

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR

Nimitz Education and Research Center
Fredericksburg, Texas

An Interview With

David W. Laughery

Nederland, Texas

April 23, 2019

U.S. Navy

USS Harrison, DD-573

Eleven Encounters with Japanese

Mr. Misenhimer:

My name is Richard Misenhimer, today is April 23, 2019. I am interviewing Mr. David W. Laughery by telephone. His phone number is 409-300-9885. His address is 719 N. 24th Street, Nederland, Texas, 77627. This interview is in support of the National Museum of the Pacific War, the Nimitz Education and Research Center, for the preservation of historical information related to World War II. His daughter Sharon Spoonmore is helping with this interview. She is also the alternative contact as he lives with them. Her phone number is 409-651-9997. Her husband is Keith Spoonmore, his number is 409-897-3163, also 409-466-1187.

David I want to thank you for taking time to do this interview today and I want to thank you for your service to our country during World War II.

Mr. Laughery

Well I may be alright, that's seventy-five years ago.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now the first thing I need to do is read to you this agreement with the museum to make sure this is okay with you.

"Agreement Read"

Is that okay with you?

Mr. Laughery:

It's okay.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What is your birthdate?

Mr. Laughery:

11/9/24.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And where were you born?

Mr. Laughery:

Titusville, Pennsylvania.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have brothers and sisters?

Mr. Laughery:

Yes I did.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How many of each?

Mr. Laughery:

I had two brothers and three sisters.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were either of your brothers in World War II?

Mr. Laughery:

Yes, both of my brothers was in World War II.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did they make it back from the war?

Mr. Laughery:

Yes they did.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Are they still living?

Mr. Laughery:

No they're not.

Mr. Misenhimer:

If they were I'd like to interview them. Now what were your mother's and father's first names?

Mr. Laughery:

My dad's name was Andrew and my mother's name was Edith.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now you grew up during the depression, how did the depression affect you and your family?

Mr. Laughery:

It didn't set very good with my mother, going to war.

Mrs. Spoonmore:

No the depression, you lived through the depression. Is that what you're asking? I don't think it affected y'all much.

Mr. Laughery:

Well my dad, well I don't think it affected us that bad. We lived through it but I can't answer that question.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was your father's occupation?

Mr. Laughery:

At that time we

Mrs. Spoonmore:

He's trying to..., was that in 1929? His dad worked at, who did he work for daddy?

Mr. Laughery:

When?

Mrs. Spoonmore:

Your dad, just whenever you were in the

Mr. Laughery:

Service?

Mrs. Spoonmore:

Uh-huh.

Mr. Laughery:

Oh at the Atlantic Refinery.

Mrs. Spoonmore:

When daddy was in service, his dad worked for the Atlantic Refinery in Port Arthur, Texas. But I don't know about during the depression.

Mr. Laughery:

No.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now David where did you go to high school?

Mr. Laughery:

Thomas Jefferson Senior High School in Port Arthur, Texas.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And what year did you graduate there?

Mr. Laughery:

1943.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You were born in Pennsylvania, when did you all move to Texas?

Mr. Laughery:

When I was twelve years old.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now on December 7, 1941 Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, do you recall hearing about that?

Mr. Laughery:

Absolutely.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How did you hear and what was your reaction?

Mr. Laughery:

Well I heard it on the radio, sitting. Drinking a coke or something, yeah.

Mrs. Spoonmore:

At your house or somewhere else?

Mr. Laughery:

No, in Beaumont. That's when I first heard about it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And how did you think that would affect you?

Mr. Laughery:

Well I'll tell you what I was ready to go to war, just like all them young men.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And so you were about seventeen, well you just turned seventeen.

Mr. Laughery

That is correct.

Mr. Misenhimer:

But you stayed in high school and graduated in '43?

Mr. Laughery:

That's right.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So when did you enter the service?

Mr. Laughery:

I entered the service in 1943.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Okay what month, what date, do you have a date of it?

Mr. Laughery:

Well I know that it was in June and I went to Houston on the 10th but they've got me down for joining the Navy the 17th. So I guess they accepted me and took me in on the 17th, I think that's the date.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now did you volunteer or were you drafted?

Mr. Laughery:

Well that's a little, they came to high school, some of the recruiters because I was still not graduated, they wanted me to graduate from high school. So they came and asked us what service we wanted in when we got out of high school. So I guess, I don't know if you call it

joined or, but I got to pick the one I wanted to get into to when I got out of high school. So that's how it happened.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now then did you volunteer or were you drafted?

