

National Museum of the Pacific War

Nimitz Education and Research Center

Fredericksburg, Texas

Interview with

Mr. Don Woodard, Sr.

Date of Interview: December 13, 2019

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Interview in progress.

Ed Metzler: This is Ed Metzler, and today is December the 13th, 2019. I am at the Nimitz Museum in Fredericksburg, Texas, and I am interviewing Mr. Don Woodard, Sr. who is with me here at the Museum today. This interview is in support of the Nimitz Education and Research Center, archives for the National Museum of the Pacific War, Texas Historical Commission, for the preservation of historical information related to this site.

So, Don, thanks for spending the time with me this morning, and I'd like to start by having you introduce yourself if you would please, and tell me when and where you were born.

Mr. Woodard: I'm Don Woodard. I was born in Fort Worth, Texas on February 16, 1926.

Ed Metzler: So, you got a birthday coming up here in another six, eight weeks.

Mr. Woodard: Nine ... number ninety-four.

Ed Metzler: Number ninety-four!

Mr. Woodard: Coming up.

Ed Metzler: Congratulations! So, you were born in town, in a hospital or at home or what?

Mr. Woodard: I was born in a little town called Springtown, Texas (pause).

Ed Metzler: And what'd your dad do for a living?

Mr. Woodard: Well, wait a minute.

Ed Metzler: I'm sorry.

Mr. Woodard: I'm going to back up. (Pause), no, that was my brother who (unintelligible). I was born in Fort Worth, Texas at 2722 Northwest 27th Street at home. And years and years and years and years afterward, and I'd grown up. I was driving around that neighborhood once, and I saw a lady sitting on a front porch and I went up to her and said, "Ma'am, I am Don Woodard, and I was born in this

house.” And she took me in the house and showed me all the ... and that house is still standing today, 2722 Northwest 27th, Fort Worth, Texas.

Ed Metzler: That’s something!

Mr. Woodard: And I have a picture on my dresser at home of myself, my sister and my brother, and I’m the only one of those three that is still here. And I was wearing a little Navy suit [and] when I was three or four years old.

Ed Metzler: So, you were destined to be a Navy man.

Mr. Woodard: I really was.

Ed Metzler: (Chuckle), I’ll be darned.

Mr. Woodard: I wanted to be in the Navy.

Ed Metzler: Yeah. Now, were you the youngest of the three children?

Mr. Woodard: No, I was the middle, uh, no (pause). I was younger; my brother was first and I was ... I was ... I was in the middle.

Ed Metzler: You’re in the middle?

Mr. Woodard: Yeah. My sister was younger than me.

Ed Metzler: Hum.

Mr. Woodard: One brother and one sister, and I was in the middle.

Ed Metzler: Yeah. So, what did your father do for a living?

Mr. Woodard: Well, he did many things. When I was born, he was an engineer on a streetcar in Fort Worth, and he wound up going to California and being an engineer on a big Pacific electric (pause) car that ran from L.A. all the way up to Hollywood.

Ed Metzler: Hum. And your mother was, I guess back then they called them homemakers. She ran the household?

Mr. Woodard: That’s right.

Ed Metzler: So, did you go to public schools there or what?

Mr. Woodard: I went to public schools. And when I was growing up, my mother only had a sixth-grade education, but she always insisted on me having books. There was supermarket there in California where we lived at the time, and they had a little room there with books and everything, and she would always bring me home books from there. And I never was without books. My mother saw to ... saw to it that I had books.

Ed Metzler: And that's a good thing, for sure. So, you went ... where did you live in Fort Worth? Through your ... all of your school years?

Mr. Woodard: Yeah. When we ... when my dad moved to California, I was there until I was about (pause) four or five, and then he returned to Texas.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Woodard: And I'd been there all my life, except two years I was in the Navy.

Ed Metzler: So, you graduated from high school?

Mr. Woodard: I was valedictorian.

Ed Metzler: You *really* graduated!

Mr. Woodard: (Unintelligible) High School. I read ... read those books (unintelligible).

Ed Metzler: Paid off, didn't it? (chuckles)

Mr. Woodard: And I never will forget my dad being so proud of my being valedictorian when he was not a high school graduate either. But both of my parents ... but my ... my dad had a set of Compton Encyclopedias, and he read those encyclopedias all the time, and he smoked. He ... he made his own cigarette rolls, and every once in a while, those books today ... I still have those books ... I'll find a little tissue paper like you roll cigarettes in which he used for ...

Ed Metzler: Cigarette paper, yeah!

Mr. Woodard: ... book marker (laughter).

Ed Metzler: (Laughter), isn't that something?! That's real history you got there, just as a book mark. That is something.

Mr. Woodard: Well, I ... I use those books. I wrote a column for the Business Press. I write a lot of columns for the Business Press, and I will resort to those encyclopedias for certain in ... information, even though you can get it on the internet now.

Ed Metzler: So, you graduated from high school after the war had started then because the war, you know, Pearl Harbor was December 7th, 1941

Mr. Woodard: Right, well I graduated in June of '43.

Ed Metzler: '43, so you were ...

Mr. Woodard: (Unintelligible).

Ed Metzler: ... you were like a junior in high school when the war started.

Mr. Woodard: I had delivered the Star Telegram every morning; I was a paperboy, and it was a Sunday morning; I delivered that paper. And my dad would take me in the car clear downtown where my paper route was, and so we'd come back that morning and sitting there about ten o'clock and radio on. Television – what was that? No television. Radio. And I think his name was Robert Trout (sp?) was his ... commentator, and he said, “We have a news flash here that our naval base at Oahu,” which we say Oahu now ...

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Woodard: ... , “Oahu had been bombed.”

Ed Metzler: He probably had never said that word before.

Mr. Woodard: Never said Oahu.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Woodard: And he ... he was a veteran radio caster, and that was my introduction to Pearl Harbor, and that was Sunday. And went to school the next morning, Monday, Green Trimble, the principal technical high school had the whole student body in the auditorium listening to President Roosevelt's Day of Infamy speech.

Ed Metzler: So, what was everybody's reaction? I mean, what was your family's reaction?

Mr. Woodard: Everybody was wanting to go to war.

Ed Metzler: You bet.

Mr. Woodard: And everybody wanted to do his thing. And when I was ... I was ... I guess ... 1945, I was born in '26, so (pause) and I'd be about fifteen at the time of Pearl Harbor.

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Woodard: And so, I spent two years delivering that paper and following that war, and I called up the Navy, 1017, “Do you take seventeen-year-old men?” “Well, we take them if the father will sign the paper.” And my daddy would not sign that I could go at seventeen. But a few months later, it came February 16th and I was eighteen, and he had nothing to say about it; then I was subject to the draft. And so, immediately when I became eighteen, I went to Dallas and that's where I joined the Navy.

Ed Metzler: And why did you join the Navy? Just because the Navy had always been part of your psyche right back from ...?

Mr. Woodard: I didn't want to be in the Army. I wanted to be in the Navy. And in those few years that we lived in California when I was a boy, we'd go down to the restaurant and see these sailors coming in off of this ship, you know, and I was sitting there a little four- or five-year-old seeing those sailors – that's what I wanted to do.

Ed Metzler: Your brother was older than you, correct?

Mr. Woodard: About a year older.

Ed Metzler: So ...

Mr. Woodard: He ... he was born in '24 and I was born in '26.

Ed Metzler: ... so did he go in also?

Mr. Woodard: He ... he became a pilot in the Air Force, went in the Air Force with the Army.

Ed Metzler: Army Air Corps back then, yeah.

Mr. Woodard: He became a pilot in that and he never saw any action as I did in the Navy.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Woodard: I saw a lot of action.

Ed Metzler: Uhm. So, where did you go to boot camp?

Mr. Woodard: San Diego.

Ed Metzler: How was that for you – tough, easy, fun?

