: I don't eat no catchup, no mayonnaise, no mustard (chuckle); I don't like stuff all mixed up.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Borst: It was a little rough (chuckles).

Ed Metzler: (Laughter)

Mr. Borst: But the food was good. The ... the cooks knew what they were doing.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Borst: One time when we took fuel, uh, took ... was taking fuel on, they also would bring out uh, food supplies, you know? And a lot of food supplies somehow didn't get down into the storage room.

Ed Metzler: Amazing! How that works.

Mr. Borst: The rope would go off the ... the bridge (chuckle), pull up, put it in the (unintelligible) bag (chuckles).

Ed Metzler: (Chuckles)

Mr. Borst: But there was so much missing that the captain gave strict orders he wanted it back and *now* (laughter)! So, most of it got back to him.

Ed Metzler: It showed back up, huh?

Mr. Borst: Yeah (chuckles).

Ed Metzler: I've heard stories that the larger ships in the fleet had ice cream.

Mr. Borst: Oh yeah!

Ed Metzler: But the ... the destroyers, being smaller ships, didn't have ice cream.

Mr. Borst: When we would deliver the mail to the different ships, you know, it ... you'd say, "Gee thanks, uh, never mind thanks, how about some of that ice cream?" And they ... they would send some over.

Ed Metzler: Yeah?

Mr. Borst: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: (Chuckles)

Mr. Borst: You don't really have much ice cream.

Ed Metzler: So, the Caperton survived Okinawa?

Mr. Borst: Yep.

Ed Metzler: Although, you had a close call there because the ship that took your place in line, got sunk, right?

Mr. Borst: Yeah, I ... I think it was there. I know it was one of the islands.

Ed Metzler: So, Okinawa is getting towards the end of the war.

Mr. Borst: Yeah, yep.

Ed Metzler: So, do you remember when the ... when they dropped the bombs on, the atomic bombs? I guess you guys heard about that.

Mr. Borst: Yeah. We seen them take off. We knew when they did the damage. We ... when we finally ended the war, it was in Yokohama we was given liberty and some of the places was really *destroyed!*

Ed Metzler: So, I guess when you heard that the atomic bomb that ...

Mr. Borst: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: ... of course, nobody knew what an atomic bomb was.

Mr. Borst: No, no.

Ed Metzler: But when they heard that, that the war was probably getting ready to be over.

Mr. Borst: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: So, soon after that Japan surrendered.

Mr. Borst: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Did you have a little bit of a celebration aboard ship?

Mr. Borst: Oh yeah, we were all screaming and hollering.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter)

Mr. Borst: When ... when they were going to sign the peace treaty ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Borst: ... we were out in the harbor a ways, and through the long glass, you could see; you couldn't tell who they were, but you could see different Japanese all dressed and that, and signing the papers.

Ed Metzler: So, through a ...

Mr. Borst: At that time ...

Ed Metzler: Okay, go ahead.

Mr. Borst: ... when ... when the war ended, we were in Yokohama for a while. They sent some of us, some of the crews to different islands around Japan, and we'd go there. We'd send a crew on a whale boat, maybe six or seven, they'd go ashore and they'd see if there was any guns or anything, you know, that they could use ... cause damage.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Borst: And we'd take all that. They used to have speed boats. The front end of this speed boat, (unintelligible) dynamite.

Ed Metzler: Really?!

Mr. Borst: We ... if we had to go and really invade Japan, we'd would have had one hell of a time 'cause you had all those islands, had all these speed boats, and they, talk about kamikaze, (chuckles) ...

Ed Metzler: Kamikaze boats!

Mr. Borst: Yeah, that ... that would have been it, too. You just took them out in the harbor, punched holes in the bottom and sank them.

Ed Metzler: Wow!

Mr. Borst: I ... I went ashore for communication ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Borst: ... between the ... the beach crews and ... and the ship, and you'd be on watch and Japs would come up in the mornings, they had their catch of fish and you'd cook fish, and they'd give you fish.

Ed Metzler: Was that in the Yokohama area?