Mrs. Spoonmore:

He volunteered. (To Mr. Laughery) You volunteered. Well yeah, they didn't say you have to go did they?

Mr. Laughery:

Yeah they said I had to go when I got out of high school. So I don't know which way we'd call it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then where did you go for your boot camp?

Mr. Laughery:

San Diego, California.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Tell me about that, how was boot camp?

Mr. Laughery:

Well it was pretty tough. I was in there, I don't know exactly how long I was in boot camp. But they put us through the grinder that's for sure. I mean we did everything the Navy's supposed to do I guess. We learned to march, we did the physical, we did the 3-inch gun, went through the gas chambers, and did a lot of swimming, just like we're supposed to do.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then after boot camp what happened?

Mr. Laughery:

After boot camp they transferred me to Vallejo, California. They set up field stuff there to, just waiting to get on a ship to go overseas.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you get any kind of special training after boot camp?

Mr. Laughery:

And after boot camp I went to Vallejo and waited for awhile at Vallejo, California. And then they put us on an aircraft carrier, took us over to Pearl Harbor.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How was that trip over there?

Mr. Laughery:

Well if you call sleeping on the deck and thousands of us, I don't know it wasn't very comfortable (*laughs*).

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was there much sea sickness?

Mr. Laughery:

Oh no, I don't get seasick.

Mrs. Spoonmore:

Did the other guys?

Mr. Laughery:

Well I'm sure there was, but I don't remember that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then when you got to Pearl Harbor what happened?

Mr. Laughery:

Well I got off, they put me in a barracks for about, little about a week or two and we got all mustered out to different ships that was in Pearl Harbor at that time. And they called my name and I was put on the *USS Harrison*, the DD-573.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And what was your job on that ship?

Mr. Laughery:

Well I was a Seaman 2nd Class when I went on it from boot training. They put me first on a

20mm gun, I was assistant there to the gunner. But I didn't stay there long, I stayed through my first battle which was Bougainville. And then I transferred down into the fireroom, I became a boiler tender or I mean a water tender at that time, 1st Class.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You went to Bougainville you say then, right?

Mr. Laughery:

Oh yeah I went to Bougainville, yeah!

Mrs. Spoonmore:

That was the first battle he said.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Tell me about that battle, what all happened there?

Mr. Laughery:

Well I don't like to talk about things like that, but

Mrs. Spoonmore:

This is for history though.

Mr. Laughery:

Well it maybe but.... The planes came in overnight, the Japanese Betty, and we were a bunch of ships, I guess I don't know. Actually it was bringing in troops and supplies into Bougainville and we got attacked that night by Japanese Betty torpedo bombers. And best I can remember, I guess the way they tell me, I wasn't on deck, but two torpedoes ricocheted off of our port side. And then I don't remember all that happened because there was shooting everywhere and I think they did hit one of the cruisers that night. I ain't sure which number it was. But that's the way it happened, it was do or don't do, I don't remember much about it except for shooting at the damn Japanese. That's about it, that was Japanese Bettys, just one of them things.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How long were you there at Bougainville?

Mr. Laughery:

Ah we left, I think we were only there two or three days. And then we succeeded in the landing and everything else at Bougainville, I mean they secured it I guess, I don't know that. But we were sent back to Pearl Harbor after that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

I think the landing at Bougainville was on Princess Bay, I forget the name of it now.

Mrs. Spoonmore:

Do you remember the name of the bay?

Mr. Laughery:

No I don't, no.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now did you all fire on against the shore?

Mr. Laughery:

Oh no, no, we didn't shell fire this time on the shore. I think we, I guess we'd of hit our own troops or something, but no we did not. They just attacked us that night. That I do remember, how can I forget, good gawd.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yeah, that was the Empress Augustus Bay. Was your ship damaged at all there?

Mr. Laughery:

No, no, we didn't get damaged, I'm sure glad of that. Do you know what cruiser was hit?

Mr. Misenhimer:

Which one?

Mrs. Spoonmore:

He doesn't know, he was wondering if you knew which cruiser was hit at Bougainville.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Not off the top of my head I don't, no, I don't remember.

Mr. Laughery:

Well it might have been the *Birmingham*, I ain't sure.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That Bougainville was a pretty bad battle.