Mr. Woodard: (Pause), when I got into the Navy and got San Diego, came into Los Angeles off the Southern Pacific, transferred to a streamliner at L.A. to go down to San Diego. I was going down there, the Pacific Ocean on this side, orange groves on that side, got down to San Diego, and ... and I don't recall how or who or what, but they had a table set up for food and must have been the Navy, but I don't know what ... at the train station, but anyway, I was famished and I saw that big steam bowl of what I took to be apples. I got me some, damn, it was turnips.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter).

Mr. Woodard: And that was on April the 1st!

Ed Metzler: April fooled!

Mr. Woodard: April 1st when we got to San Diego of 194 ...

Ed Metzler: ... 4.

Mr. Woodard: ... 4, yeah.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Woodard: April 1st of '44.

Ed Metzler: Right. So, how did ... so ... so you ate your turnips or not?

Mr. Woodard: I did not eat the turnips.

Ed Metzler: (Chuckles), that's ... that's a good story. So, into boot camp what, eight weeks? Six to eight weeks of ...

Mr. Woodard: Well, that was ... I went in the Navy on March 28th, signed the papers in Dallas, and by April 1st, I down there at San Diego. And from April 1st, boot camp and after whatever it was in boot camp, they'd send all those people to various schools, you know? I was assigned to a Yeoman School. I went to a Yeoman School and graduated on October 16th.

Ed Metzler: So, where was that? Was that also in San Diego?

Mr. Woodard: San ... San Diego there.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Woodard: Big naval base.

Ed Metzler: So, what did they teach you in Yeoman School?

Mr. Woodard: Well, in fact, in high school, I studied business – typing, shorthand and I ... I still do a lot of writing in Gregg Shorthand; I can do it real fast. And so, it became apparent to whoever it was in Diego what school I was going to that I was fit for a Yeoman School, and there they were teaching those sailors how to write shorthand, and type and (unintelligible) when I got to the Navy, that was my ... valedictorian in high school.

Ed Metzler: So (pause) ...

Mr. Woodard: (Unintelligible). That was in San Diego. I went up to San Pedro where the U.S.S. Bowie (unintelligible).

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Woodard: It was laid down in August.

Ed Metzler: So, you were assigned to the Bowie before she was finished, huh?

Mr. Woodard: Yeah, yeah.

Ed Metzler: So, you're a plank owner as they say.

Mr. Woodard: Yeah. We had to do a whole lot of work getting our ship ... paperwork getting our ship to sea, you know? I never will forget, I was sitting there, and I heard the captain and two or three others back there talking, and they'd talk about sex.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Woodard: And I remember the captain said, "If ... if the good Lord made anything better than sex, he kept it for himself."

Ed Metzler: (Chuckles).

Mr. Woodard: I remember that.

Ed Metzler: That's a ... that's a memorable statement (chuckle).

Mr. Woodard: But then while we were doing all that work, I was in my bed one morning at two a.m.

Ed Metzler: Now this is in San Pedro?

Mr. Woodard: San Pedro.

Ed Metzler: And the ship at what stage now – still under construction or ...

Mr. Woodard: Well, this was a ... that's a good question. Let me think. I know that the ship was laid down in August.

Ed Metzler: (Unintelligible).

Mr. Woodard: Okay, yeah, it ... of '44.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Woodard: And I graduated in October, so that ship was com ... coming along real good, so ...

Ed Metzler: She was launched in October?

Mr. Woodard: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Woodard: So, by December when we took it to sea, from August (unintelligible) to December, that ship was ... and anyway, on November the 5th ... we went to sea in December ... on November the 5th I was in ... asleep and the guard came back and said, "Woody (sp?), you got a telephone call," two a.m. So, went down to the office; my mother was calling and said, "Son, you just lost your daddy."

Ed Metzler: Wow!

Mr. Woodard: And ...

Ed Metzler: That's a tough call.

Mr. Woodard: And on ... on a Saturday, and the next morning, Sunday, I had to go around to the offices there at ... Navy offices and get clearance and get leave and everything and get military air transport to Fort Worth. So, we ... I left on MATS from Brandberg (sp?) Field, flew all night (pause), got my first plane ride.

Ed Metzler: Bouncing all around.

Mr. Woodard: And then I buried my father and returned to San Pedro.

Ed Metzler: How old was he when he passed?

Mr. Woodard: How old? He ... he was fifty-one.

Ed Metzler: Uhm.

Mr. Woodard: And that brother of mine, when he died, after the war, he was only forty-nine, and here I am approaching ninety-four. My father died at fifty-one and my brother at forty-nine.

Ed Metzler: Wow!

Mr. Woodard: But anyway, the ... it was a hard thing for me to ... I ... I couldn't do anything thinking about my dad.

Ed Metzler: Yeah! You were only eighteen!

Mr. Woodard: Yeah, and (unintelligible) there's another picture. That's a ... that's an interesting story. When I got to the Navy and wherever I was wanting to go, I became so homesick. And so, one day I screwed up my courage to march over to the office where, I guess, it was a Lieutenant JG was in charge, and I wanted to get leave to go home and had to make up all kinds of stories to ... I ... I'd tell him I ... I was needed to help my dad put a roof on (unintelligible), and so the Lieutenant says, "Can't let you go." So, I turned around, marched away. And I hadn't gotten very far, here came a runner up to me, said, "The Lieutenant wants to see you again." So, I went back, and he says, "I'm going to give you that ... that leave." And I was ... got a note in there some place, and I felt and I ... I was ... read a lot of books and things, I said I felt like Columbus who had

gone to see Queen Isabella for financing for his voyage and she'd turned him down. And Columbus left there broken hearted, and she sent a runner and called him and gave him a ...

Ed Metzler: Change of (unintelligible).

Mr. Woodard: ... and that was the way I felt. And (pause) that was (pause) ... so I came home when he gave me that, and my dad met me at the train station. And we got pictures in here of when all the family seeing me in my uniform.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Woodard: And everything. But had that Lieutenant not done that, I'd never of seen my dad again. But because of him.

Ed Metzler: That wasn't long before he passed away then, huh?

Mr. Woodard: Well, he passed away on November the 5th, 1944, and I ... I joined the Navy in March. So, it was June ... in about April or May when I was trying to get that leave. But I've always been grateful to that Lieutenant, don't know his name, but that was a good thing.

Ed Metzler: So, how long did you stay home that time before you came back?

Mr. Woodard: Oh, maybe not more than ten days.

Ed Metzler: To ... to ...

Mr. Woodard: Probably a week.

Ed Metzler: Did you feel different after (throat clearing) that ten days? Did you feel like you wanted to go back?

Mr. Woodard: Well, I (pause) I was ... it was hard for me and my mother and everything, you know, but anyway, we took that Bowie to see. And I remember every day it was so hard because of thinking of my dad.

Ed Metzler: Uhm.

Mr. Woodard: 'Cause he followed that war with a degree of assiduity 'cause that was ...

Ed Metzler: So, tell me about the Bowie. Good ship?

Mr. Woodard: Well, I had ... I had a friend who was in the Air Force; Biscamp (sp?) is his name, and he was a navigator on a B-29 that was shot down over Tokyo, and he became a prisoner for a year. But I always kidded him; he was in the Air Force and he lost a very valuable aircraft, but I brought my ship back!

Ed Metzler: (Chuckles). Yeah. How did he take that (chuckle)?

Mr. Woodard: Oh he ... he ...

Ed Metzler: He knew you were kidding.

Mr. Woodard: He ... he laughs, yeah.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Woodard: I ... I tell the whole group that he, you know, I'm kidding.

Ed Metzler: (Chuckles).

Mr. Woodard: But boy, we landed those troops all over Philippines, Okinawa, and occupation troops to Sasebo, Japan.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum. So, the shakedown cruise you went on ... you went on the shakedown cruises?

Mr. Woodard: Yeah, yeah.

