

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR

The Nimitz Education and Research Center

Fredericksburg, Texas

An Interview With
Wm. L. Hamilton
Columbus, OH
August 4, 2020
U.S. Navy
U.S.S. Quincy CA 71
Heavy Cruiser
Invasion of Normandy 6/6/44
To Pacific, Okinawa
Took Roosevelt to Yalta Conference

My name is Richard Misenhimer: Today is August 4, 2020. I am interviewing Mr. Wm. L. Hamilton by telephone. His phone number is 614-451-4575, Extension 107. His address is 1320 Old Henderson Road, Apt. 107, Columbus, OH 43222. This interview is in support of the National Museum of the Pacific War, the Nimitz Education and Research Center for the preservation of historical information related to World War II. Helping with this interview is Mr. Mark Veerman. His phone number is 614-264-0854. His address is 10625 Brett Ridge, Powell, OH 43065. He would be an alternative contact.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Hamilton:

Well, I'll tell you, in the context of the time, it was an honor to be able to fight for the country.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now, the first thing I need to do is read to you this agreement with museum to make sure this is OK with you. (agreement read) Is that OK with you?

Mr. Hamilton:

Yes, that was OK. I think that's a great purpose.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Good, thank you. Now, what is your birthdate?

Mr. Hamilton:

May 5, 1921.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where were you born?

Mr. Hamilton:

In Schenectady, New York.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have brothers and sisters?

Mr. Hamilton:

I had one younger brother.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was he in World War II?

Mr. Hamilton:

He was a Navy cadet, learning to fly airplanes off the carriers. Thank God the war ended before he got into combat.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Is he still living?

Mr. Hamilton:

No.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What are your mother's and father's first names?

Mr. Hamilton:

Father was Horace Lind Hamilton and my mother was Sarah Jane Lewis.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now, you grew up during the Depression. How did the Depression affect you and your family?

Mr. Hamilton:

Oh, boy. My dad had an excellent executive job with the New York Central Railroad and he did

not lose a day's work but he helped out his brother financially and my mother saved up the kitchen money and helped out her sister. So even though our family was well off, it didn't trickle down to us kids. My life was filled with frustration. I liked to build things. I didn't have enough tools to do what I wanted. I didn't have enough materials to do what I wanted and so I would pick up driftwood off the beach in order to make model boats and things like that. I was a lot better off than an awful lot of kids. I never went hungry and I was in a very nice middle class neighborhood.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where did you go to high school?

Mr. Hamilton:

I went to Collinwood High School.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What year did you finish there?

Mr. Hamilton:

1939.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What did you do when you got out of high school?

Mr. Hamilton:

I went directly into engineering study at Case School of Applied Science in Cleveland, Ohio, now a part of Western Reserve University. When the war came I was part-way through my junior first semester.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When they attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 how did you hear about that?

Mr. Hamilton:

I was at home and it was not unexpected because I had been reading in magazines about the Japanese for some years and there was no secret about the fact that we were going to have a war with them as long as anybody wanted to know, he could know. But most Americans did not want to know and so they took it as a big surprise. It was no surprise whatsoever to me. In 1939 I traveled in California and I saw what I was reading in the magazines was true. The Japanese had a close society. They took a lot of pictures. The pictures had a person in the foreground that was always blurred, out of focus and in the background there was always something of military interest that was in sharp focus. The photo finishers reported this to the FBI and it was known early on that there was low-level spying going on and all sorts of other things, too. So when the Japanese were interred a lot of innocent people might have gone to the camps but there was no way for the FBI to sort out the ones that were subversive.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What date did you enter the service?

Mr. Hamilton:

Let's see, what happened is, a couple of weeks after Pearl Harbor there were notices on the bulletin board that the Navy had a program that was offering candidates commissions if we finished and graduated as engineers. This was probably in all of the engineering colleges in the country. The Navy knew that they had lost not only ships at Pearl Harbor but they lost valuable crews and the steam power plants of that era on combat ships were rather complicated.

Mechanical engineers at that time were well-trained in steam engineering so we had to write to Chicago to get some information and the notice said we should send a passport photo and four letters of character reference. I did that. I thought that was rather odd just to get information and

then about in March 1942 those of us interested were told to go to the gym and at the door there was a man who said, "Strip." We were give a very thorough physical exam. The names were called out to form a group and the names were called out to form another group and I was afraid that I had flunked because all of the jocks were in the other group. It turned out that all of the jocks had flunked the physical. That was a kind of a revelation to me that sports do not bring on good health. We got an interview and pretty soon they lined us up and said, "Repeat after me." Before I knew it, I was in the Navy.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What date was that?

Mr. Hamilton:

It would have been in March sometime. February or March, I'm not sure. I had my paper commission by the middle of April, April 12, I think it was.

Mr. Veerman:

Was that 1942, Bill?

Mr. Hamilton:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was it in April 1942, what happened then?

Mr. Hamilton:

I got my actual paper commission.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What were commissioned as?

Mr. Hamilton:

As an Ensign, the lowest grade of commissioned officer. I found out later that it was restricted to the engineering divisions.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Let me back up a little bit. When you went in, did you have any kind of a boot camp?

Mr. Hamilton:

Yes. First of all I had to finish college at my own expense. The college speeded up. We went six days a week and all summer and graduated in December 1942 instead of June 1943. Then I was waiting to be called and since I didn't know when I got a job in a shipyard in Ashtabula and when they found out I was an engineer, they made me into a layout man on the castings that went into a big steam engine to be used in one of the ore carriers on the lake. I enjoyed that kind of work and was glad that I could contribute and it only went on for a couple of months and in March 1943 I was called to active duty at Cornell University which was a four-month combination boot camp and steam engineering school. When we graduated they told us that they didn't know how to make an officer in that length of time so they just put us under high stress physically and mentally to break down the weak ones and weed them out and fortunately I didn't get weeded out. The boot camp was a weird kind of thing in a lot of ways because they had us doing things that made absolutely no sense in order to put stress on us. The commandant was almost insane and on the last day we were given a sheet to express our preference afloat and ashore. We all knew that we were going to go afloat and so the commandant said he wanted everybody to put in for destroyers. So some of us, there were ten of us, put a preference for larger ships. I was one of them and we were sent to the sub-chaser school in Miami, Florida. The sub-chasers of course are a 110-foot, wooden boat and very susceptible to sinking by submarines and by Atlantic storms. Anyway, I reconciled myself to serving on one. It was diesel-powered so

it was kind of a waste of our steam school and there was nine other guys that found that they were there too. This was just retribution by the commandant for not choosing destroyer duty. Well, fortunately, after while the school ended and after some waiting time four of us went onto the heavy cruiser, Quincy. It was being finished up at the Bethlehem Steel shipyards in Quincy, Massachusetts and we got to watch the shipyard workers doing some of the finishing work.

