

National Museum of the Pacific War

Nimitz Education and Research Center

Fredericksburg, Texas

Interview with

Mr. Charles H. Dahlstrum

Date of Interview: June 15, 2019

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Interview in progress.

Ed Metzler: This is Ed Metzler, and today is the ...

Mr. Dahlstrum: 15th.

Ed Metzler: ... 15th (laughter) of June, 2019. How quickly we forget, and I am interviewing Mr. Charles Dahlstrum. We are Fredericksburg at his point of residence. 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, Charles, thanks for spending the time with me today so that we can talk about your experiences during the war.

Mr. Dahlstrum: (Unintelligible).

Ed Metzler: So, give me your full name and where you were born and when you were born.

Mr. Dahlstrum: My full name is Charles Henry Dahlstrum. I was born in 1926, February the 10th, 1926.

Ed Metzler: So, that makes you ninety-three.

Mr. Dahlstrum: Ninety-three.

Ed Metzler: Wow! Where were you born?

Mr. Dahlstrum: Where?

Ed Metzler: Yes sir.

Mr. Dahlstrum: In Travis County.

Ed Metzler: Travis County, Texas?

Mr. Dahlstrum: In Austin, yeah.

Ed Metzler: Well, you're right close by to where you were born.

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Were you living in the country or in town or what?

Mr. Dahlstrum: Living in the country.

Ed Metzler: Oh, so what did your dad do? Was he a farmer, a rancher or ...

Mr. Dahlstrum: No, he was a ... he worked for the city.

Ed Metzler: Okay. And did you have brothers and sisters?

Mr. Dahlstrum: (Pause), yes, I have one brother.

Ed Metzler: Were you younger or older?

Mr. Dahlstrum: He was younger.

Ed Metzler: Ah!

Mr. Dahlstrum: (Coughs).

Ed Metzler: So, you went to public schools?

Mr. Dahlstrum: I went to public schools.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Dahlstrum: From 19 oh, hell.

Ed Metzler: Well, if you were born in '26, you probably started school in about 19 ...

Mr. Dahlstrum: '43.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, '32, okay.

Mr. Dahlstrum: '43. Yeah.

Ed Metzler: So, you graduated high school in '43?

Mr. Dahlstrum: '43, I graduated from high school.

Ed Metzler: Right in the middle of the war.

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Uhm.

Mr. Dahlstrum: I couldn't wait to join the Navy.

Ed Metzler: Yeah. Well now, everybody remembers where they were on December the 7th, 1941, do you remember Pearl Harbor Day and what you were doing?

Mr. Dahlstrum: (Chuckle), yeah, I ... I don't remember, no.

Ed Metzler: Well, things certainly changed that day, didn't they?

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah, they did.

Ed Metzler: Uhm! So, why did you want to go into the Navy?

Mr. Dahlstrum: I just ... I just liked the Navy.

Ed Metzler: Yeah? And was your dad in the military?

Mr. Dahlstrum: No.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum. So, you wanted to join the Navy and see the world, huh?

Mr. Dahlstrum: (Pause), I guess so.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter), where'd you do basic training?

Mr. Dahlstrum: San Diego.

Ed Metzler: Oh.

Mr. Dahlstrum: (Cough).

Ed Metzler: So, let me guess, you rode a train out to San Diego to go to basic?

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah. Five days and five nights.

Ed Metzler: (Chuckle), were you alone or were you with some buddies that joined with you
or ...

Mr. Dahlstrum: I was pretty much alone.

Ed Metzler: Hum. So, and you were young, too!

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah, seventeen.

Ed Metzler: Seventeen?! That means your mom and dad had to sign for you for you to
even go in!

Mr. Dahlstrum: They did, yeah.

Ed Metzler: What'd your mom think about that – you going in at seventeen?

Mr. Dahlstrum: Well, she cried the whole time I left.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter). All that meant is she loved you.

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter). So, what was basic training like? Was it hard, was it easy?

Mr. Dahlstrum: Well, it was ... it was hard, I guess, hard to get used to, such strict rule and
things.

Ed Metzler: Yeah. Did you have a mean drill sergeant?

Mr. Dahlstrum: No. Didn't have a drill sergeant, I had a chief petty officer.

Ed Metzler: That's right, we're talking Navy, aren't we? I ... I keep slipping into the Army
mentality. So, you survived basic training.