Ed Metzler: Did ... did they sort out all the issues that normally are there with a new ship?

Mr. Woodard: Well, we sure did because we'd cruise back and forth to ... by Catalina Island, you know?

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Woodard: And be gone for three or four days and come back and take care of this item. But ...

Ed Metzler: What was your station on ... aboard ship?

Mr. Woodard: Well, I was the captain's yeoman. I knew pretty well what was going on. The ... eventually, my battle station was on the very tip end of that ship on a five inch, thirty-eight at gun. I was a sight setter on it.

Ed Metzler: That's up front?

Mr. Woodard: Hum?

Ed Metzler: That one's up front, huh? The five inch? On the bow of the ship?

Mr. Woodard: No! On the stern.

Ed Metzler: On the stern? So, that's where the five inches are, okay.

Mr. Woodard: Right on the stern. And I'm telling you ...

Ed Metzler: Let's have a look at this photo.

Mr. Woodard: Okay.

Ed Metzler: There it is! Or is that an AA?

Mr. Woodard: When that gun went off, boy, I'm telling you ... you know it went off!

Ed Metzler: (Laughter). So, what were you ... you had a crew on that gun, right? You had a loader and a ...

Mr. Woodard: Oh yeah, yeah.

Ed Metzler: Now what was your role?

Mr. Woodard: I was a sight setter.

Ed Metzler: Sight setter, okay.

Mr. Woodard: You ... you had to ... you'd fire one and if that one wasn't good, you got to ... twist it out a little bit, you get over to ... so you'd hit ... hit the target. I was a sight setter. We got pictures of it in my book there.

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Woodard: (Unintelligible).

Ed Metzler: Okay, good.

Mr. Woodard: But that ... that gun right there.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter). So, your first cruise we'll mention was uhm ...

Mr. Woodard: Well, when ... when ... our first cruise ... we got the Bowie at San Francisco and we'd gone from Pedro up to Frisco and well, we ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Woodard: Nobody knew where we was going.

Ed Metzler: It was a secret.

Mr. Woodard: But as soon as that pilot swung off of the ship ... we'd gone under the Golden Gate Bridge, and the captain came on the ... and I ... I hadn't been ascended the ranks up to be his Yeoman at that time, I was just a Seaman like every ... and he came on, "Attention all hands. Our first stop will be Eniwetok in the Marshall Islands." And boy, about a week later, we steamed right by Pearl Harbor, didn't even stop.

Ed Metzler: Just waved (laughter).

Mr. Woodard: Didn't wave, and we did more than that. We ... they had a plane pulling a sleeve and we took some shots at the sleeve, you know?

Ed Metzler: Some practice shots, yeah.

Mr. Woodard: Yes. And we went on, and (unintelligible) Eniwetok.

Ed Metzler: Now let me ask you a question – did you go there alone or were there other ships accompanying the Bowie?

Mr. Woodard: There was other ships. I'd say other ships, two or three.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum, yeah.

Mr. Woodard: And Eniwetok is as flat as that table!

Ed Metzler: (Chuckle).

Mr. Woodard: And I never (unintelligible), and all at once, all those buildings and barracks and things built on that little island (pause) ...

Ed Metzler: So, it wasn't much to it, huh?

Mr. Woodard: It wasn't ... wasn't any mountains ... mountains (unintelligible), Eniwetok. And from Eniwetok, we went up ... we went up to Guam and took a lot of food and salmon and stuff to Guam.

Ed Metzler: You take any soldiers?

Mr. Woodard: Uh, not ... not on that trip.

Ed Metzler: Mostly supplies?

Mr. Woodard: Yeah, supplies.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Woodard: And after two or three days at Guam, we got orders to go to Saipan. In Saipan, still fighting, and I went to church on Saipan that Sunday morning (unintelligible). And we loaded on casualties from Saipan, brought them back to Pearl Harbor.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, there was a lot of casualties from Saipan.

Mr. Woodard: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Did you have doctors aboard ship?

Mr. Woodard: Oh yeah! And as I recall, more than one of them died on the trip to Pearl. But they had that big hospital there at Pearl, (unintelligible) General Hospital. That's a great mother of a ...

Ed Metzler: So, you went from Saipan directly to Pearl?

Mr. Woodard: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Woodard: Sure did. And what (unintelligible) you'll never interview anybody else has got such a command of (unintelligible) 'cause the dates on there. Hell, that's ... I was a captain's yeoman. I kept ... and you're not supposed to keep a diary in the Navy.

Ed Metzler: That's right.

Mr. Woodard: But I did. I knew ... I got a whole ... what day we did this and that.

Ed Metzler: Did you get any close exposure to some of the wounded guys?

Mr. Woodard: No.

Ed Metzler: They were in a separate ...

Mr. Woodard: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: ... ward, I guess, infirmary.

Mr. Woodard: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Yeah. But ...

Mr. Woodard: Yeah, I know that we took casualties to Pearl Harbor and to (unintelligible) General Hospital, and then (pause) I have to look at my record (pause). I, okay ...

Ed Metzler: Well, according to what I saw, uh, you arrived in Pearl Harbor on the 27th of March with your ... with the wounded and then you guys turned around in a couple of weeks and were headed out again.

Mr. Woodard: Yeah. So, what was ...

Ed Metzler: You loaded elements of the 10th Army and headed towards Okinawa.

Mr. Woodard: (Pause) okay. On the way, by that time, I was the captain's yeoman.

Ed Metzler: What does a captain's yeoman do?

Mr. Woodard: Well, give you an example. One day in ... down in ... in there where the Indianapolis was torpedoed and sunk, very dangerous area and ... and one of the great dangers you have down there is not the fact you're going to get hit by a bullet or something, but flash burns in case your ship ... is hit and great balls of fire and everything. So, I came above deck that morning, very hot down there. I had my sleeves rolled up and the captain, just like he was sitting there over there on his throne.

Ed Metzler: (Chuckles).

Mr. Woodard: He saw me over there and he (pause), so I went over there and said ...

Ed Metzler: So, he beckoned you over, yeah.

Mr. Woodard: “Don’t you know ...,” and he said, “I got an order this morning that because of the danger of flash burns, no man come above decks with his sleeves rolled up.” “Yes, sir.” I typed the order. He turned to the boatswain’s mate and said, “Put this man in the brig.”

Ed Metzler: Whoa!

Mr. Woodard: And I was in the brig for several hours. And the chaplain came down and said, “Woody,” ... they ... they all called me Woody.

Ed Metzler: They all called you Woody, okay (chuckle).

Mr. Woodard: “Woody, what are you doing in the brig for?!” And I told the chaplain and he says, “Well, let me go talk to the captain.” So, by and by, the boatswain’s mate came back and I was a free man. Now that’s a hell of a ... down there in a war zone, in a brig, if you should get hit – what then?

Ed Metzler: You go down with the ship (chuckles).

Mr. Woodard: But, you know, I always thought that the captain ... I think he was just ... (unintelligible) humor on the high seas. He ... he thought that would be a funny thing to do.

Ed Metzler: A good for a laugh, huh?

Mr. Woodard: That ... not only that, but it was also making an example of the whole crew that I’m ... I tell you to do something, you do it. But I never was mad at him because that ... if anything, ‘cause I (unintelligible) I ... I got my just deserts, but I was in the brig!

Ed Metzler: (Chuckles).

Mr. Woodard: On a ship in the ... the war zone!

Ed Metzler: Did you ever get sea sick?

Mr. Woodard: Oh hell, yes! When I went to sea, I ... you bet! I couldn’t get to the side of the ship fast enough.

Ed Metzler: Wow!

Mr. Woodard: And boy, once you get your sea legs, no problem. But boy, we'd take these troops aboard and I'd watch them. Boy, those Marines ... but we sailors out on sea legs, we was over that, but ...

Ed Metzler: They weren't (chuckles).

Mr. Woodard: They weren't.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter). What was the food like aboard ship?