Eventually, December 15, 1943 Quincy was commissioned and we headed toward Trinidad to learn how to shoot the guns. I nearly got killed that time because when I was supposed to go from the 5-inch mount to the 8-inch mount, I didn't realize that there was a hang fire in the 8-inch mount. It cooked off just as I was climbing the ladder to get in the turret. It knocked me back on the deck, just missing the 5-inch shell casings that littered the deck and it took a good bit of my hearing also. Anyway, we learned how to shoot the guns. We saw what life was like down in Trinidad. I heard a steel drum band for the first time and then we came back to Boston Navy Yard to finish up little details of the ship and then we headed over for the invasion at Normandy. We waited for some time. We got liberty in Scotland and liberty in northern Ireland and I saw the place in Scotland where James Watts had been born. Of course as a steam engineer I was gratified to see that. Eventually we catapulted off our two airplanes and they were made for spotting for gunfire so it was more convenient for them to operate off the coast of England than off of our ship. We were up around Northern Ireland and one night in the early morning of June 5 we made a high-speed run down toward Normandy and then of course we were called back. The next day we made another high-speed run and we passed a long line of troop ships and cargo ships and other support ships and go down to our assigned position at Utah Beach.

In the invasion of Normandy, Omaha Beach is the one that everybody knows about because these poor soldiers were required to climb those cliffs under gunfire which was just absolutely inhuman. But at our position, the land was much easier to land on but on the other the hand, they had much bigger guns in order to protect it. So we were fighting with guns that were taken off of old battleships and put on railroad mounts.

Now the difference between our two opponents was that they had one big gun and we had nine 8-inch guns plus the fact that we were mobile and even though they were camouflaged, they were fixed. So it was a question of dueling back and forth and we did this for ten days. The way it worked, we would sit dead in the water and wait until the shore gun took a shot at us. Our airplane would notice where the blast came from and they would report to our gunners by radio. The gunners would lay one shot and get a correction and then they would shoot a nine-gun spread.

In the meantime, the enemy would pull the gun into a tunnel so all we could do was blow up the tracks. Then they would pull the gun out another portal and we would go through the same thing again. We hoped that on the first shot they would miss and we tried to get out of the way before they could get off a second shot. Very often the second shot fell right in the big swirl of water where our ship had been. This hit and dodge was the tactic for ten days. Now just as we were sitting there for the shore gun to take the first shot at us, we lost power in the number two fire room which was my battle station. I was in charge of one of the four boiler rooms.

The problem turned out to be one of the little electric motors that kept the throttle linkage on the steam turbines of the generator, kept it at the proper position so that the generator would run at the right frequency. Unfortunately, this little motor was extremely hot which could indicate a couple of things. One of them was that one of the three fuses to the motor would be

blown and so the electrician in charge of the electric panel checked the fuses and reported that they were all good. That meant that we had big trouble. But fortunately it occurred to me that if two of the fuses were good it would give us circuits down through the windings of the motor and back up to give a false indication that the fuse might be good. Now all of this about the motor I learned in Case School about electric motors. So I also learned at the Navy Steam School that there was a way of checking fuses in a more complicated way that would overcome this situation. They didn't tell us that this was going to be the situation but it turns out I guess it was. So I grabbed the tester, I checked the fuses, I pointed out the one that was blown. The electrician replaced it. The little motor came back to life. The turbine came up to the proper speed and the crisis was over. We found out later what caused it and the chief engineer did not tell me because it was caused by an Annapolis graduate and I found out from one of my shipmates. Fortunately, the enemy did not take the shot while we were lying there so peacefully. Quincy just kept firing back and forth and the boiler went from no steam to flank speed and back again to stop and that's what so complicated about naval boilers. Anyway, it all worked and one shot did carry away our radio antenna. Another shot landed right alongside the ship and exploded, blowing a hole in the side of the ship. There was another one that fell close to the ship aft and blew another hole. If this had been a little bit more toward amidships, it would have just hit the armor belt and scratched the paint a little bit. Otherwise we had two holes to be patched. From Normandy we went to Cherbourg where they had one gun that was a bigger gun than we'd confronted before. We fought that one for a while and then the Army went around behind it and took care of it that way.

We went down to the Mediterranean and supported some landings there. This was for a pincer movement for the retreating German Army. So the people landing at Normandy and the

people landing in the Mediterranean could squeeze them from both sides.

Mr. Veerman:

When you went down to the Mediterranean, that was in August of 1944, right?

Mr. Hamilton:

I'm not sure when it was but it was some time after the June 6 Normandy so it would probably be about that time. The ship's log of course is on the internet and the various dates can be ascertained that way. So Quincy returned to the Boston Navy yards for badly needed repairs and we were in dry dock. When we got into the dry dock one of the big blocks that the ship was to set on was out of place and it put a dent in the bottom of the ship. So, the officer in charge of the structure of the ship was required by regulations to go down on the inside of the ship and inspect it. This required him to go into what was called the double bottoms. That is a maze of compartments about 40 inches on a side and there's a manhole on one or more sides of this little compartment so that an inspector can go down and access any one of these compartments. Now it's dangerous to go down in the double bottom.

There's about 20 Navy regulations that are concerned with it. Each one of these regulations is said to have been made because of at least one death. So the commander that was in charge wanted an engineering officer to go with him. That's one of the regulations: you're not allowed to go alone. So I was chosen to go because the other junior officers who were doing nothing all said that they were claustrophobic. They vanished from the engineering office so I was appointed to go down with the commander. He was in good physical shape and he was tall and thin and he could squeeze through these openings very nicely. I was more rotund and it was a struggle to get through each opening and my arms were short so I found it difficult to reach and

pull myself through. I tried somersaulting from one to the other and that didn't work either so he had memorized how to get down there.

I was very concerned about being lost down in the double bottoms. I had read stories about shipyard workers that had been lost in the double bottoms of ships being built and their skeletons being found decades later when the ship was being dismantled. So I was very concerned. I wanted to find a piece of chalk to mark our way down and he pooh-poohed that. I told him about the story of Theseus who went into the labyrinth in Greece to slay the Minotaur that ate eight maidens or something and nobody's ever found the way out of that labyrinth. His girlfriend Ariadne gave him a ball of knitting yarn and he payed it out on the way in and then found his way out. So I related that story to the commander and he ridiculed that, saying that he had memorized the way down there. Well, we got down there and we saw the dent. If it had been me, I would have just left the dent. I pointed out that the paint was not even cracked even though I knew that was meaningless because you could still smell the paint. It had not cured to the point of cracking.

So he had not memorized the way out. I had not even noticed because I was having so much trouble getting down. The point was, we lost our way. We could not find our way out. Finally we struggled out to a horizontal gallery and we sat down to rest in the darkness. I asked him if it was possible that we could have gotten into another compartment, got past the watertight bulkhead. I knew that the shipyard had cut holes in the watertight bulkheads so that they did not have to go up and down and then they welded it all shut before the ship was finished. He should have said, "I studied the plans. It's absolutely impossible to get into another compartment." Instead he said in a rather quaky voice, "I don't think so." I almost panicked because I didn't know how we were going to get out of there.

Well, eventually while he sat and rested up, I climbed the vertical along the side of the ship, the vertical compartments and I couldn't understand why I couldn't see the light from the compartment we came down from. Well, it turned out that it was a Marine compartment. The Marines were getting ready to get off the ship and live in a barracks as long as we were in the dry dock. They had put the hatch cover over the access to the double bottoms and that was another one of the regulations that we broke. There's always supposed to be a person guarding the access hole. Eventually I was able to find the place to get out and with all of my strength I was able to push the hatch cover up and find the way out. I went back to my job in the engineering office, checking the fuel reports and I was shaking pretty badly and I didn't do a very good job of it. But the chief engineer and this commander had a long, quiet talk because they knew if I reported this incident to the Captain, their careers would have been ended. I didn't have any desire to cause them trouble and so I kept quiet about it but they were quite nervous at the time.