Mr. Laughery:

Yes it was. It was not good. Well you can understand that, hell we were just then starting to turn the Japanese back the other way, right?

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you fire on the enemy planes?

Mr. Laughery:

Yeah! If we wouldn't of, yeah they came right over our tops.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you hit any of them?

Mr. Laughery:

Well I'm sure we did, but it was all lit up. We shot at them, I'm sure we hit some of them.

Because we know that there's some Japanese planes went down, that's for sure, a bunch of them.

I don't know how many, I know they were probably on fire. All I can tell you is it was a hell of a battle.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then when you left Bougainville where did you go?

Mrs. Spoonmore:

Well you said you went back to Pearl Harbor.

Mr. Laughery:

I did go back to Pearl Harbor.

Mrs. Spoonmore:

They went back to Pearl Harbor.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Back to Pearl Harbor?

Mr. Laughery:

I went back to Pearl Harbor.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And what did you do there?

Mr. Laughery:

I'm not gonna be able to answer these questions.

Mrs. Spoonmore:

Well daddy what did you do at Pearl Harbor when y'all went back?

Mr. Laughery:

We went out to sea again.

Mrs. Spoonmore:

So you just kind of regrouped?

Mr. Laughery:

No, we went to several battles after that. We went to Tarawa, we went to New Guinea, we went to Kwajalein, we went to Guam, we went to Philippines, we went to Iwo Jima, and we went to Okinawa, the picket lines of Okinawa. We was in all of them, what do you want me to say? Leyte Gulf, yeah we was there. We were at all of them battles. You know what can I explain? How can I explain them?

Mrs. Spoonmore:

Well then just let him ask you the questions.

Mr. Laughery:

Well he can ask me but I ain't going to be able to answer him.

Mrs. Spoonmore:

Well you might, if you can't just say you can't.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were you with a particular fleet?

Mr. Laughery:

I was with three different fleets. I was with 58, I was with the 3rd Fleet Task Force 58. I was

with, I'm trying to remember, I think I was with 7th, but I don't remember 7th so much but I think they did put us into 7th at one time. Actually at one time or other we were with just about every fleet that was out there, we were part of it. Right before the end of the war we went into that Suruga Wan Harbor there, right off into Japan port itself. Kind of like on a suicide mission but we all got back out, all of the destroyers. That was right before the war's end. I don't know what to tell you. In other words all I can say is we were in eleven encounters with the Japanese either from ship-to-shore or in airplane battles with them when they struck at us at Okinawa. We got pretty well, in pretty much trouble there and so we didn't get Again we shot a couple of planes down in Okinawa, but they didn't get us. Shrapnel went everywhere but nobody got hurt at Okinawa. I don't know what you want to know this.

Mrs. Spoonmore:

Let him ask you some questions.

Mr. Laughery:

Well he can ask me, but I don't remember these. Go ahead and ask, I don't know. I'm confused. Okay.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Tell me about Tarawa, how was Tarawa?

Mr. Laughery:

Tarawa, that was kind of like the Marines going in on the beaches and we were ship-to-shore. We came right in close to it and before the Marines got in we were ship-to-shore bombing, you know shelling them.

Mrs. Spoonmore:

Y'all were shelling them?

Mr. Laughery:

Yeah, we were pouring our 5-inch guns to them. I mean we were with the fleet, just

Mr. Misenhimer:

I understand we lost a lot of Marines on Tarawa.

Mr. Laughery:

Yes they did. I don't know how many, but yes they did. Yeah, that was a battle to the end there, yeah. You didn't kill them Japanese, you either had to kill them Japanese or they'd kill you. I mean they was fighting right to the death, they didn't get captured.

Mr. Misenhimer:

About how long were you at Tarawa?

Mr. Laughery:

I wouldn't say but about maybe a week or something. Because we moved out after the Marines took the island, then we'd go to another island, Kwajalein. Then we'd go to Guam, and then we'd do the same thing everywhere we went.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Tell me about Kwajalein.

Mr. Laughery:

In Kwajalein, same thing there as Guam but we did sink a tanker there of Japan's there off of a, as it was coming out a harbor there. We did sink a tanker there, but we did the same ship-to-shore bombardments or whatever you call them.

Mr. Misenhimer:

There where did you go in New Guinea?