Mr. Dahlstrum: Boot camp (unintelligible).

Ed Metzler: Boot camp. So, when ... so what did they do with you once you survived boot
camp? Did they sent you off for more training or put you aboard ship or what?

Mr. Dahlstrum: We went ... we went into holding area to ... to go aboard a ship.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Dahlstrum: They ... they pulled out the people from the draft to go on the ship.

Ed Metzler: Right, right. And so, they pulled your name out?

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: And it said, "BB-41 on it?"

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: (Chuckles). So, when was the ... what do you remember from the first time you saw the [USS] Mississippi? Were you impressed or disappointed or what?

Mr. Dahlstrum: I was pretty well impressed.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter).

Mr. Dahlstrum: These ole damn fourteen-inch guns.

Ed Metzler: That's a big ship!

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah! It was big then. Yeah, pretty much impressed.

Ed Metzler: So, had you ever been to sea before? I guess you hadn't.

Mr. Dahlstrum: No.

Ed Metzler: Hum.

Mr. Dahlstrum: No.

Ed Metzler: So, you boarded her in San Diego or up at ...

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah, San Diego ...

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Dahlstrum: ... uh, in Long Beach.

Ed Metzler: In Long Beach, okay, alright. Up in L.A. area. So, what did they ... what was your assignment? Were you a part of the deck crew or ...

Mr. Dahlstrum: I was on the deck crew, yeah.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum. Does that mean you got to swab the decks?

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Was that fun?

Mr. Dahlstrum: Oh yeah.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter). And I'm sure you had a combat station, and what was that? Were you on anti-aircraft or the ...

Mr. Dahlstrum: No.

Ed Metzler: ... or what?

Mr. Dahlstrum: On the five-inch, fifty-one. It was a broadside.

Ed Metzler: Really?! And so, there's what, a crew, a team that, you know, you got loaders and aimers and ...

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: ... firers and what were you?

Mr. Dahlstrum: I was a mortar ... I cranked the wheel and raised the barrel and stuff.

Ed Metzler: Took ... so ...

Mr. Dahlstrum: And lined up the sites and ...

Ed Metzler: Yeah?

Mr. Dahlstrum: ... pulled the trigger.

Ed Metzler: So, you had somebody giving you orders on whether to pull it to the right, the left, up and down?

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah. Yeah, I got up ... up in the sky control

Ed Metzler: Hum! Okay. So, did you have some good buddies that you kind of palled around with when you aboard ship?

Mr. Dahlstrum: (Pause), oh yeah. Had a bunch of them.

Ed Metzler: Were they from all over the U.S. or what?

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah. All over.

Ed Metzler: And who was your officer that you reported to? Was he a ... an, you know, a petty officer or what?

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah, a chief petty officer.

Ed Metzler: Chief petty; was he mean guy or a good guy?

Mr. Dahlstrum: Oh, no, he was a milk toast guy.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter). Tell me what you mean by milk toast.

Mr. Dahlstrum: I don't know.

Ed Metzler: He was just an average guy, huh?

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah, and just average guy.

Ed Metzler: But he was good to you guys, huh?

Mr. Dahlstrum: Oh yeah. He wasn't ... he wasn't bad.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum. Well, when the Mississippi left Long Beach, did you get sea sick?

Mr. Dahlstrum: No.

Ed Metzler: Really?! Most people do!

Mr. Dahlstrum: No.

Ed Metzler: That's a big ship though.

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah. It rocked and rolled quite a bit.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum. Did they feed you right onboard?

Mr. Dahlstrum: Oh yeah, they fed good.

Ed Metzler: Really?! Ice cream and everything, huh?

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah, we even had ice cream in the evenings!

Ed Metzler: Yeah, you had your own bakery.

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Fresh bread?

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Did you put on weight?

Mr. Dahlstrum: Oh, yeah, yeah, boy.

Ed Metzler: (Chuckles).

Mr. Dahlstrum: I went from a hundred and twenty-six to a hundred and fifty-six.

Ed Metzler: My gosh, you fattened up nice! So, when the Mississippi sailed, where did she go to?

Mr. Dahlstrum: All over the Pacific. We earned thirteen battle stars.

Ed Metzler: Really?! Yeah, I understand she got around; she went to Peleliu; she went to Kwajalein, she went to Makin Island or is it ... is that how you pronounce ...