We got the ship fixed up. In the boiler room we repaired the brick work in the boiler because all of that stopping and starting was very hard on the brick work. It surprised me that all our sailors were happy to the repair work, miserable work that it was, because it would be good on their record toward advancement. So we mixed up fire clay and asbestos fiber and we had this asbestos fiber flying all over the place. We mixed it up in a washtub and carried it in through an opening into the firebox and they repaired the damaged areas. The boiler tubes had to be cleaned and inspected.

Mr. Veerman:

Bill, didn't you also tell me that when the main guns fired, the main 8-inch guns fired there was a lot that asbestos stuff in the air too?

Mr. Hamilton:

Yeah. Asbestos was used in power plants and any place where there's high temperature insulation around the pipes. So there would be particles shaken off. When the 8-inch diameter guns fired, nine of them at a time, it looked like a boiler would just jump off the deck. It made a tremendous shock. I could understand why everything was built so sturdy. We also had a lot of redundancy. For the important engineering aspects, there was always three ways of doing things. Of course our engineering propulsion on the ship was four separate boilers, four separate turbine engines, and four separate propellers. So there was a lot of redundancy. So we got the boiler repaired and got on to other things and pretty soon the ship was ready to leave.

Now in the meantime, as a reward for the job at Normandy the town of Quincy gave a huge party for the crew and a party for the officers. It was nice being treated that way by the town and we enjoyed it. Our next job was to take President Roosevelt to the Yalta conference. We took him to Malta and he flew from there to Yalta. This was kind of odd. We went to the Norfolk Navy Yard where they built a ramp from the main deck up to the level of the Captain's cabin. The rumor was that we were going to have the President aboard a lot of the sailors wondered what this ramp was for. The people that knew said, "It's probably to accommodate the President's wheel chair." Fights broke out all over the ship, real fist fights. Where those who did not know about the wheelchair would demand that the others take back the idea that the President had a wheelchair. Unfortunately, he did. Anybody at that time who wanted to know, could have known. The President was starting his thirteenth year in office. So one night the President came aboard. Let me back up a little bit. In addition to the ramp, in the Admiral's cabin they built a little projection booth in one corner of the room. This was just big enough for two brand-new movie projectors of theater quality for regular Hollywood films and big enough for

the two movie operators and me. I was in charge of the movies and so we were to show movies on nine days of the ten-day trip going over and nine days on the ten-day trip coming back.

We went on a very northerly route so that in the engine room I would still stand my four-hour watches in the engine room and we turned off all of the blowers bringing topside air. The temperature was about seventy degrees and it was very comfortable. Without the noise of the blowers, we could converse in a normal voice. So that was very pleasant. On the other hand, the deck sailors had to go out and chop ice. Every night the ship would accumulate ice from the spray and the ship would roll slower and slower as the weight of the ice made it top heavy and then the next day, all day long, the deck sailors would chop ice, an absolutely miserable job. In the evening I was not allowed to go in the Admiral's cabin to hook up the loud speakers.

So eventually the presidential party, including the President and his closest advisors, they would drift over from the Captain's cabin where they had dinner. They would bring their wine and cigars and then I was allowed to go in and once the President was situated, I could connect up the wires for the movie. At that time I was a Lieutenant, j.g., but of course these high-ranking people did not care to chat with me so I just hung on the wall most of the time. I did get a conversation with General Watson who was one of the early politicians who helped Roosevelt get his first office. Unfortunately he died on the way over. There was a lot of conjecture as to maybe there was something underhanded about it but nothing ever came of that.

Also, the Surgeon General, Admiral McIntyre, who was the President's personal physician. He and I would chat and before I could turn off the lights for the movies, I had to call him over and he would take the President's pulse. This worried me because I was hoping that the President would be alive when I turned the lights back on again. I was only about six feet from

the President and I would ask his daughter Anna who was the only one that spoke to him. He could not speak back in English. He would grunt a little bit one way or another and she would try to interpret it and I would ask, "Would the President like to see the movie now?" And she would say, "Daddy, would you like to see the movie?" He would grunt and she couldn't interpret it so she would say, "Oh, go ahead anyway." So the pulse would be taken, I would turn off the lights, my two movie operators gave a flawless performance. I could not see the movie but I could tell they were doing well by watching the projectors. At the end of the movie, someone would turn on the lights, I would open the little door from the projection booth and have one of the operators stand there so he could see the President. Each time Anna would be wheeling her father out and she would stop and thank the movie operator for showing the movie. She was a very gracious person. The next night the other operator would stand in the door. That was a great experience.

I was the only one of the ship's company that was allowed to associate with the presidential party. Even the Captain was not allowed because they did not want anybody to see what poor health the President was. For years I couldn't understand how he could take part in the Yalta conference. Then I read a book by Doris Kerns Goodwin who was a historical writer and she pointed out that whenever the people needed the President they would give him a shot of adrenalin and digitalis and since he was dying of congestive heart failure, that would jog his tired old heart and he would be somewhat like his old self. Adrenalin was a brand-new thing at the time and so they were every concerned about the dosage to give him and I'm sure that was a tricky thing. In any case that explained how he could take part. It also explained how he was able to make one last speech about the conference to the joint session of Congress. He died just six weeks after I last saw him. I was now ready to join the Pacific War.

We went back to the Boston Navy Yards. They took out the projection booth, they took off the ramp and they put the ship in dry dock and gave it a coat of paint with the Pacific camouflage colors (design). Unfortunately on that northerly route the ship still had coatings of ice. So they painted right over the ice and by the time we got down to the Panama Canal the appearance of the ship was pretty awful. We took a leisurely voyage out to Pearl Harbor. I was very glad to get out there and see what the thing was all about and we had liberty for quite some time. I went to the junkyard and got a brake drum in order to make a turn-table for a record player. You couldn't buy anything like a record player so I made one of my own. It was very nice to have.

On the Waikiki Beach I met a high school classmate. I was in a dance band with this guy and he and all of the other guys became professional musicians while I went ahead and became an engineer. They joined the Navy as a group and so they were sent out there to Hawaii and they played a concert each afternoon and otherwise they lolled around on the beach the rest of the day. The Royal Hawaiian Hotel had been taken over and used as R & R for Navy pilots. I wondered whether I'd taken a wrong tack, getting into the Navy. So I was surprised that the people that looked very, very Hawaiian by their face, they were very American in their manner. For example, at the soda fountain they would say, "Gimme a Coke, Mac," which was the slang of that era and very much like people in the 48 states. Quincy sailed out and we seemed to be killing time while Admiral Halsey's task force was getting ready to engage in the battle of Okinawa. We went back and forth, back and forth along the equator. The Captain stayed just north of the equator so that we wouldn't go through the traditional ceremonies of initiating the sailors for crossing the equator. I never did get south of the equator.