Mr. Woodard: Great!

Ed Metzler: Good cooks!

Mr. Woodard: Huh?

Ed Metzler: They were good cooks then there.

Mr. Woodard: Well, I'll tell you one thing. I could say as the captain's yeoman, you can ... you can do certain things. And all the cooks, they knew who I was. "Hell, this is the captain's yeoman, you know," or anything I'd want, they'd make me cakes and anything I'd did, they'd do that.

Ed Metzler: You might as well have been an officer.

Mr. Woodard: Hum?

Ed Metzler: You might as well have been one of the officers.

Mr. Woodard: That's right. And I never will forget that would be probably about it. The dates in the book ...

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Woodard: ... about May the 2nd that he put me in the brig. And a few days later, that same captain, that captain who had at first said, "Our first op will be Eniwetok and the Marshall Islands." That night he said, "All hands go to your battle stations." And I was running to my gunner on the stern of the ship. These two kamikazes came over. One was shot down 'cause every ship in the harbor was firing at them, and the other one, right over our bow, into the Battleship New Mexico.

Ed Metzler: This is at Okinawa?

Mr. Woodard: Okinawa.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Woodard: I believe it was on ... dates in there; I think it was May the 10th. And great balls of fire!

Ed Metzler: Uhm!

Mr. Woodard: I saw that – god!

Ed Metzler: Uhm! So ...

Mr. Woodard: Again, that ... the ... as captain's yeoman, you ... the battle was going on over on Okinawa, we were there in the harbor and waiting to maybe take casualties back or something, but may be a war going on, but sometimes it's very quiet, you know? Nothing going on right where we are, so I took the captain's gig ... you think of that.

Ed Metzler: I'm listening.

Mr. Woodard: I took the captain and went over to see a friend of mine who was on the Granville, USS Granville.

Ed Metzler: Was that an attack transport ...

Mr. Woodard: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: ... also?

Mr. Woodard: APA.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Woodard: APA-171.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Woodard: We were on, three, five. One, one, three, seven [USS Bowie-137]. But as I was going over there, we passed right by the [USS] New Mexico, saw a big chain down in the water, I could have reached out and touched the chain. And I was on the captain's gig and got over there and had my visit, came back right by the New Mexico, it was afternoon. And that night about sunset is when, "All hands, go to your battle stations!" And I saw the New Mexico get hit where I was just hours before.

Ed Metzler: How does that make you feel?

Mr. Woodard: I don't know, I just ...

Ed Metzler: Lucky (chuckle)?

Mr. Woodard: No, I ... I had ... was what I was out there for, and (pause) ...

Ed Metzler: So, when the Bowie went to Okinawa, you basically down ... launched the landing craft with ...

Mr. Woodard: Yeah, yeah, we ...

Ed Metzler: ... with the 10th Army guys in it? What was that like?

Mr. Woodard: Well, we put ... put them in the boat and lowered the rope and coxswain takes the boat over to the island. At that time, the fighting was going on; it wasn't storming the beach all at once. If you're already fight, and we're bringing the re-enforcements ...

Ed Metzler: Right, I think the 10th Army was a re-enforcement ...

Mr. Woodard: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Because you guys were in Okinawa in ... from the 10th of May till like the 15th of May.

Mr. Woodard: Well, whatever it is, I can get you the dates.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Woodard: Like today.

Ed Metzler: The Okinawa Campaign started on the 1st of April, April Fool's Day.

Mr. Woodard: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: So, we were already five to six weeks into the ...

Mr. Woodard: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: ... campaign, but it lasted into June.

Mr. Woodard: Oh yeah.

Ed Metzler: It was horrible from what I'm told.

Mr. Woodard: That was *the* war of the Pacific.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, that was a tough one! So, did you take wounded on at ... at Okinawa to bring back or do you ...

Mr. Woodard: I don't think so. I don't recall. All I know is when we left Okinawa, I guess, well ... I don't know, makes it so damn ... well, went to Ulithi ...

Ed Metzler: Uhm.

Mr. Woodard: ... Eniwetok and Guam, but it's all in that book, day by day.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Woodard: And then, that would be in May, and we were back in Pearl Harbor, and Chief McCaffrey (sp?) he's chief yeoman, we were sitting on the fantail with the ... back there by my gun, and he says, "Gun (?), have you heard about that ... about

that big bomb we've got?" And he said, "Boy, we got a big bomb now that's going to end the war." And (pause) ...

Ed Metzler: But that was before Hiroshima, right?

Mr. Woodard: Yeah. Well, I guess you'd say that was Hiroshima.

Ed Metzler: Well, they had already tested it in New Mexico to see if it worked.

Mr. Woodard: (Unintelligible).

Ed Metzler: And I'm suspecting that's what ...

Mr. Woodard: Well, we ... we hadn't heard; all we knew was Hiroshima.

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Woodard: All I know is we got orders with ... we went back to Hawaii, yeah. We went to the big island and landed the Fifth Marines and took them, after a stop or two at Saipan, took them to Sasebo, Japan, occupation troops.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum, after the war was over.

Mr. Woodard: After the war. And after we got the Marines off the ship, heck, we were given liberty to go ashore and see what we could see. And three or four of us yeomen went ... went up the street.

Ed Metzler: This is in Sasebo or Sasebo however you pronounce that?

Mr. Woodard: Sasebo.

Ed Metzler: Sasebo, yeah.

Mr. Woodard: Sasebo.

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Woodard: Sasebo today remains a big, big U.S. naval base at Sasebo.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Woodard: It ... it is a ... just maybe a hundred miles from Hiroshima.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Woodard: Not far from Hiroshima. And we went up the street there at Sasebo and saw these Japanese girls sitting on the front porch (unintelligible).

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Woodard: But this shows what a ... a few ... a few weeks before we'd been trying to kill them, and they was bombing New Mexico and then a few months later ... a few weeks later, we're walking around see ... seeing these pretty girls and they said,

“Would you like to come in?” “Yeah!” Well, we’re the conquerors; they’re the concorred. “You can come in but you have to take off your shoes.” So, we had to take off our shoes, the conquerors did to go up on the front porch with the conquered. And they served us some sake and some cookies and stuff. Hell, we’d just been trying to kill them!

Ed Metzler: Strange, isn’t it?

Mr. Woodard: Yeah! And you compare that to those poor sons of bitches over there in Bagdad and Iraq, roadside bombs and things that went on for a long time after the war was over (pause).

Ed Metzler: That’s strange change of events there in September when they surrendered.

Mr. Woodard: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Was there a big celebration when Japan finally officially surrendered? Did you guys throw a part or throw your hats in the air or something?

Mr. Woodard: I don’t remember all that much about it because (pause) Chief McCaffrey went down to the wood shop and brough, and got some wood alcohol and we was drinking that wood alcohol and god a mighty! I never got so sick.

Ed Metzler: Well, that stuff’s not good for you (chuckles).

Mr. Woodard: And I was ... next ... when we went to ... it was days after we’d gone to sea before I recovered myself (coughs). That’s my allergies.

Ed Metzler: Uhm.

Mr. Woodard: But that’s what we (pause) but you know, there’s the Bowie, and I’ve a picture ... pictures in my records there.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Woodard: There sets the captain up on the bow, and who was he sitting with? The Japanese pilot. The Japanese pilot leading us into Sasebo harbor.

Ed Metzler: Uhm!

Mr. Woodard: I have, as the captain’s yeoman, I got ... I came by those ... those ... all those pictures.

Ed Metzler: Uhm! Did you talk to that pilot?

Mr. Woodard: No.

Ed Metzler: Could he speak English, I wonder?

Mr. Woodard: I don't know that, but all I know, he knew that harbor.

Ed Metzler: (Chuckles), that's what's important!