Mrs. Spoonmore:

I'm sorry what part of New Guinea? (To Mr. Laughery) What parts of New Guinea did you ...?

Mr. Laughery:

I don't know, I really don't know where, I can't answer that. New Guinea was one of the biggest islands, it was not the little ones. So I can't tell, I don't know which part. No way I would know that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were you in on the invasion of Guam?

Mr. Laughery:

Ship-to-shore, yeah right. We could see the enemies right on the hill, we'd shoot at them with our 5-inch guns or 40mm's and our 20mm, and just pouring bullets to them until the invasion, the Marines or whoever it was invaded them. You had Guam, the same thing everywhere, yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then where did you go in the Philippines?

Mr. Laughery:

Leyte Gulf.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Tell me about Leyte Gulf.

Mr. Laughery:

That one is a little different problem. We got into that, it wasn't that, we got in late after the Leyte Gulf. We got in there almost when the battle was over. The only thing we got into was one plane that came in on us and I think that us and an English cruiser was in that harbor. I think we shot him down, but that's about the size of Leyte Gulf for us. The big battle was right before us and we had the pleasure of being just back being reconstructed in San Francisco. We got a leave there right about Christmas time. And they let us go back to Frisco to get repairs, overhauling the ship and stuff. So that's all about I can tell you about Leyte Gulf.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then where did you go after that?

Mrs. Spoonmore:

What battle was after Leyte, where did y'all go?

Mr. Laughery:

Honey, I don't remember when these battles were. I know we went to some more, but the next one I remember I was going to Iwo Jima. But that wasn't until we, it was ship-to-shore, we didn't stay there at Iwo Jima very long. They'd already taken or they were almost taken that hill there they set the flags up on, Suribachi. And we stayed there but we was ordered back somewhere else I guess because they almost had it taken. But there was one of the aircraft

carriers in there, he was burning when we left, so I don't know. I kind of believe it might have been the *Franklin*, but I don't know that. I'm just telling you things I ain't sure about.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were any of our ships ever sunk near you?

Mr. Laughery:

No, not near me, uh-uh. No, no, no.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How about damage, were some near you damaged?

Mr. Laughery:

I'm sure there was but I don't know. If they weren't they sure missed just like we did I guess, I don't know. I'm sure they were. Most damage we ever, that the ships ever got into most of the time was that damn typhoon that we ran into off of there. I don't know, again we was all on our own and that thing took a, I don't know if it sank the ship but one of the aircraft carriers plumb under, the deck went down, the *Pittsburg*. I don't know, I can't answer.

Mrs. Spoonmore:

Do you think it's the *Pittsburgh*, you were thinking it might be?

Mr. Laughery:

Pittsburgh lost it's bow or something, I don't know honey. I don't know, I don't think I should have done this.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were you in Halsey's fleet?

Mr. Laughery:

Yes sir, I was in Halsey's, Bull Halsey yeah, oh yeah. He was the Third Fleet.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now were you ever attacked by Japanese submarines?

Mr. Laughery:

No, never was, never was, uh-uh. Now they kind of stayed away from us destroyers or

something. We at one time threw depth charges at submarines, but we weren't attacked by them. No, we didn't. We thought our sonar, they dropped depth charges but we didn't accomplish nothing I don't guess. It never was recorded anywhere.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were you ever attacked by the kamikazes?

Mr. Laughery:

Huh, you kidding? Yeah. Time and time again, yeah. The picket lines of Okinawa.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you ever see any ships get hit by kamikazes?

Mr. Laughery:

No, fortunately I did not. We were attacked several times. We even shot two or three of them down before they got to us. And by the way we were pretty good (*laughing*).

Mrs. Spoonmore:

Yeah, sounds like it.

Mr. Laughery:

Yeah, if you know they had to get to us before they got to the fleet because we wasn't actually with the fleet. We were right on the picket lines where they'd get to us before they'd get to the fleet. That's the way they, some would get through and they'd hit some of them ships in the fleet, like the carriers. We were supposed to protect them, they'd hit us first or if they didn't they'd get through us. So that's the way that worked. That's the way I understood it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you say you were on the picket line at Okinawa?

Mr. Laughery:

Absolutely we're on the picket lines. We stayed on the picket lines.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That was pretty dangerous out there I understand.

Mr. Laughery:

Uh-huh, you didn't want to be there brother, no sir.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you ever see any ships get sunk out there?