I stood watches in the engine room, 4-hour watches as I had all along and by now the temperature in the forward engine room was 140 degrees and I suspect in the after engine room where I was, it was at least that much. It's as close to hell as I ever want to be. When one of the sailors would go out to check the temperature on the bearings at the reduction gear, I would time them for about 90 seconds. I did not want anybody collapsing from the heat. They would check a few bearings and record it and I would call them back. They would be just sopping with perspiration. The only way we could possibly survive was by standing under the blowers. The blowers had fans in them that had three speeds and on the top speed it would blow a tremendous blast of air from topside. I stood under one along with the Chief Petty Officer and sometimes one of the crew and the other crew of five would stand under the other blower and four or five, the fans under the other one. That's the only way we could survive four hours.

There was a time when I thought we had dropped off the edge of the earth but Admiral Halsey was having a hard time. He had been through a typhoon which I found out later was called Typhoon Cobra, December of 1944. His ships were badly damaged. He lost three destroyers and was having a hard time getting it back in shape. So our ship was just killing time. Our crew, each member of our crew, was given a knife to protect themselves in case we might be sunk by a submarine and would end up on a Japanese-held island. These knives were like a bowie knife, if that rings a bell. They were great big knife with a blade that you could use in personal combat. Also, they had some sharpening stones and the sailors would while away the evening, sharpening these knives to a razor edge. It turned out the doctor told the Captain that the crew was bleeding to death. While they were doing all this sharpening they were also cutting themselves one way or another so the Captain decreed that they were to take the razor sharp edge

off of the knife and turn in the sharpening stones. Knives kind of got put away and I never saw them again. But thank God nobody ever had to use one.

The Captain was really good. He tried to give liberty whenever he could and wherever he could. Despite the fact that we were supposed to stay out of the view of any Japanese ship-watchers on these small islands, he was able to get us to places to where earlier battles had taken place and we had a Navy presence. Everybody loved getting off the ship because the crew had tight quarters and the 200 Marines had even tighter quarters. I really felt sorry for them. They were on our ship not for any combat but to protect the ship in case we would be attacked close up. One of the islands that we went to was the island of Mog-Mog and almost any Navy man that served in the Pacific was on the island of Mog-Mog at one time or another. This was an island where they took off all the Natives. They replaced it with a big refrigerated beer warehouse and when we went ashore each man got two cans of beer. I was not a drinker so I gave my beer to one of the men in my division.

At that time my battle station was in the steering engine room. This was a hell-hole if there ever was. I enjoyed being in the boiler room but the steering engine room, nobody wanted that. Now I had been switched from the boiler division over to the auxiliary machinery division. This took care of boats, the steering engines, the emergency connected generator and any ice machines and any little thing that didn't, any kind of machinery that didn't fit into the other category. The problem with the steering engine room was that the overhead was quite low. That gave people claustrophobia. For some reason after I'd been lost in the double bottom, the chief engineer thought that I was immune to claustrophobia so he gave me every lousy claustrophobic job on the ship. But anyway, I got by. When the ship was running at normal speed the noise level was tolerable, the vibration was not much but when running at high speed, the vibration from the

propellers was just unbearable. I would stand on my tiptoes with my fingertips on the overhead and just pray that the Captain would slow down. The vibration was not from an unbalanced propeller, it was from something called cavitation which is well-known and understood and I don't want to waste your time with that.

Now one of the things that happened was we were out there in the middle of the Pacific Ocean and we ran out of fresh food. The only thing we had to eat was the emergency rice. So for three meals a day for three weeks we ate nothing but rice. Now I didn't mind that so much because I liked rice but a lot of the guys from the wheat-growing states, thought that rice was too oriental and somehow it was sort of un-Christian and so they had a double whammy against eating rice. We would spend the lunch, the mealtimes, picking out the black maggots that were in the rice and then somebody discovered that there were white maggots as well as the black. Now it was hopeless to pick them out and so from that point on, we ate white maggots and black maggots together.

We eventually rendezvoused with a provisions ship and of course the provisions would be ferried from one ship to another on a cable that was strung out between the two ships. It was a rather precarious kind of a thing but it was done all the time and with practice they did a good job with that. When we'd get the boxes aboard the bos'un would have a chute that they would set on each stairway and they would slide the boxes down the slide and then pick one up and put it on the slide going down to the next deck lower. So the sailors involved in this operation very carefully allowed the first box to hit the deck hard and burst open. It was a box full of apples so the sailors grabbed apples as fast as they could. A new tradition was born on our ship. The bos'un said, "We're not going to let you carelessly smash open a box whenever you want to. I

will make sure the first box that we slide down the slide is one that you can open and pass out all of the fruit, whatever it is.” So from that time they observed this tradition.

Okinawa, the battle for Okinawa, started April 1, 1945. Quincy didn't get there for the beginning of it. I never understood why we got there a little late. That's in all the Navy archives and perhaps there's an explanation. Our job was to provide anti-aircraft protection. There was a ring of cruisers around the carriers. It turned out it was a carrier war to protect the troops that were landing on the island. The Japanese knew that if that island ever fell to our troops that their goose was really cooked. Okinawa was quite close as far as airplane attack and they knew that it was serious so they put up everything they had. That's where they had the kamikazes. The kamikazes were used before that but they really used their kamikazes up to their last airplane. There was a ring of cruisers around the carriers and we were to provide anti-aircraft fire. Farther out there was a ring of destroyers which was to give warning whenever these attacks were going to take place. A good number of them took place at night. I don't know how our gunners ever found them but I guess our fire control equipment could pick them up by radar.

Later the Japanese had what we called baka bombs which was a bomb with a human on it that would guide the bomb right to a carrier if possible. They would be dropped about 20 miles out where they were safe and the two-engine airplane could return for another one. These baka bombs were just a terrible weapon against the carriers. We couldn't see them and our gun control equipment could not do much against them. In the daytime we would see a carrier in the distance, smoking. I never found out which carrier it was. That was not my job to know those things but there were eight of our carriers that were devastated by these Japanese kamikazes and baka bombs. They were not sunk but they were totally destroyed. One of the things that was of great interest to me was when we did what was called plane guard. We would sail along, parallel

to an aircraft carrier, when they were taking on airplanes returning from the battle over Okinawa. The planes would see the two ships on a parallel course and they would know that was their carrier and they would come downwind, right alongside of us, and when they got to our ship they would make a left-hand turn over toward the carrier, toward the wake of the carrier and when they got to the wake, they would make another left-hand turn and they would be set up for a perfect final approach. So we would see the pilots, many of them bleeding, some of them dead, sometimes the plane would be flown by a radioman or torpedo man.

A lot of time the plane would be all shot up with pieces flopping around and when they went past us we saw what terrible condition they were in. When they landed on the carrier, we were only about a quarter of a mile away and we could see them very well. Some of them would make a nice landing, would get out of way for the next plane coming in. But sometimes the plane would land hard and burst into a big ball of flame and that would hold up things for a while. I had a half hour of flight instruction and I always wanted to learn to fly. So my heart really went out to these pilots. There was one plane that could not possibly get up enough altitude to land on the carrier. It crashed into the back of the carrier in a huge ball of flame. Other planes did not have the pilot capable of landing would land in the water right alongside the carrier in hopes of course of being picked up by the destroyer that would follow along and pick up people out of the water. I found out later just how they did that and it was rather clever. But sometimes the people flying the airplane landing in the water did not do a good job. They would flip it over sometimes just a nice easy flip, sometimes a rather violent flip and of course they had training on how to get out of the plane when it's upside down like that. So they would. The planes did not float for very long. They would sink. So I always hoped that these people got picked up before the sharks got them. There was one Corsair which is a heavy airplane was coming downwind and the engine

was sputtering and I was afraid he was not going to make it. I kind of prayed that he would be able to get over the carrier and I guess he made a flat turn at our ship and it might have sloshed gasoline into the fuel pump and the engine picked up speed and fortunately he was able to land. These pilots of course had put in a hard day's work fighting over Okinawa and so they were just hoping to get back to their own ship safely. Some of them did and some of them didn't. I never knew what carrier we were doing the plane guard for.