Mr. Woodard: The ships, you know, at sea, he's god almighty, the captain is, and hell, he can sail over the (unintelligible) but when they ... when they get to a new harbor, they don't know anything about that, and they have to have a local pilot lead them in and ...

Ed Metzler: Uhm.

Mr. Woodard: ... to ... and ...

Ed Metzler: So, what did the harbor at Sasebo look like? Were there a lot of sunken ships?

Mr. Woodard: Oh yeah.

Ed Metzler: And damage?

Mr. Woodard: Oh, hell yeah.

Ed Metzler: Tell me about that.

Mr. Woodard: Oh. Saw aircraft carriers out ... badly damaged, everything was ... you've been ... I saw lots of destruction in Sasebo harbor.

Ed Metzler: How did the Japanese react to you guys as conquerors? Were they just ...

Mr. Woodard: Well, I just told you; they gave us sake and cookies.

Ed Metzler: Well, that's the girls, but what about the guys?

Mr. Woodard: I don't have much (unintelligible) with the guys.

Ed Metzler: They just kind of ignored you guys?

Mr. Woodard: Well, we ... that was just a short trip that we made over there.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Woodard: We didn't stay long; we had to get back to the ship.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Woodard: But I didn't have any intercourse with any of the natives as such.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Woodard: But all I know that we saw those pretty Japanese women, and there's three or four of them on the porch and they made us take off our shoes.

Ed Metzler: (Chuckles).

Mr. Woodard: And we (unintelligible) at the gate.

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

Mr. Woodard: No, no.

Ed Metzler: 'Cause I ...

Mr. Woodard: I heard ... heard about her, but I never heard her.

Ed Metzler: Yeah. Did you have a handful of close friends that you kind of palled around with on the ship or ...

Mr. Woodard: Oh, yeah.

Ed Metzler: Who ... who was ... who were those guys?

Mr. Woodard: Well, a little yeoman, you know.

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Woodard: And then there was Flo ... Floyd Miller, he was older than I was, but Floyd and I was great sea pals. We'd go ashore. I know one ... one day Floyd got drunk and I had to bring him back to the ship, and I ... 'cause I think that's in my diary there.

Ed Metzler: This is while you were in Japan on occu ...

Mr. Woodard: Oh no, (unintelligible) in Hawaii.

Ed Metzler: In Hawaii, okay.

Mr. Woodard: Or it could be San Francisco; I'd have to check on it, but I know that he got drunk, and I know that night he got two tattoos of (unintelligible).

Ed Metzler: (Chuckles).

Mr. Woodard: but Floyd and I were ... and then there was Clinton Graves; he was one of the yeomen, and we got decommissioned at Norfolk. We came home with orders to report to New Orleans, such and such a date to be uh, decommissioned to be ...

Ed Metzler: Mustered out.

Mr. Woodard: Mustered out.

Ed Metzler: Right, right.

Mr. Woodard: So, Clint and I, we got mustered out at New Orleans, and ... and he lived in Oklahoma, so he and I rode the train from New Orleans to Fort Worth. He got ... I got off at Fort Worth and he went on. But I've got a note in there from Clint sent me a picture of the crew and it's all in there.

Ed Metzler: Were you able to stay in contact with any of your buddies after the war was over?

Mr. Woodard: Yeah, yeah, sure was.

Ed Metzler: What, did you write letters or visit or what?

Mr. Woodard: Visit or letters. I've got letters.

Ed Metzler: Did you have any reunions of the ship crew? You know, where everybody got together at the ...

Mr. Woodard: Never did.

Ed Metzler: Hum. Did you write letters home while you were aboard ship, or ...

Mr. Woodard: Sure did!

Ed Metzler: ... or receive letters? Were you good at that?

Mr. Woodard: Yeah! Hell, I was a ... a yeoman, had ... had a typewriter.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, you had everything you needed.

Mr. Woodard: Yeah. I had a girlfriend (pause). That's ... (unintelligible) when we got back to Pearl Harbor, I'd say I had about forty-five letters from one ...

Ed Metzler: Whoa! To ... you mean for you to mail or for ...

Mr. Woodard: Mail.

Ed Metzler: ... mail waiting for you?

Mr. Woodard: Mail for me, yeah.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Woodard: I had forty-five letters and ... and we always wrote forward to get into some port where you won't get mail.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Woodard: Of course, I always had pretty good money on (unintelligible); you can get paid, you know, every ... on ship there's no place to spend the money, and they'd always have a posting up there (unintelligible) and how much money is in ... (unintelligible); I always had more than anybody because of them gambled a lot and ... and ... but no place to spend your money. And I'd always get ... when I got mine ... sent to my mother; she was a widow at that time.

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Woodard: And I did what I could for her; I sent her money.

Ed Metzler: You bet. So, when you were at your battle stations, you mentioned at least one instance where when you were in Okinawa, you saw a couple of kamikazes coming by.

Mr. Woodard: Sure did!

Ed Metzler: I gather the Bowie was never the actual target herself?

Mr. Woodard: No, no.

Ed Metzler: But you had the opportunity fire at the kamikazes?

Mr. Woodard: You bet!

Ed Metzler: Did you get them?

Mr. Woodard: Well, I like ... I like to claim that I shot down one of those planes. But every ship in the harbor was firing at them.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter), there was a lot of lead in the air, yeah (laughter). How do you feel about the Japanese?

Mr. Woodard: (Pause), what do you mean?

Ed Metzler: Well, you still hate them? Do you like them? Did you ever hate them? How do you feel?

Mr. Woodard: I hated them, but I don't have that feeling now be ... I ... I kept ... I ... I guess I have never been asked that question before, but I guess I quit hating them when those beautiful Japanese girls said, "Come in and have some ... some sake and cookies."

Ed Metzler: That's interesting.

Mr. Woodard: The war was over.

Ed Metzler: It's time to set it aside.

Mr. Woodard: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Get on down the road.

Mr. Woodard: You bet!

Ed Metzler: I like that attitude.

Mr. Woodard: And when I got back in civilian life, I studied a long time the Japanese language, learned ... learned quite a bit about it.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Woodard: I could read Japanese pretty good.

Ed Metzler: Really?

Mr. Woodard: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Can you still?

Mr. Woodard: Yeah. Well, I can make it out, yeah.

Ed Metzler: That's amazing! It just ...

Mr. Woodard: I'd go to Hawaii and they had a lot of Japanese signs in Hawaii; I could read it good.

Ed Metzler: Uhm! Have you ever been back to Japan since the war?

Mr. Woodard: Once.

Ed Metzler: Where'd you go?

Mr. Woodard: Landed at some (unintelligible) near Tokyo or whatever it was, but I ... we flew from Alaska uh, (pause) down to Hong Kong and stopped there near Tokyo. It's on (pause) and that (pause) ... (shuffling sounds).

Ed Metzler: Did ... when you guys were in Japan after the war was over, did you get exposed to any of the allied prisoners of war as they were being rescued or taken back?

Mr. Woodard: No, no. The ... the only thing is this friend I have now who was shot down over Tokyo.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Woodard: Uh, he's written a book or two and I've read those, and ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum

Mr. Woodard: ... horrible treatment that they got as prisoners of the Japanese.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Woodard: Oh, he despised them. But even he made up with those Japanese in recent years, you know?

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Woodard: But he sure did hate that Japanese ... he called him Shorty, made life for him miserable.

Ed Metzler: So, after the occupation trips to Sasebo, did you come back to the States directly?

Mr. Woodard: Oh, no!

Ed Metzler: So, you bounced all around out there taking ...

Mr. Woodard: What we'd been doing.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Woodard: We'd been landing these troops on these beaches.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Woodard: Now, and they'd always tell us when we landed them, "Don't forget us."

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Woodard: I ... , "Don't worry, we'll bring you home," and we ... after the war, hell, god!
We went to ... down to Guam and landed, took on fifteen hundred, got a picture
in my book.

Ed Metzler: Uhm.