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah, Makin was the first one.

Ed Metzler: Makin was the first one?

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah, it was a (unintelligible) atoll.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum. So, what did the ... the Mississippi do? Just provide fire support for the landers?

Mr. Dahlstrum: Fire support.

Ed Metzler: Yeah. Did you see any Japanese aircraft?

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Well, did you shoot them down?

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: (Chuckles).

Mr. Dahlstrum: Most of them.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter).

Mr. Dahlstrum: Except two of them that hit us (chuckles).

Ed Metzler: Oh really?! Where did that happen?

Mr. Dahlstrum: Where?

Ed Metzler: Yeah. Was that Okinawa?

Mr. Dahlstrum: Okinawa, we got hit, yeah.

Ed Metzler: Yeah?

Mr. Dahlstrum: And somewhere else, I forget where else.

Ed Metzler: So, when they hit the ship, where ... where'd they hit hurt? Midships or stern or what?

Mr. Dahlstrum: They hit on ... come in and the wing clipped the bridge and spun into the boat deck.

Ed Metzler: Uhm!

Mr. Dahlstrum: Over the anti-aircraft guns were, killed a bunch of guys there.

Ed Metzler: How far away were you when all that happened?

Mr. Dahlstrum: Oh, I don't, fifty ... fifty feet or so.

Ed Metzler: Ooh! That must have been a bit scary!

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah, it was a lot of fire.

Ed Metzler: Did you lose any friends?

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah, quite a few.

Ed Metzler: Uhm. I understand that there was an accident aboard ship, too, where ... there was an explosion in one of the main turrets; do you remember that?

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah, turret two.

Ed Metzler: Uhm.

Mr. Dahlstrum: Blew up.

Ed Metzler: Do we know what happened?

Mr. Dahlstrum: (Coughs), yeah. (Coughs), they rammed a ... a black-power bag in on ... on a piece of burning powder bag.

Ed Metzler: Yeah?

Mr. Dahlstrum: And of course, it just blew up.

Ed Metzler: It killed a bunch of guys.

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah, forty some odd.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, I think forty-two or forty-three; I know it was bad! So, after that happened, I guess the Mississippi had to come back to the States to be repaired, is that right?

Mr. Dahlstrum: I think we came back, yeah. Or came back to Pearl Harbor.

Ed Metzler: Okay, didn't come all the way back to the mainland. And they repaired the guns and all that?

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Uhm!

Mr. Dahlstrum: (Coughs).

Ed Metzler: So, what was your scariest moment of the whole time you were on the Mississippi? What was your closest call?

Mr. Dahlstrum: I don't remember; there was a bunch of them.

Ed Metzler: A bunch of them?! Well, tell me about them.

Mr. Dahlstrum: Oh hell, I can't remember.

Ed Metzler: Yeah. Now, I understand the ... the Mississippi was in the Battle of Surigao Strait.

Mr. Dahlstrum: Right!

Ed Metzler: That was a magic moment in World War II. That was *huge*!

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Tell me what you remember about that.

Mr. Dahlstrum: Well, we just (coughs) we got word they were coming (coughs), excuse me.

Ed Metzler: That's alright.

Mr. Dahlstrum: We got word they were coming and went out and cross the (unintelligible).

Ed Metzler: Correct.

Mr. Dahlstrum: Steamed this perfect formation, and we could bear all our guns could rain on her, on the ... the Japs coming in and just their forward guns could fire.

Ed Metzler: Right, they came in one at a time.

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: So, did this happen at night or during the day?

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah, at night.

Ed Metzler: It was a ... it was a night battle.

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Tell me about that.

Mr. Dahlstrum: Oh, I don't remember ... I don't remember much about it.

Ed Metzler: Well, I guess the big guns were going off?

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: And ...

Mr. Dahlstrum: (Unintelligible) a lot of fire.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah, they ... they just shoot the hell out of you (chuckles).

Ed Metzler: I was going to ask you, what does it feel like when a fourteen-inch salvo is fired? That must shake you to your core.

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah, it pulled (throat clearing) it would rip our clothes off.

Ed Metzler: What?!

Mr. Dahlstrum: (Throat clearing), and rip your shirt off.

Ed Metzler: Really?!

Mr. Dahlstrum: Just tear it off, yeah.