On June 5, 1945 after the battle of Okinawa we went through typhoon Viper. I found out later that was the name of it. I was on watch in the after engine room on the four o'clock to the eight o'clock in the morning. I watched and I saw that the ship was rolling more and more and more. The inclinometer showed that it was rolling about 49 degrees. I had no idea how far the ship could roll and come back but I was beginning to think we were getting to that point. The inclinometer called a chronometer by the Navy only went to 45 degrees so I had to estimate. Now down there in the engine room I was just sort of standing there, rocking back and forth on my feet. I realized that the Captain was swinging through the air from nearly being in the water, over to the other side, swinging in a huge arc back and forth. It must have been terrifying for the people on the bridge. When I got off watch I realized that we were in real serious trouble. The ship was bouncing around too much to eat, to have breakfast and too much to try to go to sleep so I positioned myself by a porthole and I looked out and saw the U.S.S. Pittsburgh which is CA-72, built just like ours, and it was sailing on a parallel course about a quarter mile away. The rain was so heavy I could see only the heavy part of the ship. It would go down in a trough and then up while we were on a crest and then we would be in a trough. Later after the war I computed from the silhouette of the ship that the waves were at least 50 feet high if Pittsburgh had been upright in the trough and it would have been a lot higher wave if the ship had been heeled over

when it was in the trough. As I watched for a couple of minutes Pittsburgh disappeared and somebody came running up to me and said, "Get back in the bigger part of the ship." Pittsburgh had just broken in two.

We found out later there was no loss of life but true enough, the whole front end of the ship had broken off. Fortunately our ship did not have the same problem but on the other hand that was when I first lost my cool. I had seen in the ship yard how careful the ship yard workers in building a staunch ship. Our Captain was a marvelous seaman and so I felt nothing but confidence up to that time. At Normandy they had told us we would not get out of the boiler room if anything hitting a sea mine or a heavy hit the steam pipes would break and we would not get out. So I turned my fate over to God and forgot about the fear but here when I heard that a ship could break in half and maybe sink, that kind of blew my cool. Anyway we got through the typhoon. Our airplanes were damaged and we had a lot of small damage on the ship. It's amazing how the water could break away heavy castings on the ship. I was just absolutely amazed at the power of the water.

One of the strange things: when the ship passed through the eye of the typhoon I was foolish enough to go out and take a look. I wish I had taken a better look at the conditions. I had the impression that it was cooler in the eye and I could see this huge wall of rain that we had just come through and the circular pattern of rain that we were going to plunge back into. But what fascinated me was that the bow of our ship would bury under the water and then come up with about a six-foot layer of water that would quickly run off. Our ship would bend up and down to be about eight or ten inches and it would go at about one second oscillation and about three oscillations and then it would bury itself back down again and then it would do it again. I watched this phenomenon about three times and then went back in. I wondered could the ship

possibly bend that much. I was sighting over something amidships and it certainly looked like it. In recent years I did write to one of the big naval architectural firms and I asked them just to give me an off the cuff estimate of whether the ship could possibly have bent that much. They assured me that under those conditions it could. When I mentioned that the Pittsburgh had broken in two, they undoubtedly knew that, and said that any ship can get stressed which can destroy it. Fortunately Quincy survived.

At the end of the typhoon there was an absolutely glassy sea. We were to meet up with Admiral Halsey's group which missed the typhoon and unfortunately when he gave orders to join up to our group we had to go right through the typhoon. One of the problems back then was that the weather reporting was very poor and especially because the enemy held the territory to the west where weather comes from. After the typhoon I never saw a sea as smooth as it was. It was like an absolute plate glass mirror. We were sitting there waiting for Admiral Halsey's group to come and join up with us. Then we spotted an airplane, low altitude, coming right toward Quincy. Our gunners were not firing so we had to assume that it was friendly. As it got closer we saw it was a flying boat and one of the propellers was stopped and then both propellers were stopped. Obviously it was out of gas, knew that a cruiser had aviation gas so they wanted to refuel. They landed not too far from us. A small boat brought the crew over to our ship where we had an Admiral and they begged for some gas from our ship. The Admiral and some of the Captains decided that they just didn't want to bother doing that. They claimed that there was danger from Japanese submarines. That didn't seem to be very possible because we had a lot of destroyers that have sonar gear to detect submarines. Anyway, the Admiral decided that the flying boat would be destroyed and as the crew came out of the Admiral's cabin they were all in tears. They were angry, furiously angry and just devastated. I don't know what happened to them

but a destroyer was dispatched to sink and destroy the flying boat. I thought that was pretty poor judgement because the flying boats were aerial reconnaissance and at that time would have been very useful.

We got over to the Philippines and I had to go to the repair ship that was anchored there and a motor boat took me over there and I was to get parts to repair the Captain's motor boat. He had a little boat, a kind of a speed boat, that was only about 16 feet long but it did have a little canopy over the front of it so that spray coming over the bow would not get his uniform all wet. Unfortunately a little boat that size did not take rough water very well. But the engine had been running on aviation gas. That was very hard on an ordinary engine and so I had to go over to get some tools to rebuild the engine and some parts. I told the storekeeper that I would have to get a message over to Quincy to send a boat. The man next to me said that he was the Captain of an LST and he was going right past the Quincy and he could give me a ride. That sounded good and I wanted to see what an LST was like. It turned out it was a great big, slow speed rumbling ship that could carry tanks right up onto the beach and certainly not as elegant a ship as the Quincy. We got over by the Quincy and they sent a boat over to pick me up and I asked, "Where's the ladder?" No ladder. "Do you have a net over the side of the ship?" No, we don't have a net. "How about a rope to slide down?" No, we don't have a rope. I was expected to jump from the deck of the LST down into the motor whale boat. Well, the boat was going up and down about 12 feet on the swell and what I was going to have to do was to jump when it was up at the top of the swell and that would be about a 6-foot jump. So I tossed down all the big heavy tools and all the smaller parts I stuffed into my pockets. I planned to jump at just the right time and as I jumped the motor whale boat moved out about three feet and I went right down between the two ships. Fortunately, the water was warm and fortunately I was at home in the water so it didn't

make any big panic. Unfortunately, with all that weight in my pockets, I went down like a stone. So I was getting darker and darker as I went down but I kept throwing all this stuff out of my pockets and finally I could claw myself back up to the surface. I saw the two sailors in the boat leaning out, looking down, as I got near the surface I put up both arms and each sailor grabbed an arm and yanked me into the boat. I realized that if I had actually jumped and landed in the boat I probably would have broken both ankles. I might even have straddled the gunnels of the boat and really had a bad accident. In any case, going between the boats was the far better thing and thank God for that. We just went back and I went up the ladder on the Quincy and there was the medical officer. He already had a little bottle of brandy and it was open. He said that when anybody fell overboard he was required to give them a bottle of brandy. It was an old Navy tradition and the idea was that if it was cold water it would make you feel warmer again and the odd thing that the water was very tepid, almost like bath water. So we didn't need the brandy. However, as it was open and I was not a drinker, I told the medical officer he would have to drink it himself. A big smile broke out over his face and so he drank it.