Mr. Laughery:

No I didn't. Bombed, no I didn't, I didn't see them. I know we got some, we got quite a few destroyers hit but fortunately we weren't with them at the time. We were there, but we weren't with them when they got hit. They were in, probably on a different place on the picket line. Because we were just I think seven destroyers in one squadron, so we'd be in one place and they'd be in other places.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What would you consider your most frightening time?

Mr. Laughery:

My most frightening time. You know I hate to say this, there's two of them. My most frightening time was first one we ever had was Bougainville. That was frightening. The second one I would say Okinawa, the picket lines of Okinawa. The third one I'd say that suicide mission when we went in to Suruga Wan Bay, it's a Japanese port there at Suruga Wan, right before the A-bomb, we weren't supposed to be. They didn't think we'd, they even told us where we'd go swim if we got sunk. But fortunately we, again we got out of there after we

Mrs. Spoonmore:

Did y'all bomb something there or what?

Mr. Laughery:

Yeah we shot 'em, we shot again from ship-to-shore, so many 5-inch shells at them, all those two or three hours there before we came back out of the harbor. That we was, I guess they just didn't expect us. But that was right before the A-bomb really, not too long after that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was anyone on your ship ever wounded?

Mr. Laughery:

Well not exactly, yeah exactly and not exactly. They had one that was on battle station, he got crushed by a 5-inch gun that turned while we was in battle. But yeah, yeah he didn't make it. Otherwise we had no more, we had shrapnel once at the picket lines of Okinawa that fortunately we didn't have nobody wounded there. I don't quite understand that but we didn't, shrapnel went everywhere.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How was the morale on your ship?

Mr. Laughery:

Well that's a good one. I guess it was pretty good, you mean as far as getting along with each other? We got along great together, we worked like a team. Morale was fine. Yeah, we were just doing our duty that's all we were doing. We were out there to either get killed or come back home or do the best we could and we all understood that, yeah. We sure didn't want them to get to us so we had to stay right where we were. Our morale was pretty much good I guess they'd call it, I don't know. I can't get into the thoughts of other people but I thought we did pretty good together.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you ever cross the equator?

Mr. Laughery:

Yes sir!

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have any kind of ceremony when you did?

Mr. Laughery:

Yes sir!

Mr. Misenhimer:

What all happened?

Mr. Laughery:

Well they have old King Neptune and all that. And just things you had to do. I don't know, I

think of some of the joke things they did. You had to kiss a belly or something and do things like, stupid things. And gawd they had one thing that was kind of electric thing that they did and shock you a little. I don't know just different things across it. Give you a good clean wash down and everything else. Well that equator deal was, that's different that's for sure. It was kind of fun, but if you were a victim, which I was one of them (*laugh*), it was awful things we did but nothing serious you know. It was pretty good, it was okay. Now I can't tell you what all, I can't hardly remember, what a King Neptune and all that. I got a card, I had one, but I don't any more, crossing the equator.

Mr. Misenhimer:

To make you a Shellback, huh?

Mr. Laughery:

That's right, made me a Shellback (*laughs*), you're right. Yep, yeah did that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now did you ever hear Tokyo Rose on the radio?

Mr. Laughery:

Yes I did (*laughing*). They tuned her in pretty often, as often as they could. She was quite a gal wasn't she (*laughs*)? She'd sing good American songs. She seemed to know where we were or what, knew a lot about us. But she didn't know it all though that's for sure. She'd tell us how we were, she was going to tell us how we was gonna get killed and all that. And played good music.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Tell me about being in those typhoons, how was that?

Mr. Laughery:

That was one of the worst things. Well what they tell me, our ships are lucky to come out of that typhoon, the tilting of the ship you know the, what do you call it a, I don't know. The degrees that we leaned, we were sure it went all the way over but we didn't, many times that night. And

it was the whole, water was coming over the whole darn ship. You couldn't walk on the decks at all, yeah, that's for sure. And it was just one terrible thing. We were all in that typhoon, we all put on our own, the whole fleet was on their own. We just went in different directions I guess because we couldn't stay together that's for sure. And we just went in every, yeah we were on our own, that's all it is. We were lucky to come through, that was a scary part too. Just tilting all the way over, almost sinking. And that was terrible. But that typhoon we got over it. And a few ships got very damaged in it, all I can do is remember that they'd telling me that *Pittsburg* lost it's bow, but I ain't sure of that. And one of the aircraft carriers, their flight deck was bent all in from that awful typhoon. I don't know, that was just here say and what they told me, that's all.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now April the 12th of 1945 President Roosevelt died, did you all hear about that?