Mr. Borst: Yeah, yep. I don't know the names of the persons.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Borst: But that ... that's what they did.

Ed Metzler: How did the Japanese act towards you Americans?

Mr. Borst: (Unintelligible) no hostile ... hostilities; they ... they accepted their defeat.

Ed Metzler: Yep! What do you think about the Japanese?

Mr. Borst: Uh, I really didn't have too much contact with them except in the islands and that.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Borst: But they were always, you know, friendly, didn't back away from you or anything.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Borst: They ... they had their, I don't ... their swimming pools or bath houses. You could go in and go in swimming and that's it.

Ed Metzler: So, did they have enough food? I mean, did they look starving or ...

Mr. Borst: (Unintelligible). They'd be working in the fields and they had to use the toilet, that was right where they planted everything

Ed Metzler: That was the toilet, yeah. So, Tokyo was in pretty bad shape, huh?

Mr. Borst: Yeah, yep.

Ed Metzler: Did you ever see any prisoners of war, American or Japanese?

Mr. Borst: Yeah, we got ... we picked up a couple of Japanese, and they didn't want to keep them too long, and they were ... they were happy being aboard ship. They figured it was going to be a lot of trouble if these sailors would try and give them a problem, you know, and kill a couple of them or something. They run them off the ship as fast as they could get them.

Ed Metzler: Where ...

Mr. Borst: Take them off the destroyer, put them on a battleship (chuckle) or a carrier.

Ed Metzler: Put them in the brig there and ...

Mr. Borst: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Yeah. So, what was your closest call of all the time you were there on ... on the battle front? When you kind of went, "Phew! Boy, that was close!"

Mr. Borst: (Chuckle), (pause) we ... planes came close, but we shot them down.

Ed Metzler: Uhm.

Mr. Borst: We didn't really have that much trouble. Of course, there was submarines, and uh, floating mines, and I was (unintelligible) ... I think it was the [USS] Rhode Island that ... floating mine tapped the side, put a little hole, damaged the hull in there. One fellow ... one fellow we picked up, he had the headphones on and ... and of course, he was hooked into a bulkhead where the ... for the phones, knocked him off the ship, pulled the guy's headset right out of that thing, and it went right down to his head. And we had doctor, but not a physician, couldn't do much for him, he died.

Ed Metzler: Whoa!

Mr. Borst: We buried him at sea.

Ed Metzler: Uhm! Uhm. You mentioned submarines. Did you have any close calls with Japanese submarines?

Mr. Borst: We ... we made a torpedo run on Japanese ship I think it was, a submarine. But we fired a fish, all five, none of them hit (chuckle).

Ed Metzler: Uhm!

Mr. Borst: Floating mines is the things that we ... really more.

Ed Metzler: The biggest problem, huh?

Mr. Borst: Yeah, nervous about. That was something you don't see till you're practically on top of it (chuckle). I remember they would shot their forty-fives at ... when you'd see one of them, you know, and blow it up.

Ed Metzler: But that used to trigger it when you ...

Mr. Borst: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: ... shoot it with a forty-five?

Mr. Borst: Yeah. That was ... that was cause the explosion. You know, I don't think I really ever had a close call.

Ed Metzler: And that's good (laughter).

Mr. Borst: Yeah, we were able to keep them away.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum. What did you miss most from ... when you were out there from the civilian life?

Mr. Borst: (Pause), it must have been anything close to twenty, twenty-one, and this is ... if I was home, I'd be getting ready to get in my (unintelligible).



Ed Metzler: So, you got ... you ...

Mr. Borst: It's ... it was funny, I worked for the (unintelligible) Company before I went in the service, and it was a woman there, she was like the second in charge in ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Borst: ... owner of the company, and I ... and she had a daughter, and the mother, at Christmastime, I'd always get a fruitcake in the mail. I wouldn't eat it, I don't like fruitcake.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter)

Mr. Borst: So, I would cut it up, and give it to the fellows, you know?

Ed Metzler: Yep, yep!