The Captain was getting ready to go to a big conference of Admirals and Captains that were going to plan the attack on the Japanese home island. Now the Captain's motor boat's engine had been repaired and so I asked the motor machinist mate who did the work "Did it run OK?" He said, "I didn't test it." I said, "You're going to have to test it. It's Navy regulations." He started in and this guy had a garage of his own in peacetime and he says, "I've been rebuilding engines since before you were born." Which may have been true. But I said, "You still have to test it." He says, "The boat's hanging out over the side of the ship. I'm not going to go out there and fall overboard." I said, "Well, get the bos'un to swing the boat back in and then you test the engine and report to me." So about a half hour later he came to me and very

sheepishly he said, "Well, I tested it and it didn't run. I must have set it up too tight." I said, "Oh, shit." So I went to my division officer and I stood formally and saluted and I said, "Pursuant to Navy regulations such and such (and I had the number) the Captain's motor boat was tested and it did not run." He said, "Oh, shit." So he went to the Chief Engineer, reported and the Chief Engineer probably says, "Oh, shit." (laughs) The Chief Engineer went to the Captain who probably said, "Oh, shit." He's going to have to go to this conference in the open motor whale boat that the spray came over the bow. His uniform would get wet and going in a whale boat was pretty low esteem for a Captain. Anyway he went.

Quincy began to bombard the Japanese home islands. We blew the town of Kamaishi all to pieces. That was a steel-making town. This was a bright afternoon, the sun was out, we were not too far out and there was absolutely no opposition. Kamaishi was chosen as a target because the steel works was on one side of the river and the residential area was on the other side of the river. So we could demolish the one without harming the other. We went to another town and destroyed it too. We felt we were doing pretty good. But we got the orders to pull out to sea 50 miles and then the next day we heard about the first atom bomb. At that time we knew that the war was almost over. The Japanese air force was completely used up at Okinawa. The Japanese navy was gone by Okinawa. The largest battleship ever built was the Yamato and that was sunk at Okinawa by our carrier planes. They had nothing left. Their army was still in China and on the islands. On the other hand, they would certainly be bringing back their army from China to defend the home islands but anyway we were confident that the war was almost over. Anyway, the atom bombs sure did seal their destiny. The question was what the heck was this atom bomb? Now we had one of our officers had been a physicist and so we asked him what the heck could this thing be. He just did not know. He didn't have a clue as to what it might be. On the other

hand the sailors had some interesting opinions. One of them was they would take the highest explosive that they had and soak it in aviation gasoline and that would really make it high potent and that was probably what it was. It's a little laughable looking back.

About ten days after the A-bomb we got ashore at the Japanese naval base at Yokosuko. The Japanese called it Yokuska and our job there was to get the naval base back in shape so that our ships could be repaired. When we got ashore we saw that the Marines had landed before we did, the Navy did, and they took out their fury against the Japs by smashing up everything they could possibly smash with their rifle butts. One of the things was these steam gauges, brass steam gauges, with Japanese markings of course that were about two foot in diameter. I would have loved to bring one of those home as a souvenir but they were all smashed to pieces. One of the things was there was a huge warehouse there and our Navy got some things from that warehouse that we could use. We also got to Tokyo on liberty and that was nice to see. The electric railroad was still running and the engineer looked to be about 15 or 16 years old and may have been. The officers would ride on the pilot truck of the electric locomotive. Now this was a little platform with four wheels and it had a little railing around it and it was out in front of the locomotive to keep the locomotive on the tracks. We would stand on that and you could get about eight people on it perhaps. That way we didn't get in the regular passenger cars that were just jammed full of Japanese. We also didn't have to pay anything. One of the men, there was a Japanese man that came riding along. He was well-dressed. He spoke to me in good English and I thought perhaps he wanted to practice his English. He mentioned that he was an editor for several engineering magazines. I said, "Oh, I come from Cleveland, Ohio, where the Pennton Publishing Company does exactly that." He said, "I'm very familiar with the Pennton Publishing Company." I'm sure that he got everyone of their magazines and translated it into Japanese.

That's one of the ways that the Japanese were able to do so much with so little. I asked him "How come there's all these old Ford and Chevrolet trucks running around?" Now our people had just kind of taken over and were driving these trucks around for one reason or another. Who knows what. He explained that when the Japanese bought junk from our junkyards they specified that they leave the vehicles together and that they could separate the different metals cheaper than we could do it in the United States. Actually what they wanted was complete vehicles. So they would take the ones that wouldn't run and take the parts off of those and put them on the ones that could run so for the price of scrap iron they got usable trucks. That explains something that I had wondered about. It was a nice thing to meet this guy.

In Tokyo there was a lot of damage of course. It was done by a six-hour bombing raid with ordinary bombs that used fire bombs to set fire to all of the Japanese buildings that were not very sturdy. A big department store was only about half burned down so we tried to find things that we could buy for souvenirs. One of the things I bought some little Saki cups which I figured we might use for salt or something like that. I bought ten of the little Saki cups. That way I could just multiply the price by ten and so I laid the money down on the counter. The clerk took her abacus and flicked those little beads back and forth for about two minutes and finally told me how much the price was and I shoved the money over to her and she looked surprised that I could figure out what the price was without that computing tool. Each sale had three people to make the sale: the clerk, one person who was cutting up paper to wrap it with and another person that would wrap it. They had a surplus of people and so they gave jobs to people for all these little nitpicking things.

One of things I saw in Tokyo was that the people were really, truly starving. Their diet consisted of about one-third fish, and our Navy ships would sink any fishing boats that ventured

outside the harbor and so that part of their diet was gone. There was a little garden that I saw. There was a strip of dirt between the sidewalk and the street. This little garden was about eight inches wide and about eight feet long. There were some sprouts, looked like bamboo sprouts, and there was a boy about 12 years old guarding it. I saw other things that I've never told anybody and never will. It was horrible that the Japs were in such awful condition. Oddly enough, at the house of prostitution there was a long line of sailors and it always amazed me how they could find that so quickly.

So, one of our jobs was to go to the northernmost island of Hokkaido where they had an anti-aircraft installation and our people were to deactivate that. I didn't get in on that because the gunners took care of that. One of our guys had galoshes with a hole in it and he picked up poison, he was poisoned by the squishy-squashy powder from one of the shells. Our medical officer had just gotten a shipment of penicillin so the first time didn't know all about how it was to be used and so he gave this officer penicillin in hopes that might counteract the poison. Of course the penicillin was a poison in itself and this poor guy had quite a time getting over that. He did survive though.