Ed Metzler: It rip your shirt off one time?

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: That's amazing!

Mr. Dahlstrum: Do what?

Ed Metzler: That is amazing!

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah!

Ed Metzler: That must be hard on your hearing, too when that goes off.

Mr. Dahlstrum: Well, we had cotton we stuffed in our ears.

Ed Metzler: Uhm, so you had plugs, yeah. So, what ... let's see, I think the Mississippi was also uh, she went to the Philippines next I think, so there the ... there was the Battle of Lingayen Gulf in ...

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah, Lingayen Gulf.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, yeah. So, we had to land a bunch of troops on Luzon Island and ...

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: ... and you guys were right in the middle of it.

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: And after that, you ended up at Okinawa, too.

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: What happened at Okinawa?

Mr. Dahlstrum: Oh, we got hit again.

Ed Metzler: Really?! This is ...

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Was this the one where the wing clipped or was this ...

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: I understand you got a ... a piece of Japanese airplane as a result of that. You picked it up off the deck or something, I guess.

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah, they were scattered all over.

Ed Metzler: Really?!

Mr. Dahlstrum: 'Cause a bomb went off on it, and it just shredded that plane.

Ed Metzler: What kind of part did you get?

Mr. Dahlstrum: Oh, I got a piece of the wing.

Ed Metzler: Oh really? Have you still got it?

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Hum!

Mr. Dahlstrum: So ...

Ed Metzler: Uhm. So, I guess you got a lot of ribbons and commendations from all the different actions that the Mississippi saw. Did you keep all those ribbons and ... and awards and stuff?

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah, yeah.

Ed Metzler: You got those put ... put away somewhere or what?

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: You ever look at them?

Mr. Dahlstrum: Oh yeah.

Ed Metzler: Did ... did you get letters from your family when you were aboard ship and ...

Mr. Dahlstrum: Oh yeah.

Ed Metzler: ... out at sea? Yeah? Did you ever get any cookies or ...

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah (chuckle).

Ed Metzler: Yeah, yeah? Tell me about that. You didn't share them, did you? You ate them all yourself, didn't you?

Mr. Dahlstrum: One (throat clearing) that I kidded my wife most about, I got a (unintelligible) my ... not my wife then, I wasn't married, my mother. A box came and all crushed and crumbled up, just crumbled and it had in the box cookie crumbs that were removed, destroyed, something unfit for human consumption.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter).

Mr. Dahlstrum: And I still got that sign for ... note from ...

Ed Metzler: (Laughter). Yeah, but you ate them anyhow, right?

Mr. Dahlstrum: Oh yeah, but we forget.

Ed Metzler: (Chuckles), now, did you do your part and write letters back home to your parents?

Mr. Dahlstrum: Oh, yeah, I wrote every time I got.

Ed Metzler: Were you married before you went overseas?

Mr. Dahlstrum: No.

Ed Metzler: I didn't think so at seventeen. So, you wrote letters, and then they would cut it all up and into pieces so that you wouldn't tell any secrets, right?

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah (chuckles). They had censors (unintelligible).

Ed Metzler: Yeah, they censored the heck out of them! So, after Okinawa when the Mississippi got hit by the kamikaze, did you guys go back for repairs or did you just kind of patch her up and keep on going?

Mr. Dahlstrum: We went to ... we went back to Pearl Harbor.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum. So, that's 1945; Okinawa was April, May and June of '45, and the war was just about over. Do you remember when they dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima?

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah!

Ed Metzler: Did you have a little victory party after that, I'll bet?

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah (chuckles).

Ed Metzler: Hum?

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah, we did.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter), you want to tell me about that party?

Mr. Dahlstrum: Oh, it just ... we all had ... been saving our beer.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter).

Mr. Dahlstrum: We all (chuckles) break it out ... broke it out and drank it.

Ed Metzler: So, you had a few beers, huh?

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: And I understand the Mississippi ended up in Tokyo Bay during the signing of the final surrender on the Missouri.

Mr. Dahlstrum: You're right.

Ed Metzler: Were you aboard the Mississippi?

Mr. Dahlstrum: Right, uh huh.

Ed Metzler: Well, that must have been interesting to see what Tokyo looked like.

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Did you ever go ashore?

Mr. Dahlstrum: Not then, no, I did later ... after ...

Ed Metzler: Really?!