Mr. Woodard: Brought them back to San Diego, and then back to Guam again for another two
thousand.

Ed Metzler: That's a lot of people on that ship!

Mr. Woodard: Yeah, that's what my note said, - two thousand.

Ed Metzler: Wow! I guess they're sleeping on the decks, huh?

Mr. Woodard: Oh yeah! But we said, "We brought you, but now we're taking you home in
peace."

Ed Metzler: Uhm. So, when you took them home, what'd you go to San Francisco or San
Diego?

Mr. Woodard: Dago.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Woodard: Both times.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Woodard: I think it was two trips, both of them to San Diego.

Ed Metzler: So, the first time you got back to the States after the war was over, how did that
feel?

Mr. Woodard: Well, I got a (pause) two or three pages written in long hand which I wrote at
TCU ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Woodard: ... telling a little about the beautiful Golden Gate Bridge coming back.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Woodard: I'd seen the Golden Gate Bridge many times from land, but boy, that morning coming back after weeks and weeks, to see the Golden Gate Bridge! The sun beaming down on it; it's all in that book.

Ed Metzler: Let's look at your book; can we look at your book?

Mr. Woodard: (Searching for book.)

Ed Metzler: Let's see what kind of items you got in there (searching through book).

Mr. Woodard: (Coughs).

Ed Metzler: Two Years Before the Mast, WWII.

Mr. Woodard: You ever read the great novel, Civil War, Four Years Before the Mast?

Ed Metzler: You know, I've of it, but I've not read it.

Mr. Woodard: I've ... I stole her name, Two Years Before the Mast.

Ed Metzler: Yeah? Yeah, by golly, you go through it day by day, don't you?

Mr. Woodard: Yeah!

Ed Metzler: Yeah, you got the note in here when you heard that President Roosevelt had died.

Mr. Woodard: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: That was a sad day for everybody.

Mr. Woodard: That really, really was.

Ed Metzler: So, when you think back on your World War II experience, you have anything really humorous or funny happen to you that sticks in your ...

Mr. Woodard: I was put in the brig!

Ed Metzler: (Laughter), well, I've heard that story already (laughter). What a (laughter), did you play any pranks on anybody or get pranked?

Mr. Woodard: I don't know; we threatened to bury them at sea if they didn't make good coffee.

Ed Metzler: Yeah (laughter).

Mr. Woodard: No, we ...

Ed Metzler: I love this photo of you and Floyd in Honolulu.

Mr. Woodard: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: You guys are looking sharp!

Mr. Woodard: Well, you notice there, I'm a Yeoman Third Class, one stripe.

Ed Metzler: Uh huh!

Mr. Woodard: I was the only man on that ship, Ed, who went from Apprentice Seaman, Yeoman Third, Second, First. I was the only man to make First Class Petty Officer. And of course, the captain he took care ... he did that, the one that put me in the brig.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, but ...

Mr. Woodard: You're not going to get promoted at sea if the captain doesn't promote you.

Ed Metzler: So, you ... you did good by the captain, and he took care of you?

Mr. Woodard: Oh yeah, (unintelligible) I have to ... I know humor about him putting his ... his ... hell, in addition to being ... I was the court reporter for all of the Captain's Mast that we had many times. The captain sitting there and here's this maybe a black sailor down in the bowels of the ship who never saw the captain before and he is sitting in the court, and there's the captain's yeoman writing down what he said. I was the yeoman; I was the captain's ... the ... the court reporter.

Ed Metzler: Court reporter, yeah.

Mr. Woodard: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: And your shorthand capabilities came in handy.

Mr. Woodard: Yeah, it sure it.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Woodard: Sure did.

Ed Metzler: So, you've heard all those stories, and there must have been some interesting ones.

Mr. Woodard: Well, yeah. I ... I tell you ... one day in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, one hot afternoon, every man on the ship lined up to get a Coca Cola, a bottle of ice-cold Coca Cola out in the middle ... you think that wasn't a thrill?!

Ed Metzler: That was a treat, wasn't it?

Mr. Woodard: That was a treat!

Ed Metzler: A little bit of home out there on the sea.

Mr. Woodard: I remember that.

Ed Metzler: Did you ever cross the equator?

Mr. Woodard: No.

Ed Metzler: So, you never did all that shellback stuff that they do?

Mr. Woodard: All north of the equator, uh huh. I had a ... did ... did you ever know Jim Wright?

Ed Metzler: Oh yeah! Okay.

Mr. Woodard: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: I didn't know him, but I know of him, yeah.

Mr. Woodard: Jim and I were like this.

Ed Metzler: Really?!

Mr. Woodard: Jim and I were like this.

Ed Metzler: No kidding?!

Mr. Woodard: He served the first two years of the war; I served the last two years. Jim Wright; I've written many articles about Jim Wright been published in the Business Press. Beautiful, beautiful articles, at least everybody said they beautiful.

Ed Metzler: And he was speaker, right?

Mr. Woodard: Speaker of the House. No, after the war ...

Ed Metzler: Well, you had to go through the Panama Canal, right?

Mr. Woodard: Yeah, sure did. I remember that *very* well.

Ed Metzler: Tell me about that.

Mr. Woodard: Well, I know the night before we got to Panama, we got liberty and I went ashore and bought Chanel Number Five for my girlfriend; I remember that.

Ed Metzler: Chanel Number Five?

Mr. Woodard: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: That was back then, too, huh?

Mr. Woodard: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter).

Mr. Woodard: Chanel Number Five. And we got through that canal and we got up to Jamaica, past Jamaica and came into (pause) uh, Virginia.

Ed Metzler: Norfolk?

Mr. Woodard: Norfolk.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Woodard: My mind's not (unintelligible). Came in Norfolk, and I never will forget and it's Seven Oaks there. The captain ... I was standing there on the bridge with earphones on, and he was out there. And he came walking up to me and he said, "Boy, it's damn sure cold up here in Norfolk!" We'd just come up out of the Pacific, you know?

Ed Metzler: Out of the tropics.

Mr. Woodard: And I ... I put ... here this captain, I was wonder if he was remembering putting me in the brig that morning when he was telling me, "Woody, it sure is cold."

Ed Metzler: (Laughter).

Mr. Woodard: But there's a note in there that the captain wrote me; it's in that book there at the very end of it.

Ed Metzler: Okay (looking through book). Boy, there's a lot of stuff in here, Don.

Mr. Woodard: Well, I didn't know what I was going to give you, too, but I ...

Ed Metzler: Will we be able to keep this or ...

Mr. Woodard: Yeah, I'm ...

Ed Metzler: Oh, that's great, that's great because this is ...

Mr. Woodard: You bet!

Ed Metzler: ... this is perfect back up for, you know, the audio that we're doing here.

Mr. Woodard: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Well, what else are we going to talk about here? You went through ... you went through the Canal, you bought Chanel Number Five, you made it up to Norfolk, and it was cold.

Mr. Woodard: And I'd never been to Washington.

Ed Metzler: Yeah?

Mr. Woodard: So, we rented a car and drove up to Washington, and I stayed at some hotel in Washington that night.

Ed Metzler: (Cough).

Mr. Woodard: I had my first ... and then I got very involved in politics when that ...

Ed Metzler: Now, were you alone when you went up to Washington?

Mr. Woodard: No.

Ed Metzler: Or were you with your ...

Mr. Woodard: No, (unintelligible). Somebody ...

Ed Metzler: Of the group, okay.

Mr. Woodard: ... rented a car and four or five of us drove up to Washington.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Woodard: I never will forget seeing the White House at night.

Ed Metzler: What was that like?

Mr. Woodard: A real big thrill.

Ed Metzler: I would think so.

Mr. Woodard: The White House.

Ed Metzler: I mean, that's what you've been fighting for all those years.

Mr. Woodard: Yeah, you bet. FDR, Harry S. Truman.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Woodard: (Unintelligible) you ...