Mr. Laughery:

Yeah, I guess we did, we heard about it. I'm sure we did. I can't remember. I know they told us that he died, that's for sure, before the A-bomb. I think, yeah we knew about it, yeah. Sad situation.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now on May the 8th of 1945 Germany surrendered, did y'all hear about that?

Mr. Laughery:

Yeah we heard about it, yeah we heard about it. And that's when the Russians turned towards Japan. I think that Russians pointing towards Japan and the A-bomb is what made the Japanese surrender. Yeah, we heard about it, you bet you we did.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now on August the 6th of 1945 they dropped the first atomic bomb. Did y'all hear about that?

Mr. Laughery:

Oh yeah, yeah. Yeah we heard about that, we were right there! Pretty close. We were right off

the shores of Japan, oh yeah we knew about that. Well we heard they bombed, killed so many people and stuff, yeah. We heard about that. Yeah, they let us know about that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now on August the 15th of '45 Japan surrendered. Did you hear about that?

Mr. Laughery:

Well yeah. I was right sitting outside of the harbor. We didn't go in there with the *Missouri* but we were out there with the carriers. Yeah, yeah. That's when they surrendered on

Mr. Misenhimer:

Well I'm talking about earlier than that, not on September 2nd but August the 15th when they surrendered. And we didn't land for awhile after that.

Mr. Laughery:

No I didn't hear about that (*laughs*). All I know is, what did he say August the 15th?

Mrs. Spoonmore:

August the 15th, it's when they I guess verbally, it's when they verbally surrendered?

Mr. Laughery:

August two weeks, that's right before I think, that's right before we went into Suruga Wan in that area. I don't know. I don't think we heard that. But I don't remember that as far as hearing that they announced they were going to surrender.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yeah they announced it on August 14th they were going to surrender, right.

Mr. Laughery:

I don't know if we heard it. I'm sure we did, but I ain't sure, I'm not sure, I'm not sure. Well we knew that where we were, well you're talking about that time, that was right before Suruga Wan. You ever hear about that?

Mr. Misenhimer:

About what?

Mr. Laughery:

That harbor we went into, Suruga Wan.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Tell me about it.

Mr. Laughery:

Well there ain't nothing I can tell you about it because we went in to the gates of, in to Japan itself at a, I don't know what the town, they called it the Suruga Wan Bay of Japan. We shelled them all night long, the little factories and everything else that was there in that harbor. It's just part of the war but it was almost over then, we think. And that might be the time you're talking about, right before they surrendered or said they were going to surrender. That's all I can tell you. I don't know what they're going to do with my story, what's this got to do with it?

Mrs. Spoonmore:

Like Jack can go in later and listen to your voice and hear what you had to say.

Mr. Laughery:

Who?

Mrs. Spoonmore:

Jack.

Mr. Laughery:

Oh. I'm just so mixed up here, that I can't remember.

Mrs. Spoonmore:

Well gosh, I think you're remembering great.

Mr. Laughery:

Well all I can is it was a hell of a war, terrible.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then after the war was over what did y'all do then?

Mr. Laughery:

Well (*laughs*) we came through that canal like you said, yeah. We came right back to it, they put us back through the canal. We went back into the Atlantic Ocean and up to Boston for Navy Day. They put us up there in Boston, Massachusetts for Navy Day, yep. We spent two or three days, or four, or something like that, liberty and having good time that the war was long over then when we got there. I don't know exactly when Navy Day was, but it was quite a ways from September 2nd that's for sure. You know I got married on September 2nd come to think of it. Okay partner.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now when they had this surrender on September 2nd were y'all anywhere close to that in Tokyo Bay?

Mr. Laughery:

Yeah, we were sitting outside, well quite a ways with the carriers out there with the other, the rest of the fleet. They couldn't have put the fleet in that harbor. We had a heck of big fleet. So we were one of the destroyers that sat outside of the bay itself there for awhile. Then we were ordered back to the States, I guess what'd you call it, yeah to the States.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now did you get home from World War II with any souvenirs?

Mr. Laughery:

No, don't believe I did (*laughs*).

Mr. Misenhimer:

No souvenirs?