Mr. Dahlstrum: ... I went back over there then in, oh hell, 19 ...

Other Person: '51.

Mr. Dahlstrum: ... '50, I guess.

Ed Metzler: Yeah? I didn't know you went back after the war.

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah, I did.

Ed Metzler: Why did you go back?

Mr. Dahlstrum: I joined the reserve and we got called back in.

Ed Metzler: Well, I guess they'd repaired Tokyo by then.

Mr. Dahlstrum: Oh no, it was still uh, just shells.

Ed Metzler: Still a few holes, huh?

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Uhm. So, after World War II was over, the Mississippi came back to the U.S., I assume?

Mr. Dahlstrum: You're right.

Ed Metzler: And is that when you got out of the Navy or ...

Mr. Dahlstrum: I got out, yeah.

Ed Metzler: Where did that happen? In west coast in Long Beach or San Francisco or where?

Mr. Dahlstrum: Uh ...

Other Person: You were ...

Mr. Dahlstrum: Norfolk, Virginia.

Ed Metzler: Oh, you went through the Canal then?

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: What was that like?

Mr. Dahlstrum: Just ... we just had about this much clearance on each side.

Ed Metzler: (Chuckles), I was going to say, you got about three inches in each side.

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, that's ... yeah, they designed all those warships so that they would just squeeze through. In fact, the Mississippi was actually in the Atlantic when the war started.

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: And they pulled her through into the Pacific.

Mr. Dahlstrum: (Coughs).

Ed Metzler: So, what was it like to come back to the United States after being out there fighting for two years?

Mr. Dahlstrum: Pretty damned good!

Ed Metzler: Yeah, I bet (laughter). Felt good to kiss the old Mother Country's soil.

Mr. Dahlstrum: And we had ... all had plenty of money on the books 'cause we didn't ... couldn't draw anything over there but five dollars, health and comfort.

Ed Metzler: Well, so you took your money, and you ... did you muster out of the Navy?

Other Person: No, not (unintelligible).

Mr. Dahlstrum: Mustered, yeah.

Other Person: We've got something going on; not right now.

Ed Metzler: And ...

Other Person: Thank you.

Other Person: (Unintelligible).

Ed Metzler: So, you joined the reserve, huh?

Mr. Dahlstrum: I did, yeah, later.

Ed Metzler: Oh later. So, did you go back home after you got out?

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: So, what? Rode the train from Norfolk back to Texas?

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum. So, what do you think about the Japanese after all these years?

Mr. Dahlstrum: They just fighting for their country.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum. And they were pretty tough, too, weren't they?

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah, they were. They didn't mind dying.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, that's true. All you got to do is think about that airplane that ... crashing into the ship to know that they didn't mind dying.

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: So, when you came back from the war, let's see, you went in when you were seventeen.

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: So, when you came back, you were only nineteen.

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah. Nineteen or twenty.

Ed Metzler: Well, let's see. You said February the 10th, so, I guess it depends on when you actually got out, but you were either ... you were either nineteen or had just turned twenty.

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: So, my question is you went as a young teenager of seventeen and you came out twenty. How did the war change you in the way you looked at the world?

Mr. Dahlstrum: (Laughter), I don't know.

Ed Metzler: Did it change you at all, or were you still just the good ole Charlie?

Mr. Dahlstrum: Oh, I imagine it changed me.

Ed Metzler: (Chuckles). You ever think about the war or dream about the war at night after you came back?

Mr. Dahlstrum: Oh yeah.

Ed Metzler: Really? Good memories or scary memories?

Mr. Dahlstrum: Both.

Other Person: (Chuckles).

Ed Metzler: Uhm, uhm. Did you stay in touch with any of your old buddies after the war was over?

Mr. Dahlstrum: Oh yeah.

Ed Metzler: Really? Did you go to reunions?

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Where? Different places?

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Was it fun to talk about the old times?

Mr. Dahlstrum: Oh yeah.

Ed Metzler: (Chuckles). So, what else you want to tell me about your war experience? What's ... what's the first three things that come to your mind when I say World War II?

Mr. Dahlstrum: War is hell (chuckles).

Ed Metzler: That's three!

Other Person: (Chuckles).

Ed Metzler: Perfect! First three things – war is hell. And it is, isn't it?

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah, it is.