Ed Metzler: Now here's some of ... oh, there you are (looking through documents) ... Bill, can't read it ... Selifman (sp?)?

Mr. Woodard: Hum?

Ed Metzler: Bill (questioning)?

Mr. Woodard: Oh, Shif ... Shifman (sp?).

Ed Metzler: Yeah, it's hard to ...

Mr. Woodard: From Idaho, Bill Shifman. He ... he ... he was a young man who was married at that time. He really missed his wife.

Ed Metzler: Yeah. Well, I can understand that. You know, the story of the Bowie is really amazing in a lot of ways but particularly because she wasn't even launched until last quarter of '44, and she was decommissioned in early '46.

Mr. Woodard: Two years.

Ed Metzler: Less than two years!

Mr. Woodard: Two years. That's the great United States what they built those ships (unintelligible).

Ed Metzler: I mean, a bang, bang, bang!

Mr. Woodard: Yeah, you bet! But to build them in seven or eight months, you know.

Ed Metzler: Or less! Yeah! I mean, I think they laid the keel down in April, and she was launched in October.

Mr. Woodard: It was in August!

Ed Metzler: That's right!

Mr. Woodard: August did.

Ed Metzler: That's right. So, you went in as a eighteen year old, just barely eighteen, and you came out two years later, well, just barely twenty.

Mr. Woodard: Twenty, uh hum. It's in the book there.

Ed Metzler: I know it's in the book.

Mr. Woodard: (Unintelligible) about 1920 ...

Ed Metzler: Yeah. But my question is, that's two years of a young man's life and you just went through an adventure like ... almost nobody else. How ...

Mr. Woodard: And I did not want to get out of the Navy.

Ed Metzler: Oh really? Tell me about that.

Mr. Woodard: Oh, no.

Ed Metzler: You wanted to stay?

Mr. Woodard: Well, so much so that when I got out, my mother and I went over to Dallas, interviewed at the naval reserve about the possibility of staying in the Navy as a ... in the reserve.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Woodard: That would ... I give it serious thought to that.

Ed Metzler: Well, you thought about it.

Mr. Woodard: Because, you know, you walk around with three red stripes on your shoulder and all the apprentice seamen, and boy, and you're the captain's yeoman, you know.

Ed Metzler: They straighten up when you come in, huh?

Mr. Woodard: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Hey, here's a photo of the USS Texas!

Mr. Woodard: Woody, the Texas!

Ed Metzler: There's the Texas BB-35! Have you ever visited her since the war?

Mr. Woodard: Yeah, went down to Galveston.

Ed Metzler: Yeah. Well, yeah. It'd be San Jacinto, right?

Mr. Woodard: BB-35.

Ed Metzler: Yeah. She's still floating in the mud (laughter). But the question I was going to ask, in two years or less than two years, you went from an eighteen-year-old kid, and I mean, a kid, to a three-stripe veteran of World War II. How did that war experience change you inside?

Mr. Woodard: Well, I remember seeing the White House at night. And a variation of politics. And uh, you ever hear of William A. Blakley?

Ed Metzler: Yeah, tell me about ...

Mr. Woodard: One day, Star Telegram, you know of Star Telegram?

Ed Metzler: Yeah

Mr. Woodard: Fort Worth Star Telegram called me and said ...

Ed Metzler: Yeah, that's a heck of a newspaper!

Mr. Woodard: ... , "Don, who is William A. Blakley? I said, "I don't know, Cullen (sp?), who is he?" "Well, Governor Shivers has just appointed him to the U.S. Senate." And from that introduction to Bill Blakley, he came over and met with me and wanted me to be his Chief of Staff in the Senate, and I agreed to do that. And I went to Washington (pause) and did ... in the early days getting him launched in the Senate, and I was sitting with ... with Senator Blakley on the morning of January 20, 1963 when Jim ... when John F. Kennedy was being inaugurated. And I was sitting here, Kennedy there (unintelligible), Blakley there. And when John F. Kennedy said, "So, my fellow Americans, ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country." I said, "Senator, you're hearing history." And I went on from there, and so when Kennedy ... I ... I'd sat on a platform in Fort Worth in (unintelligible) Park when Kennedy came here in the campaign, the 1960 Campaign. He came to Fort Worth, and I sat on the rostrum with five or six other people 'cause I had been a delegate to the Democratic National Convention that nominated him. I shook hands with him that night when he was nominated. And when he came to Fort Worth in that campaign again, I shook hands with him. And then (pause) when we inaugurated and he said ... heard Kennedy's speech and I told Blakley, "You're

hearing history – “Ask not what your country can do for you.” I heard that. And then when Kennedy came here in Fort Worth in 1963, had breakfast in the Texas Hotel in Fort Worth, and I was sitting there in the audience that day, and the president of the chamber gave Kennedy a western cowboy hat and said, “Put it on.” And Kennedy and he ... and he says, “Come see me Monday in the White House and I’ll put it on for you.” And everybody cheered, you know. “Come see me Monday in the White House.” And on that Monday, I stood in front of the White House as his casket went by, and I could just hear him say, “Come see me Monday in the White House.”

Ed Metzler: Wow! (Pause)

Mr. Woodard: But I was put on the staff of Congressman Tiger Teague. Tiger Teague was chairman of the astronaut committee. The astronauts thought that Tiger Teague hung the moon. And (pause) Tiger introduced me to ... one day in his office to three young astronauts, and I got my picture made with Neil Armstrong.

Ed Metzler: (Chuckles).

Mr. Woodard: Got very involved in the upper echelons of politics. And there’s some picture, I forget what it is in the very end of that book (looking through book) ...

Ed Metzler: Tiger Teague’s office and Neil Armstrong, you, Dick Gordon ...

Mr. Woodard: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: ... and Pete Conrad.

Mr. Woodard: When they gave the astronauts a big parade in Fort Worth, I put the parade on. I was the chief person ... the biggest parade they ever had in Fort Worth.

Ed Metzler: Uhm!

Mr. Woodard: That was for Alan Bean who was a Fort Worth boy. It wasn’t Apollo 11, that was Apollo 12.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Woodard: And Alan Bean was a good friend of mine, and we gave him a big parade in Fort Worth.

Ed Metzler: So, do you think your time at sea changed you from an eighteen-year-old kid to a very patriotic adult in less than two years?

Mr. Woodard: Well, I don't know whether I'd changed or anything. You just went along in what I was interested in doing. But one thing, Ed, about me – I've been so fortunate in being very close to the powers that be.

Ed Metzler: You sure have.

Mr. Woodard: I don't understand how that would be. When I later on became in the oil business, I was right next to Babe Fuqua who was the man to see in Fort Worth. And I was Fuqua's political assistant. I knew all the politicians in town, you know? He didn't know them, but he had me as his right-hand man and I'd take care of that. I was next to the power that be, and (pause) go to sea, next to the captain. I never will forget, when I was studying shorthand and typing in high school, there was one article I read that ... you can study this and you can become close to the powers that be. I read that in high school because you ... be next to the people that make the rules. You can type and write letters, you know? And it turned out. That high school training I got ... 'cause when I think of those five hundred men on our ship, down there in the engine room, doing whatever they ... they never saw the captain, and there I was right next to the captain.

Ed Metzler: But you were good at it, so that's one reason you ended up doing that.

Mr. Woodard: (Pause), you know, one thing about me about getting old is that I've noticed it. You don't know this, but I do. You lose everything on the end of your fingers, ridges and things, and it's hard to turn a page.

Ed Metzler: (Chuckles), it's hard to get a grip!

Mr. Woodard: My ... my son, Greg, took me over to ... and in our insurance business you got to get licensed and everything. And went over to get my finger prints, and they took them three or four times and never could get any finger prints!

Ed Metzler: Well, you wore your finger prints out!

Mr. Woodard: Yeah! I could go and be a successful criminal ...