Mrs Spoonmore:

You got back from Korea with a camera, but that was in Korea right?

Mr. Laughery:

That was in Korea when I was over there fighting with somebody else in Korea.

Mrs. Spoonmore:

But nothing from the World War II, huh?

Mr. Laughery:

No I don't remember getting anything from World War II, no. That was during the Korean War when I was over there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now during World War II did you ever see any USO shows anywhere?

Mr. Laughery:

You know partner (*laughs*) believe it or not I went to one.

(End of side one of tape.)

(Beginning of side two of tape.)

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now during World War II did you have any experience with the Red Cross?

Mr. Laughery:

Red Cross, no I don't think we did, I thought we did, but I don't think it was during World War II. No we didn't have, we didn't cross to the Red Cross, uh-uh. I did in Korea, I did in the war in Korea, but I didn't in World War II. Seems like we might have though, I ain't sure. Anyway no, I'm going to say no to that Red Cross.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What day were you discharged?

Mr. Laughery:

All I can remember, let's see I was ... (*counting months*). I think partner, I ain't sure, it was April, April 1946 I think I was discharged. I was discharged in, there, what's that base over there, Annapolis or, oh I don't know. It was in there and it was Annapolis or somewhere, I ain't sure. Well anyway I got discharged around April.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So you stayed in quite awhile after the war was over then?

Mr. Laughery:

I stayed in because they kept me in on the *USS Harrison*, the DD-573, over in Charleston, South Carolina, yes. I don't know why they kept me in but they did, for nothing I, I didn't beg to get out but everybody was leaving and we were still decommissioning the old *Harrison*, yeah, yeah. They kept me there, we got it fixed.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now when you got out did you any trouble adjusting to civilian life?

Mr. Laughery:

Yes I did, well I thought I did. Couldn't get no job, went all the way, went to Philadelphia well where my dad lived at. Stayed for a month or two and couldn't get no work. Yeah I was kind of depressed, couldn't do nothing. And I remember though before I went to war I worked three weeks at Texaco down in Port Arthur, so. I got married and well, no I went down there first and they put me back on in Texaco and then I went and got married (*laughs*).

Mr. Misenhimer:

When you got out did you use your G.I. Bill for anything?

Mr. Laughery:

Yes I did, I used the G.I. Bill and FHA to buy my first little house in Nederland, Texas. Both of them, I think it was a combination of both, I think it was, yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you use your bill for going to school or anything?

Mr. Laughery:

Oh yeah.

Ms. Spoonmore:

I mean did you use the G.I. Bill to go to school?

Mr. Laughery:

Oh wait a minute, yeah! Yeah I did. I went one year of college over near Lamar, I used the bill. Then I went to, I guess I was using the G.I. Bill when I went to, I went back to training school in

different things like blueprint and mathematics and all that. Yeah I think I was under the G.I. Bill, I know I was, yeah, yeah. Yeah, I used the G.I. Bill.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now since you've been out have you had any reunions of your outfit?

Mr. Laughery:

Oh yeah we had, in 1989 when I was in my sixties they started having reunions on the old *USS Harrison*, the old DD-573. The first one was started 1989, yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Have you been to several of those?

Mr. Laughery:

I went to, me and my wife went to six of them, yeah. And they don't have them no more, we're all dead, they're all dead. Yeah we went, they were wonderful. A guy by the name of John Chiquoine in West Chester, Pennsylvania put them on. His dad was an engineer, torpedo engineer on our ship. And I guess he was putting it on for his dad, must have died so he started putting them on, boy one year after another. Oh we had a good time at them reunions, reacquainting with the old timers that's right, we did that, had some good times. Now what?

Mr. Misenhimer:

Have you kept up with anybody you were in the service with?

Mr. Laughery:

Oh yes, I still got me and one guy now. He's Ray Lindsey up there in Oregon. He's my old shipmate, one of my last liberty buddies off of the old *Harrison*, going in to homecare and nurses and all that, oh yeah. He's still living and still kicking up there in Oregon, Ray Lindsey, yeah. One of my last liberty buddies off the *Harrison*. Yep he's still living, he's one of the fifteen that's left, so that's all that's left of us, fifteen from that ship. And that's a lot of things that have gone by the way side. Oh yeah, oh yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now you say you were called up for Korea?

