

**The National Museum of the Pacific War
(Admiral Nimitz Museum)**

**Center for Pacific War Studies
Fredericksburg, Texas**

**Interview with
Owen Fluckey
293-54-85
USN**

**By John Tombaugh and Peg Van Meter
Great Lakes Naval Training Station, Illinois**

April '44 - '46

Owen Fluckey
293-54-85
April '44 - '46
USN

Pacific Theater

Medals earned:
Victory Medal
Good Conduct
World War II Medal
American Defense Medal
Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal
Ruptured Duck

Original Interview by
John B. Tombaugh and Peg Van Meter
completed
21 August, 2004

With reinterview with of
Owen Fluckey
by John Tombaugh
, 2004

My name is John B. Tombaugh and Peggy Van Meter and I are interviewing Mr. Owen Fluckey.

Mr. Tombaugh

Would you please state your name and address?

Mr. Fluckey

Owen Fluckey at 301 Indiana Ave. Argos, Indiana.

Mr. Tombaugh

What is your wife's name?

Mr. Fluckey

Bertha Mae Schrimsher, married in April 3, 1948.

Mr. Tombaugh

Do you have any children?

Mr. Fluckey

A daughter, Brenda Lee.

Mr. Tombaugh

Where did you go to school?

Mr. Fluckey

Walnut township., south of Argos, Indiana and graduated from Leiters Ford in 1944.

Mr. Tombaugh

What were your parents names and where were they born?

Mr. Fluckey

Clella and Anna Goheen Fluckey. Dad from Lakeville, Indiana and Mother from Tyner, Indiana.

Mr. Tombaugh

Where were you born?

Mr. Fluckey

Lakeville, Indiana on April 25, 1926.

Mr. Tombaugh

Where did you enter the military?

Mr. Fluckey

My parents signed for me to get into the military and I entered in April at Great Lakes. Actually I went into the military before I graduated. In April of 1944 took my boot training at Great Lakes.

Mr. Tombaugh

Why did you choose that particle branch?

Mr. Fluckey

My dad was in the Army in WWI and he didn't want me in the Army. Said you might have to swim but you'll have three hot meals a day and a dry place to sleep in the Navy.

Mr. Tombaugh

Do you remember basic training there?

Mr. Fluckey

What do you want to know about it?

Mr. Tombaugh

Was there any special memories about that?

Mr. Fluckey

No, it was a short basic training, we had five weeks of boot camp and a work week after; we worked with recruits coming in.

We had 160 men in our outfit and had an athletic petty officer who was our company commander and in excellent shape. Nobody got liberty in boot camp. He said that on a hike Friday we would go out and anybody that could run me in the ground could have Saturday and Sunday off. Well there was about ten guys left when I gave up and he run backwards most of the time, and laughing at us because we couldn't keep up. I long for those old days again (ha ha).

Mr. Tombaugh

After boot camp were you given any specialized training?

Mr. Fluckey

I was sent to California-NLFED, it was a landing craft depot - landing craft amphibious tanks. That's where they were send when they came in from invasions. The ones that were in good enough shape to be rebuilt we did and took parts off of the ones that weren't so that we could rebuilt the good ones.

Mr. Tombaugh

Were those the Higgins boats?

Mr. Fluckey

No, they were LVT's (land vehicles track) amphibious tanks. I left there in August or September of 1944 and was sent to Clipperton Island. It belonged to the French and was uninhabited. Laid out in the shape of a coral ring and in the center of the island was a big lagoon which had brackish water in it due to the salt. The island at the longest point might of been 5 miles by about 2 or 3 miles wide.

We set up a weather station and once a day I remember exactly it was 9 o'clock in the morning we sent up a weather balloon with a transmitter. I don't know but assume it transmitted its messages back to the states, what direction the wind came from and all this kind of stuff, that was our sole duty at the weather station.

Mr. Tombaugh

It was much need by a lot of people?

Mr. Fluckey

I don't know, it didn't help us any. I was there I believe for six or eight months. For some reason they transferred a young man my age and wanted that duty there so bad; he applied for it and got it and he replaced me.

I went aboard a ship he was on a YP 419 and came back to the state and was entitled to a thirty day leave so got my leave and went home and when I came back my ship was gone. That was at San Diego and they sent me up to Treasure Island and I became a crew member for a new ship that was just being commissioned, the AS 17 USS Nereus which was a sub tender. I served the rest of my time aboard that ship, we carried supplies - hospital parts, a floating city almost, we could even pour. I never saw it done but told because that was a big ship 962 feet long and war time complement with 1,500 men. You lived in your little world and took care of it but we could even machine parts and make parts for submarines.

Mr. Tombaugh

I believe you had buoys on board to float the subs if they needed it?

Mr. Fluckey

We had anything a submarine might need within reason. We had our own squadron.

Mr. Tombaugh

Do you remember the number and how many in that squadron?

Mr. Fluckey

No I don't because they were never there all at one time. One might come in and then you might not see one for quite a while then another one would show up.