Ed Metzler: Yeah! That's right (laughter).

Mr. Woodard: Yeah, I can't turn this page!

Ed Metzler: Well ... (pause), are you looking for a photograph or a letter, or what you looking for?

Mr. Woodard: A note. (Pause as he's looking). That tells all about the Bowie which ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum. This is a great book that you've put together; we appreciate that.

Mr. Woodard: Okay, there's where (pause) ... I sent a note to Captain Durnell (sp?), after the war.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Woodard: And that's what I told him. That's ... the ... the ... that was the last page here.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, the tail-end of your letter.

Mr. Woodard: Yeah. And see, what he wrote back. That Captain Durnell was writing a note to me.

Ed Metzler: And this is May of '46.

Mr. Woodard: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: "Dear Woodard." He didn't call you Woody (chuckles).

Mr. Woodard: (Unintelligible) Woodard.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter). "Received your letter of 25 May and have tried to locate Red and Mac."

Mr. Woodard: Mac Caffrey, the chief yeoman.

Ed Metzler: Uh huh.

Mr. Woodard: But ...

Ed Metzler: "But have had no luck; both came to the rep station here, but moved on, and I can't find out to where, sorry. The new job goes fine. Glad to hear from you at any time. Regards, Captain Durnell." Sounds like a good man.

Mr. Woodard: Now, that's the captain!

Ed Metzler: Yep.

Mr. Woodard: But the executive officer, that's the commander. The executive officer, not the captain, he's number two.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Woodard: The ... the executive officer was Captain ... was Commander Ensinsberg (sp?).

Ed Metzler: Uh hum. (Looking through book.)

Mr. Woodard: And I was the commander's yeoman ... but the captain took me away from him and he wanted me.

Ed Metzler: (Continuing search through book.) Well, we've covered a lot of territory, but I bet there's some stories you haven't told me yet. What other stories we got?

Mr. Woodard: You don't (unintelligible). The only story I have is when something hits my mind that I remember that and had forgotten all about it.

Ed Metzler: Yeah. Yeah, I know. Wonder what ever happened to the Bowie, did she get scrapped?

Mr. Woodard: Yeah, it (unintelligible).

Ed Metzler: When they decommissioned her, they didn't mothball her; they scrapped her?

Mr. Woodard: No, it didn't happen overnight. They kept those ships a long time.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Woodard: (Unintelligible). Here is (pause) (looking through book), damn! No fingers! Okay, there ... there's what I'm looking for. "USS Bowie APA-137." Tells about World War II service. "Put in (unintelligible) to Okinawa. Bowie (unintelligible) out of Pearl Harbor on 17 April (unintelligible). She arrived off the Toguchi (sp?) beaches on Okinawa on 10 May and took ... went ashore immediately and the attack transport began unloading cargo and taking on casualties." And (unintelligible).

Ed Metzler: Yeah, that looks like the same report I saw in ... on ... online at the Wikipedia location; that's kind of the modern encyclopedia of the world.

Mr. Woodard: "Both war activities; the attack transport made a round trip voyage from the west coast to Guam and back between 27 November and 27 December bringing veterans of the Pacific theater home to the United States. On 16 January, 1946, Bowie departed San Pedro on her way to the U.S. east coast steaming by San Diego and the Panama Canal. She arrived in Norfolk, Virginia on 4 February. There the ship began preparating (?) for inactivation. On 8 March 1946, Bowie was placed out of commission at Norfolk. She was returned to the Maritime Commission on 14 March, '46, and here name was struck from the Navy (unintelligible). And on 28 March, 1946, she was birthed with the National Defense Reserve ...

Ed Metzler: Uhm.

Mr. Woodard: ... “(unintelligible) at James River, Virginia, and remained there until 9 April, 1973 at which time she was sold to the Union Minerals and Alloys Corporation, New York City, for scrapping, ’73.”

Ed Metzler: Yep. Well, she lasted a long time.

Mr. Woodard: They ... they kept them there at ...

Ed Metzler: They didn’t know whether they might need them again.

Mr. Woodard: ... (unintelligible). But there it is.

Ed Metzler: Well, that’s a heck of a ... you got the history of that ship!

Mr. Woodard: Well, now what do y’all do with this?

Ed Metzler: We will take this ... that book that you’ve prepared and we will put it into the Museum archives under your name as one of the people that we’ve interviewed, and then also we will take the audio and download it into the computers. And your ... this audio will ultimately be on our website where people can listen to it all over the world. So, this is our chance that we make sure we get it straight from the horse’s mouth; that’s what this is all about because see, we don’t teach our kids in history class anymore much about World War II.

Mr. Woodard: Isn’t it funny that princes and kings and clowns in paper and sawdust ranks and common folks like you and me are builders for eternity? To each is given a book of rules, a stumbling block ... to each is given a book of rules (pause) and each must (unintelligible), their life has flown, a stumbling block or a stepping stone.

Ed Metzler: (Chuckles).

Mr. Woodard: My heart is warm with the friends I make, and better friends I’ll not be knowing. But there isn’t a train I wouldn’t take no matter where it’s going.

Ed Metzler: What’s that from?

Mr. Woodard: (Pause) ... I ... (unintelligible) poet from Maine. You know, my mind is not what it used to be.

Ed Metzler: That’s true of all of us.

Mr. Woodard: Well, it really hurts me because I knew thousands of people. I used to (pause) advertise. I was in the insurance business; I had fifty thousand friends in Fort Worth, and that’s true. I had ... I (unintelligible) records of fifty thousand

friends. But so many now are out in Greenwood Cemetery, and I'm still here (pause) with a fading mind. And you all are to be commended for what you're doing to ... keeping this record.

Ed Metzler: Do you get thanked very often for what you guys did?

Mr. Woodard: No. The thanks ...

Ed Metzler: Thanks for your service.

Mr. Woodard: I'll tell you one thing – whenever I get to thinking, now ... but I'll say this about the American people. God, they really do respect veterans. I can't walk any place without somebody thanking me for my service. And very, very often, the waiter will come up to me at the restaurant and say ... somebody ...

Ed Metzler: They paid for you.

Mr. Woodard: ... somebody paid for this.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Woodard: “Well, who, who?” “I don't know; they said ... ”

Ed Metzler: Just somebody.

Mr. Woodard: Yeah. It's amazing! And I'm just one, but they do that all over the country for these veterans.

Ed Metzler: Yes sir.

Mr. Woodard: And little children, “Thank you, thank you for your service, thank ...,” hell, I'm one ... I just did my duty.

Ed Metzler: I know.

Mr. Woodard: Robert E. Lee.

Ed Metzler: Robert E. Lee.

Mr. Woodard: He said, “The sublimest word in the language is duty. You can never do more than your duty. You should never wish to do less.” Robert E. Lee. What a great mistake Robert E. Lee made when President Lincoln offered him command of the whole Union Army.

Ed Metzler: I know.

Mr. Woodard: But he went with Virginia.

Ed Metzler: It's that state over nation mentality that did it.

Mr. Woodard: He went (unintelligible). Well, of course, in those days, it ...

Ed Metzler: It was different back then.

Mr. Woodard: They didn't know, that was it.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Woodard: But I often think what a mistake he ...

Ed Metzler: But you know, if he'd been from Delaware or Rhode Island instead of Virginia, maybe it wouldn't have been such a ...

Mr. Woodard: Well, that's right; Virginia (unintelligible).

Ed Metzler: ... the temptation wouldn't have been ...

Mr. Woodard: Virginia was everything.

Ed Metzler: That's right.

Mr. Woodard: You bet.

Ed Metzler: That's right. May I thank you for your service?

Mr. Woodard: It ... it was my duty.

Ed Metzler: I appreciate that. And we thank you for the time you spent with me today.

Mr. Woodard: It's your book.

Ed Metzler: And we got the book, and it's going to go in the archives, and I just want to thank you again. I appreciate it.

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