Ed Metzler: Everybody glories it, but there's real dead people, friends who are dead.

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Well, you survived.

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah, thank God!

Ed Metzler: Uh hum. So, if you are talking to one of your grandchildren, and they ask you about World War II, what's the three things you tell them?

Mr. Dahlstrum: I don't know (chuckles).

Ed Metzler: You can't say war is hell because you've already told me that. You tell them about when the big guns go off or do you tell them about when that kamikaze was coming or do you tell them about the good times and the ice cream?

Mr. Dahlstrum: We never knew when the kamikazes came.

Ed Metzler: Well, that's true.

Mr. Dahlstrum: They just hit you all of a sudden.

Other Person: (Chuckles).

Ed Metzler: I heard that the battleships and the big ships in the war made their own ice cream.

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Which you've confirmed, and that when the smaller ships like the destroyers and stuff came up with the mail ...

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: ... that they would only give you guys the mail if you'd give them some ice cream.

Mr. Dahlstrum: Oh, we gave them ice cream.

Ed Metzler: You gave them ... you didn't have to be blackmailed?

Mr. Dahlstrum: No.

Ed Metzler: You gave it to them anyhow.

Mr. Dahlstrum: Oh no, we gave them ice cream.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter). Yeah, I've talked to guys who were in the British Navy or the Australian Navy, and they said that when they came aboard a U.S. ship, like the Mississippi, they couldn't believe how good you guys had it because you had ice cream, and I think you ... did you get a beer ration?

Mr. Dahlstrum: No. Oh, we could go ashore and drink it.

Ed Metzler: Well now, now, speaking of that, did you ever go ashore for any liberty and do a little drinking?

Mr. Dahlstrum: Oh yeah.

Other Person: (Chuckles).

Ed Metzler: Yeah? Tell me about that.

Mr. Dahlstrum: Oh, I don't know what there is to tell (chuckles).

Ed Metzler: (Laughter), so you're not going to share all your thoughts with me, huh?

Mr. Dahlstrum: No.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter). Well, that was a long time ago, wasn't it?

Mr. Dahlstrum: It was.

Ed Metzler: The world has changed, hasn't it?

Mr. Dahlstrum: It sure has. It sure changed.

Ed Metzler: Well, you know, all of us youngsters, and that includes me; I'm only seventy-six, all of us think you guys were the greatest generation. What do you think about that?

Mr. Dahlstrum: Nah, we just lucky to even come through it (chuckle).

Ed Metzler: Yeah, and I guess most of the guys I talk to say, “We didn’t do anything anybody else wouldn’t have done.”

Mr. Dahlstrum: No.

Ed Metzler: “And we didn’t think we were heroes.”

Mr. Dahlstrum: No.

Ed Metzler: “And we were just defending our country.” Is that the way it was?

Mr. Dahlstrum: That’s the way it was.

Ed Metzler: Yeah. So, are you proud of what you did during the war?

Mr. Dahlstrum: Most of it, yeah.

Ed Metzler: Okay. I think you should be. Well, I know I speak for a lot of Americans when we say thank you for what you did.

Mr. Dahlstrum: Well, thank you.

Ed Metzler: If you hadn’t stepped up to the ... the plate, we’d be a different country today.

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: We’d be ... learning to speak Japanese and German.

Mr. Dahlstrum: (Laughter), yeah.

Ed Metzler: Huh?

Mr. Dahlstrum: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter). So, anyhow, I’m going to give you one last chance to tell me some good, juicy stories.

Mr. Dahlstrum: Oh, I don’t know any.

Ed Metzler: Oh, that’s what they all say.

Mr. Dahlstrum: (Chuckles).

Ed Metzler: Come on, Charles.

Mr. Dahlstrum: I don't remember any.

Ed Metzler: Okay. Well, if you decide that you come up with some stories that you'd really like to tell, Roy's got my phone number and my email.

Mr. Dahlstrum: Alright.

Ed Metzler: And I'll come back over here and I'll let you tell me some more stories.

Mr. Dahlstrum: Alright.

Ed Metzler: That would be a real thrill for me, and it's an honor to talk to you today.

Mr. Dahlstrum: Well, thank you for talking to us.

Ed Metzler: Let me shake your hand, thank you, sir.

Mr. Dahlstrum: Thank you!

Ed Metzler: I appreciate it.

(end of interview)

FINAL copy
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