Mr. Laughery:

Yeah, yeah. Yeah I was called up alright. When I got out of the Navy I joined the Reserves like many of us did. And dang they called me back in the Navy. And, what year was it?

Ms. Spoonmore:

1947 or 6?

Mr. Laughery:

Oh no, no, no. It was '49 or '50, right before you were born.

Ms. Spoonmore:

Oh right before I was born, okay.

Mr. Laughery:

When were you born?

Ms. Spoonmore:

1950.

Mr. Misenhimer:

The Korean War started in June of 1950.

Mr. Laughery:

Well okay, June of 1950. When were you born?

Ms. Spoonmore:

I was born in September, so you must have gone right when they started.

Mr. Laughery:

Well I did, they shipped me over to Japan.

Ms. Spoonmore:

Japan? Really?

Mr. Laughery:

Well yeah, had to catch a ship over there. Yeah over in Japan. They put me on the PTF, patrol frigate 47, the *USS Gallup* (PF-47) to patrol up and down the Korean, North Korean coast there, yeah we were. I stayed in only nine months though, I finally got a hardship out, my wife, we had

one baby, two-year old and one on the way when they took me in. They should not have took me in but they did anyway. So I didn't get to come back for nine months later. That's what we did in Korea, shelled ship-to-shore again. And I think we got hit but not bad because we put on, our engines had got bad so we had to come back to Japan to get our diesel, it was run by diesel. So we had to get it all fixed. By the time they got it all fixed and everything they got me a hardship discharge so I came home. That's about all of Korea I want any part of.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So when did you get discharged then, about what date?

Mr. Laughery:

In Korea?

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yes sir.

Mr. Laughery:

Let me think that. When was it hon?

Ms. Spoonmore:

I don't remember.

Mr. Laughery:

Let's see.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How long were you in for Korea, a year more or less?

Ms. Spoonmore:

He was in nine months.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Anything else you recall from your time in World War II?

Mr. Laughery:

Well I don't know, it was bad war, that's all I can say. It wasn't pleasant. No there's only one thing that always bothers me though, I can't figure it out, maybe I had nothing, it's just history I

guess you'd call it. I'd like to know what in the world and why the *Indianapolis* was sunk with no escort. At the time it was, I know it carried the A-bomb at one time and all that. But why we had many, many destroyers but none was escorting that *Indianapolis* when all them sailors got eat up by sharks and everything right before war's end. And I don't understand that, I guess I'm not supposed to.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That's one of the big mistakes our people made.

Mr. Laughery:

I think it was too, I'll tell you for sure.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When they were leaving Tinian the people said there's no Jap submarines out there. But they did know there was one but they didn't tell them. And then they didn't have any escorts around so they said, "Well you don't need an escort, go ahead and go."

Mr. Laughery:

Yeah but they didn't even know where they were.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yep, well and nobody kept up with.... See the war was getting down pretty well, it was still going on, but the war was getting down. And we let down a lot on our intelligence.

Mr. Laughery:

Uh-huh, something happened there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then when it got sunk nobody was keeping track of where it was. So it was several days after it was sunk before they knew it was missing.

Mr. Laughery:

Yeah I know and that was uncalled for, yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

I've got a couple of books on the *Indianapolis*.

Ms. Spoonmore:

Ah, that'd be interesting.

Mr. Laughery:

Yeah, that'd be interesting there. No rhyme, no reason for that you know it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That was a very big mistake on that, that's right.

Mr. Laughery:

Yep, that's right. I just can't get over that, yeah, that's terrible.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Several years ago they had a symposium there at the Nimitz Museum on the sinking of the *Indianapolis*. And they had the commander of the Japanese submarine as one of the speakers.

Mr. Laughery:

Really!

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yep.

Mr. Laughery:

Well I'll be.

Ms. Spoonmore:

Ah that would have been interesting to go to, I guess that one there.

Mr. Laughery:

Yeah well. Knowing the Japanese they didn't let nobody know that that old *Indianapolis* was there and they sunk it, they knew that, that's for sure. Well that's one of the war's, horrors of war I guess, yeah, yeah. What else you want to know partner?

Mr. Misenhimer:

Well again thank both of you for your time today and David thank you for your service to our country.

Ms. Spoonmore:

Thank you. Thank you for your service also.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Well you're welcome. So have a good day and we'll talk to you again later.

Ms. Spoonmore:

Alright, bye, bye.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Bye now.

(End of interview.)

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