Mr. Borst: They always asked, "Did you get a fruitcake?" And I, "Oh yeah, I forgot to tell you." So, I'd cut half of it up and give it to them and put the other half away, and I would say, "Oh, you ate it!" "No, we didn't!" And I'd hold it for maybe a month 'cause that danged fruitcake never goes bad!

Ed Metzler: That's right, it lasts forever!

Mr. Borst: (Laughter), and (unintelligible). Okay, well anyway, her daughter wrote and I guess that's when we were coming back for ship repairs. She wrote to me, and I told her, "Well, I'll be ... I'll be coming in such and such a time," so it was on a weekend, and she says, "Okay, how about we meet at the Arington (sp?) High School Saturday for a football game?" I said, "Oh, that's good, alright." So, when I got there, I started walking from the main street into the football ground. I ... I'd seen her but I never saw her before, but there was another girl with her. That was my wife.

Ed Metzler: Oh, (laughter)!

Mr. Borst: And she didn't know Helen and I had a thing going ...

Ed Metzler: Oh really?!

Mr. Borst: ... for a while, yeah, because we ... I was at sea and that, and ...

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Borst: And (unintelligible) and she raised hell with Helen, "How come you didn't tell me?!" She says, "Cause I wouldn't have been here."

Ed Metzler: That's right (laughter).

Mr. Borst: (Laughter).

Ed Metzler: So, how long did you and the Caperton stay in post-war Japan before you came home? Was it fairly quickly after the war or ...

Mr. Borst: No, it had to a month or so because I say we went to different places and ...

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Borst: ... and I ... I honestly ... I don't think it was really that long.

Ed Metzler: So, you were able to get back to the States fairly soon after the war was over?

Mr. Borst: Yeah, yes. Yeah.

Ed Metzler: So, did you put in on the west coast or did you go back through the canal?

Mr. Borst: No, we went through the canal again.

Ed Metzler: And back up to ...

Mr. Borst: Five times.

Ed Metzler: Five times!

Mr. Borst: Well, when we first went.

Ed Metzler: One, two ...

Mr. Borst: We come back for ...

Ed Metzler: ... three, four ...

Mr. Borst: ... and then the final one.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Borst: I think it was five times.

Ed Metzler: So, how did it feel pulling back into the U.S. after the war was ...

Mr. Borst: Great (chuckles)! I ... I was going to ship over for another three years.

Ed Metzler: Oh really?!

Mr. Borst: And I says to my wife, "What ... what do you think if I stay in the Navy a little longer?" She says, "Bye, bye."

Ed Metzler: (Laughter)

Mr. Borst: I said, "Okay."

Ed Metzler: You done your part.

Mr. Borst: That was the end of that.

Ed Metzler: So, I understand you got back from the war with a rifle with a long ...

Mr. Borst: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Tell me about that.

Mr. Borst: That ... that uh ...

Ed Metzler: A bayonet?

Mr. Borst: ... a bayonet; it must have been that long.

Ed Metzler: Eighteen inches?!

Mr. Borst: And I said, you know, I didn't pay much attention to it, but my wife says, "You know ... you know why that bayonet is so long?" And I said, "No." And she says, "Cause the Japanese have short arms, and when they go to jab, the Americans would already have their bayonet in them (laughter)."

Ed Metzler: Yeah, (laughter). Where did you get it?

Mr. Borst: After the war, the captain gave different things out.

Ed Metzler: Oh really?!

Mr. Borst: At that moment, that was ... that's (unintelligible); you couldn't use that rifle again. And it wasn't ... have a rifle where you could shoot somebody (chuckles), so, it was plugged.

Ed Metzler: So, what'd they do, pull the firing pin out or something?

Mr. Borst: No, they plugged the barrel.

Ed Metzler: Oh, they plugged it?!

Mr. Borst: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Oh (chuckles).

Mr. Borst: Yeah. And what else? They had other things, but I got the ... I got the rifle.

Ed Metzler: Hum! That's interesting. So, how do you think being in the war changed you as a person?