I do have one experience. The submarine SS 220 Barb came along side with a man with an acute appendicitis so they transported him to our ship and the submarine left. I never knew until a long time after that the commander of that sub was Eugene Fluckey who lives in Connecticut. He is a second cousin twice removed and is 91 years old. We had a Fluckey Reunion in Effingham, Illinois and he is still living, he was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor; his submarine got several Presidential Unit Citations and so forth and I was rather proud. I knew of him before that but I didn't know he was skipper of the submarine SS Barb when he came along side, I had no idea.

Mr. Tombaugh

I do know this as I'm writing the history of World War II on a daily bases and I do remember entering into my files where they came along side a repair ship and let off one man.

Mr. Fluckey

I stood at the rail and watched it. I was honored to meet his daughter at the reunion.

I knew about him previously when I was in Island duty, one of the guys from Ohio got the local paper and Headlines was Commander Fluckey wins Congressional Medal of Honor and this guy says: "Hey Owen, do you know this guy?" You always got to pop off about something.

I said, "Yea, he's my father."

He said, "What are you doing in a spot like this if you have a dad like that?"

I said, "We never got along. We barely speak to one another." and that went on for a while and later, when I told them the truth, they didn't believe me.

I met his daughter at the reunion and said to her: "You didn't know this but for about a week you had a brother."

She looked at me so funny and asked how that was and she didn't know about him. I then told her the whole story.

Aboard the sub tender we pulled into Sasebo harbor in Japan and they had a bunch of Japanese submarines that were still operable. So from 6 am to 6 pm we had picket duty, we went aboard every sub and made sure everything was okay and when it was all said and done we took these submarines out in what they called "lands end operation" and sank every one. I thought that was such a waste.

I was at Sasebo for 2 to 3 months and our skipper was the senior officer in the harbor, in fact he was senior officer over everybody and I was the engineer in the Captain's gig. I got to go around quite a bit and hauled him or some of the officers here and there. We had two little Japanese girls that worked in the officer club. I wasn't the engineer in the Captain gig all the time, only when he needed. The rest of the time I was the engineer of 50 foot motor launch. Our job was to pick these girls up when the officer club closed and take them back to the dock where we had picked them up at. The two girls were very nice. One of the girls daddy was chief executive officer in one of the banks over there and disabled. I got pretty well acquainted with these two little girls and after I came home they would write letters to me. The trouble was I had to find somebody who could read Japanese, I did find a person who could. Over the years that faded away too, especially when I met my wife and got married.

They should have save a piece of the Japanese subs for history and they could of cut them up for scrap. I sat and watched them as they put charges against the pressure hull and towed out to sea and blew them up.

We did have trouble with a couple of the crews in getting them off their subs because they wanted to go down with the ship. They had quite a ritual before they left the submarine. They would bow this direction and that direction and to the Japanese flag and everything else before they finally left the submarine.

Mr. Tombaugh

While you were aboard ship what was the food like?

Mr. Fluckey

Not bad. It wasn't very good for a while and then the commissary officer got transferred and the food got better. Being a farm boy when the food was put on the table you either ate it or did without. It didn't bother me much but everybody else complained. Heck, I thought it was pretty good.

When on Island duty we didn't have any dairy products. We did have a freezer and diesel generators and while on the island that was my job taking care of the generators. You ran one for 24 hours then the other one for 24 hours. We had a small walk-in freezer. Every ship that went by, when we could see them, we would challenge them, like we could do something if we wanted. The largest gun we had on the island was a 20mm and we couldn't have reached them with that. We challenged the American ships and the fishing was great around the island and we always had fresh frozen fish in the freezer. We would ask them what they'd trade for fresh frozen fish and all were willing to trade. We got ice cream, milk and all kinds of food items and one time we got a bunch of steaks.

We had a southern boy who was a cook and he could take dehydrated potatoes and make them palatable, and that's a trick in itself, even powder eggs. If your hungry enough it's all eatable.

Mr. Tombaugh

From basic on forward did you make friends and keep friendship with anybody over the years with them?

Mr. Fluckey

I did for a while, there was a friend of mine that lived in Connecticut and we did keep in contact with each other but we have drifted a part. One from Illinois and Kentucky and Winamac, Indiana and the sad part have lost contact with them.

Didn't get to go to the reunion of the USS Nereus. I wanted to go but had made plans to take the grandchildren to Alaska. So the grandkids won out.

I belong to the VFW and keep looking in their magazines for any reunions.

Mr. Tombaugh

Do you remember your CO's name?

Mr. Fluckey

I can see him but right now but I can't remember his name.

Mr. Tombaugh

What were the changes you found when you came home?

Mr. Fluckey

We came back a little bit older and I won't say smarter, maybe wiser. You know, truthfully I never noticed a big change of anything. Like I said I was nothing but farm boy and mom and dad still lived on the farm. The one big change I did notice was that you could get a job anywhere. I retired from Del Monte in Plymouth,

Indiana.

There was no naval reserve around so I transferred to the Army Reserves and attended the meetings at South Bend, Indiana.

It was an Honor to Serve.

-END-

9 hours