Quincy finally headed for home. We sailed under the Golden Gate Bridge about December 15. It was about noontime and I was very pleased that I was not on watch. There was a big sign on the hill at the Golden Gate. It looked like it was bedsheets. A huge sign that said, "Well done." It was the first time I'd ever heard a good word since I got in the Navy. The little ship that took people around the harbor and out to see what San Quentin looked like, that had a sign that said, "Welcome." That was really nice to see. As we got near the bridge we saw, now this was about December 15. It was several months after the end of the war but the bridge was lined with people waving us home. The other side of the bridge was also lined with people. Now

apparently the Navy would arrange to come in about lunch time and it was published in the newspaper when a combat ship was coming so the people would go out to cheer us home. It was very heartwarming to have that welcome. I'll never, ever forget that.

I got home by Christmas 1945 and I was very pleased about that. We had to wait three days for a train and then it took three and a half days getting to Chicago where I was mustered out of the Navy and I got home in time for Christmas. I spent almost three years, short a week or two, in the Navy and it's the only service I would have wanted to be in. I loved ships, I loved the water, I loved the Navy and despite the hardships and despite some of the weird things that happened, I had a good perspective and I saw that I was so fortunate in surviving and I was also fortunate in being a naval officer and that was so much better than being a crewman. That's my story and I'm glad to put it onto some kind of a record. Drop out any parts you don't like and shorten it any way you choose and thanks very much for listening.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Stick with me here. What date were you discharged?

Mr. Hamilton:

I'm not exactly sure. It would be about December, in the middle of December 1945. The reason I'm a little hazy about that is that the night before I was to be interviewed for discharge, a bunch of us went to the restaurant they had there and had a hamburger in the evening and my hamburger did not taste very good. The other people said theirs was OK and I only took a couple of bites of it but it made me terribly ill and I spent three days in bed. I should have gone into sick bay so I had to be careful.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When you got out, did you have any trouble adjusting to civilian life?

Mr. Hamilton:

No. First of all I had eight years of being in the Reserves and the question was being in the active Reserves, or the inactive. I chose the inactive. Some of my friends chose the active and that way they would meet once a week and they would get a nice pension out of that. I pointed out that that would restrict me from traveling and going on vacations and traveling for work. They said, "Oh, don't worry about that. We check each other in even though we're not there." Well, I'm not about to falsify records with the Federal Government so I didn't want any part of that. I was already married and my wife's prayers undoubtedly something to do with my return and the problem was I wanted to head to Detroit and get in the auto industry because I had prepared myself as an automotive engineer. My wife did not want to go to Detroit. Well, I found out later that why she didn't want to go there and it was kind of a selfish thing. So I settled for a company in Cleveland that built off the highway trucks. That was right down my talent. I enjoyed the work but the company did not pay very much. The management liked me and I liked the management and I had a lot of interesting things but they just didn't pay much. So I worked at another company at night and managed to pay the rent. I had plans to get a house built and five years after the war I designed a house and got a contractor to build it. In the meantime I'd been working away and saving money. I had a very nice down payment. To get back to your question about having a hard time. I just recently read a book by Victor Franko who was a psychiatrist and spent something like three years in a death camp in Hitler's Germany. He was a Jew ready to be killed off. Being a psychiatrist, he noticed that the other inmates that had a purpose in life were able to put up with the terrible deprivations and the fear and the ones that had no real purpose in life just died off. So I had always had a purpose in life. First it was just being an

engineer and then later it was doing engineering work and finally it was making an engineering career and having a family. So having this purpose I just carried it all out.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you get home from World War II with any souvenirs?

Mr. Hamilton:

Yes. Our aircraft hangar which was a very spacious place where we'd show movies in bad weather, not at sea but in port, and that was four feet deep in Japanese rifles. So everybody on the ship got at least one rifle. Some people took two. So I got an officer's suicide pistol and a rifle. I also brought back tools from that shipyard I mentioned. I used those tools all my life. They were pointed out to me by a Japanese and I think he expected that I would give him some money for it and stupidly I just accepted these tools that he pointed out without offering him any money. I felt so bad about that later and I still have some of these tools laying out here in front of the television as souvenirs of my life. When I was a small manufacturer I used all of that and that introduced me to the metric system.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When you were in the service, did you ever see any U.S.O. shows?

Mr. Hamilton:

I went to one in Hawaii. It was a stage show, "The Man Who Came to Dinner" with Kitty Carlyle who was a Broadway actress and her husband and Monte Wooley as The Man Who Came to Dinner. I was very disappointed in it. Nobody else wanted to go so I went by myself and it was not like a Bob Hope show. But that's the only one I ever saw. Wait a minute. There was one other one. Before the invasion of Normandy, our ship had just come from the States and some of our officers had heard about this British tradition of busker. They were entertainers who

didn't have an awful lot of talent that would do street entertainment for donations. They would gather wherever there was a long line of people that might be bored waiting and so they brought them aboard our ship. It was really sad. These people would tell jokes that were funny to the British and were not funny to the Americans. They would do songs and dances and they were so totally exhausted that I realized that the British would completely collapse if it had not been for the United States. Our sailors did not treat them very well. We'd just come from good entertainment in Boston and they did not give them a very nice return. That was about it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have any experience with the Red Cross?

Mr. Hamilton:

Several times I went to some of their places and they were willing to sew buttons on the shirt if I needed it. Unfortunately I didn't need much. I was married so I was not interested in going to dances or anything like that. Some of the people took a very dim view of the Red Cross, claimed that they had to pay for a cup of coffee. But actually on the trip home from San Francisco to Chicago, or perhaps it was on the trip from Chicago to Cleveland, the train stopped at a small town that had become famous for treating the servicemen to coffee and donuts. They had done it for every train that went by and unless there was a crisis going on, the trains would automatically stop right there. Since it became a big thing, they had to get help from other small towns and I'm not sure whether this was in Indiana or Illinois but it was written up in Readers' Digest after the war and I did get a cup of coffee and a donut when I got out to stretch my legs. It was nice that there were people like that.

The people at home of course did a great job. I had a cousin and an uncle that worked in Schenectady at the General Electric Turbine shop. They made the steam turbines for all of the

combat ships in the U.S. Navy, including the engines on the Quincy. So I felt kind of backed up by them and in Cleveland of course there were many small companies that made components for ships and it was nice to know that hometown people were doing that. It was also the Thompson Products Company a large employer. I think it was during the war it was the largest employer in Cleveland. They made airplane engine valves and also other parts and I have one of the valves here as a display that was used on the B-17 bomber.

Mr. Veerman:

Bill, did you want to mention about your interaction with General Eisenhower on the Quincy?

Mr. Hamilton:

Eisenhower, all right. While we were waiting for the big invasion, General Eisenhower came aboard our ship for a formal inspection. This was normally done by high commands in order to see with their own eyes whether the troops were ready for battle. The Quincy, of course, was in great shape, a brand-new ship, a new crew that had been well-trained and so as Eisenhower stepped through a water-tight door, there was a guard standing there in case he might have tripped. I was a few feet from there and he was following the Captain on a tour of the ship. When Eisenhower saw one of my firemen from the boiler division who was rather chunky, rotund, Ike stopped and asked him, "How's the chow?" I'm sure that Eisenhower was waiting to find a guy that description and so poor fireman first class Pittle was kind of overwhelmed for a minute but then he collected himself and he said, "I like it" which was a perfect answer because it didn't reflect on the cook one way or the other and so it was great to see Eisenhower.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Mark, you got any other questions for him?