Mr. Borst: Well, you go out for a job that I was going to be able to support a family, and (pause) one of my friends told me, "Why don't you go to public service?" "I don't think like I can go to public service," and he said, "You may be surprised. Just tell them you graduated high school when you make your application." So, I said, "Okay." So, I went down to Newark and inquired and they hired me. So, I worked as a meter man. I would go from house to house and test your electric meter, make sure everything was alright and you weren't jumping it out. And I did that for a few years. Then there came a job opening for a (pause)

fellow would go in a truck and you have any trouble some place, the dispatcher would call you, give you the address, you'd go and try and give them temporary service ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Borst: ... or full service. You'd go out, you'd find holes drilled in the glass where they stick a wire in and (unintelligible).

Ed Metzler: Oh my lord!

Mr. Borst: They'd put jumpers on them in ... in the box between the breakers. So, I did that for a couple of years. I loved that job.

Ed Metzler: But you went into the war as a ... an eighteen-year-old kid.

Mr. Borst: Nothing (chuckles).

Ed Metzler: Just a kid!

Mr. Borst: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: And you came out of the war, what a hardened veteran or happy man or ...

Mr. Borst: Yes, well, I'd say I'd be happy because I come out ... I come out in February and I got married in March, and it was good. I was ... we were married ten months, first boy came (chuckle).

Ed Metzler: Yeah, you had six boys, huh, I heard.

Mr. Borst: Uh huh, yep.

Ed Metzler: All boys?

Mr. Borst: All boys.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter), I'll be darned!

Mr. Borst: (Unintelligible).

Ed Metzler: Well ...

Mr. Borst: That was rough because, you know, I ... that job I took where I went from house to house, that was shift work.

Ed Metzler: Uhm!

Mr. Borst: I would work nights, seven (unintelligible) days (cough), but she had to take care of (unintelligible) like Harry, Jr.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Borst: And he wasn't quite out of high school yet, and he worked for (unintelligible), it was (unintelligible) Clothing Store.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Borst: He worked for them, and he was doing something on an escalator and got down, hurt his legs, and he was in the hospital for a while.

Ed Metzler: Uhm!

Mr. Borst: (Pause), the second one, Gray (sp?), he was a husky one, not ... not fat, but he was ...

Ed Metzler: Big.

Mr. Borst: ... he was strong, and if any of the other kids (unintelligible) brother says, "Go take care of them." (laughter)

Ed Metzler: (Laughter), so he was ... he was the enforcer, huh? (laughter)

Mr. Borst: Yeah, yeah.

Ed Metzler: Well, what stories have you not told me because I didn't ask? Anything you want to say? Any stories you want to recount?

Mr. Borst: (Pause), I got ... I can't think of any.

Ed Metzler: Well, I want to ...

Mr. Borst: I should have read the darned thing before I came.

Ed Metzler: Say again.

Mr. Borst: I should have read my ...

Ed Metzler: You should have read up on your ... on your ...

Mr. Borst: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: That's alright!

Mr. Borst: (Unintelligible) ... what do they want to talk to me for?

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Borst: So ...

Ed Metzler: Well, that's okay, between having a copy of your diary ...

Mr. Borst: Oh ...

Ed Metzler: ... plus ... having ...

Mr. Borst: (Cough), it was easy (unintelligible) to copy.

Ed Metzler: ... I've got it here.

Mr. Borst: Let me see it.

Ed Metzler: You want to see that?

Mr. Borst: Yeah (looking through document). My wife typed that up.

Ed Metzler: Really?! Well, I tell you what, let's ... let me start this again, and I want to thank you for spending the time with me today. We ... we've been going for over an hour.

Mr. Borst: Oh ...

Ed Metzler: And you are one of the Tin Can Sailors!

Mr. Borst: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: I mean, you guys are famous!

Mr. Borst: Yep.

Ed Metzler: So, it's always a pleasure to talk to another Tin Can Sailor.

Mr. Borst: We were the safeguards of the fleet.

Ed Metzler: Absolutely! And so, I want to thank you again, and thank you for your service.

Mr. Borst: (Unintelligible) ... (chuckle).

Ed Metzler: And we appreciate it.

Mr. Borst: Well ...

Ed Metzler: And we will end it there.

(end of interview)

**FINAL** copy  
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