Mr. Veerman:

I'm thinking you covered most everything that you...

Mr. Misenhimer:

I've got some more but go ahead if you have any. Let me know what they are.

Mr. Veerman:

That one I thought was rather unique that most individuals would not have met Eisenhower. So I wanted to make sure you captured that.

Mr. Hamilton:

Yeah, OK. That was certainly an odd quirk. I'll tell you the Quincy was a blessed ship to have Roosevelt and Eisenhower and... I'll add one more thing: When we got to the island of Malta with the President he was going to join Winston Churchill. Churchill was coming aboard the ship with his daughter. The officers on the Quincy were vying against each other to get a good spot where they could see all of this action. I went up on the searchlight platform where two of my electricians were standing and I told them to move over so we each had one foot on this little tiny platform and we could look down and see the whole thing. So Winston Churchill... We were tied up to the dock. Churchill stopped about a hundred yards from the ship and he got out of the car with his daughter. He put on his derby, he took his cane and he took his cigar and then he came trudging down the dock toward our gangplank. It was pure Churchill. He came up the gangplank and it's customary to salute the flag which is at the back of the ship when they are in port, and then to salute the Quartermaster who is in charge of the deck. I should call him the Officer of the Day and then ask for permission to come aboard. So Churchill came up the gangplank, he saluted the flag, and then he handed his cigar to a Marine that was standing there. The Marine was kind of overwhelmed but he coped in the traditions of the Corps while Churchill saluted and then Churchill took the cigar back and came aboard. We did not see him with the

President. His letter home that evening said that he saw the President in fine health. Now that was either to hide the fact that the President was so bad or perhaps the President had been given a shot of adrenalin and was in better shape.

Now there's one little thing I omitted there. When we were in the Mediterranean where we took President Roosevelt to the conference he flew on from the Island of Malta to Yalta where the conference took place. In the meantime our ship anchored in the Great Bitter Lake which is part of the Suez Canal. That was very interesting in a lot of ways. We could see the boats and ships in the canal and in the Great Bitter Lake some of them were the Arabic sailboats that were different from our sailboats and I also got a ride in our seaplane because the pilots had to keep up the number of hours. I got to hold the stick for a little bit and we flew over the town of Alexandria. As we went over the City of the Dead where they had buildings where they would place the dead in order to dry out and decay. That's how they took care of the dead. The stench at five thousand feet was just unbearable. Now, of course, Jesus referred to that when he said that some of the people were like a whited sepulcher. Of course all of these buildings had been whitewashed to make them look nice but they smelled bad because of these decaying bodies. I got liberty in Cairo for one day and that was a marvelous experience.

Our airplane flew around the pyramids three times slowly at low altitude and I just could not believe the immense size of the main pyramid. The Sphinx was also quite interesting even although it was damaged. The city of Cairo, the main street was unpaved, the famous Shepherd Hotel I saw was about what we would call a fourth class hotel. We hired a guide to drive us around in his taxi and show us various things. I saw a man selling bread on a side street. He had a stack of the flatbread that they eat over there just setting on the ground and one of the local men had a couple of sons with them, small boys, and he bought a piece of the bread, wiped with

the filthy hem of his garment and then tore off pieces for his kids. They certainly must have had a strong stomach to survive in that area.

The minute our bus stopped, kids came running up, asking for coins. They would say, Baksheesh, Bakseesh which is Arabic for alms. Now I had read in a little book that the Navy provided that gave some of the words that might be locally useful. I learned Mafeesh, Bakseesh which mean no alms. So when I said mafeesh, bakseesh, all of these kids got a big kick out of my two words in Arabic and that was more of a kick to them than getting a coin. But anyway whenever our guys would give coins, immediately there would be a couple of hundred other kids come out of nowhere, trying to get some money. So our guys were all generous. We were not supposed to use American money. American money would go to Adolph Hitler to use in his spy network. We were supposed to use local money and on our ship, before we would get off our ship, they would give us some of the local money.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Bill, what was the highest rank you got to?

Mr. Hamilton:

I started out as Ensign and that is really a low rank. All of the sailors know that an Ensign doesn't know much about the Navy. When you graduate from Annapolis you are an Ensign but they also have other ways and the way I got to be an Ensign was a lot easier in going through Annapolis. After the invasion at Normandy, they increased our rank to Lieutenant, j.g. Now when the atom bomb ended the war, they increased us to full Lieutenant just to give us a little extra money to go home with. It was a temporary rank in case we were going to stay in the Navy. Now, our Captain had pointed out what a nice life the peacetime Navy could be. If I hadn't been married, I might have stayed in. I would have got in the Bureau of Ships, into the shipbuilding

end of it and I would have enjoyed doing engineer work on the shipbuilding. But being married, I knew I was not going to have any part of the service and in general that was the attitude of all of the servicemen anyway. I was biting my lip so hard that blood began running down my chin and I was quite embarrassed and I tried to hide it from the Captain. This was not our original Captain. After the typhoon our Captain left the ship. He had a ship in World War I and I suspect after the typhoon he had seen enough water and so we got a new Captain, Captain Waters. We didn't serve under him long enough to get to really know him.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Have you been on the Honor Flight to Washington, D.C.?

Mr. Hamilton:

Yes. That was shortly after that was started and we went on a regular commercial airline but the originator of that idea went along with us. That was unusual. He would arrange so that when we got off the airplane he would send an advance person out tell the people in the waiting room who we were. So all of them would jump up and cheer. I don't know if they understood what they were cheering but anyway, it was kind of nice. When we got back home we were all kind of tired of course. It was a longest day I ever spent. The female airline people gave each one of us a hug as we got off the airplane. That was kind of nice. One of the people on the airplane had the Silver Star. He was in a wheelchair and I'm sure it was very nice for him to see it.

I've been to Washington many, many times, to the Patent Office and so I was very familiar with the city. We also went out to the Arlington Cemetery and saw the Marine Iwo Jima memorial and I took a little nap in the bus when they did that. I'd seen it many times.

Mr. Misenhimer:

All right, Bill. That's all the questions I have unless you've thought of anything else.

Mr. Hamilton:

Well, there's a lot of other little things. Some of them in the beginning, I could have mentioned when I first got the battle station in the boiler room, I asked one of the older officers "how come we didn't get life jackets like the guys on deck." He said, "You're not going to need a life jacket." I said, "What if the ship hits a sea mine or takes a heavy hit?" He says, "If that happens, some of these pipes will break and you'll have tons of steam at 850 degrees. You won't take two steps before you're cooked. You're not going to get out." He must have seen on my face that that didn't sit very well. So he kind of clinched it by saying, "Get used to it." So I just said a prayer and put my fate in the hands of God. But I also asked, "What if we can get out?" So he said, "We'll get a life jacket off somebody that doesn't need it anymore. Try to get one without blood on it because blood attracts sharks." Well, now I had a plan. When you have a plan, even though it's as thin as that, you don't have to fear about the unknown. I often chuckled about it later that it was a pretty thin plan. Anyway, I never had the problem

Mr. Misenhimer:

Well, Bill thanks

Mr. Hamilton:

Thanks very much for listening and I sure appreciate it and I'll look forward to it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Thanks again and we'll keep in touch.

Mr. Veerman:

Bye, Bill.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Good-bye.

End of Interview

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September 25 , 2020

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