Interviewer: This interview is taking place at Mr. Boyd Lamb’s residence in Crosby, Texas. I will be asking questions about his life prior to, during, and after World War II.

I would like to start by asking for some general background about you. Where were you born?

Veteran: I was born in West Virginia in a little place called Hardman. I stayed there until I started to college.

Interviewer: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

Veteran: I had three brothers and four sisters.

Interviewer: What did your father do?

Veteran: He was a small-time farmer.

Interviewer: What did your mom do?

Veteran: Just looked after us.

Interviewer: Can you give me an example of everyday life at your home?

Veteran: Like any farm, there’s a lot of work, and we all had things to do. I don’t know of anything in particular or out of the ordinary that we did.

Interviewer: What kind of chores did you do?

Veteran: Helped milk cows, weeded gardens, and worked in the fields—a little of everything.
Interviewer: What kinds of schooling have you had?
Veteran: I have a Bachelor of Arts degree and a little graduate work at the University of Michigan.

Interviewer: What were you studying to become before the war?
Veteran: When I finished college, I thought I would teach school. I was hoping to go on to school and get an engineering degree, but that never happened. Instead I went to work in sales in Cleveland, Ohio.

Interviewer: When did you first hear of the war?
Veteran: I guess whenever it started. That would have been in the early 40s.

Interviewer: What were your thoughts about it?
Veteran: At first, I didn’t want to go into the service, because I did have a good job, but as the war went on, like most others, I wanted to be a part of it.

Interviewer: How old were you when you first heard about it?
Veteran: I guess 21 or thereabouts.

Interviewer: Did the announcement affect your family directly after hearing it?
Veteran: No, not that I know of.

Interviewer: When did you first hear about the draft?
Veteran: Whenever it went in. I don’t remember the dates, but that was in the early 40s, too.

Interviewer: What were your thoughts about it?
Veteran: I’d go along with whatever happened.

Interviewer: Some people didn’t expect the draft to go through so fast. Were you prepared to leave?
Veteran: I was never drafted, so I don’t know.
Interviewer: You decided you’d go into the Navy?
Veteran: Yes, I decided to volunteer. I was working out of Chicago and checked with the Navy office there. They offered to give me a commission, so I took it.

Interviewer: How long was the training process that you had to go through?
Veteran: I spent four months at Cornell University at a deck school, and from that I went to Washington, D.C. to fire control and gunnery school for three months. Then I was ordered to the battleship Tennessee.

Interviewer: Can you give me an example of a typical day during your training?
Veteran: We usually had to do about an hour of exercise early in the morning and then classes all day. Pretty much like any other school, except we did have a lot of calisthenics and different types of exercises to go through.

Interviewer: What kind of exercises?
Veteran: All types—pushups, pull-ups, running.

Interviewer: What determined your rank going into the service?
Veteran: When I volunteered I was given an ensign commission. I guess that was determined from my education from what work I had been doing.

Interviewer: When did you finish your training?
Veteran: I reported January 3, 1944.

Interviewer: When you got notice, did you know where you were going right then?
Veteran: Oh, yes. You know where you’re going at all times.

Interviewer: Did you train with the people you were deployed with at that time?
Veteran: No, I didn’t know anyone.

Interviewer: How many places did you stop before you finally got to the ship?
Veteran: As I said, I was at Cornell for four months and then in Washington, D.C., and then when I was ordered to the ship, I went to San Francisco to await
transportation to the ship. I had no idea where it was. In San Francisco, I was ordered to a trip ship that was leaving San Francisco for the South Pacific. We made several stops. One was Pearl Harbor, and we made two or three stops along the coast of New Guinea. Finally, after about thirty days, I caught up with the *Tennessee* in the Admiralty Islands.

**Interviewer:** Did you travel by ship, or chopper, or by plane?

**Veteran:** From San Francisco, we traveled by ship—a troop ship, which was a converted luxury liner.

**Interviewer:** Was it crowded?

**Veteran:** Oh, yes—very crowded.

**Interviewer:** What did you do to pass the time?

**Veteran:** Very little—read, did a little exercise on the ship, we stood a few watches. On the troop ship I was on, there was about 3,000 sailors and about 100 officers going to their final destinations, so the ship was very crowded.

**Interviewer:** What orders were you given directly off the troop ship?

**Veteran:** I was assigned as assistant division officer in the 40 Millimeter Division.

**Interviewer:** What did you first think of the USS *Tennessee*?

**Veteran:** That it was big and kind of frightening when you first got aboard, but it was quite an experience to see something that big and know that you’re gonna be part of it.

**Interviewer:** Did you know how long you would be on it?

**Veteran:** No, we had no idea. Of course, we knew it would probably be until the end of the war.

**Interviewer:** What kinds of jobs were there aboard the ship?

**Veteran:** That’s a little hard to say. In the first division I was assigned to, which was the 40 Millimeter Division, we had about 120 sailors and two officers in the division,
so we had to look after our men and be sure that the guns and all were in good condition. We stood watches and just generally took care of business.

Interviewer: Can you give me an example of everyday life on the ship from when you first got up?
Veteran: It’s been a long time. You usually checked with your chief petty officer to see that everything was taken care of. It’s really hard to say what you did all day, because it depended on where you were.

Interviewer: So you had other jobs as well all over the ship?
Veteran: The guns were all over the ship, so you had to be familiar with everything. You had to be sure that your men were all taken care of.

Interviewer: Do you remember how many men were onboard with you?
Veteran: We had approximately 2,200 enlisted men and 125 officers, so there was a little over 2,300 people normally onboard.

Interviewer: Did you ever go on shore leave?
Veteran: You were allotted thirty days leave per year, so I was able to get my full leave each year I was in the service.

Interviewer: Where would you go?
Veteran: The first leave that I had was when the ship would come back to Seattle after the battle in the Philippines. I received thirty days leave at that time, and this was in December of ’44. I spent most of it back in Cleveland, Ohio, where my mother was.

Interviewer: When you were on the ship, could you leave all the time?
Veteran: No. Most of the time you didn’t see land, so you didn’t leave unless you were in port, and that was very seldom.
Interviewer: Where would you go when you were in port?
Veteran: It depended on where you were. You’d try to get ashore as often as you could, but that was very seldom.

Interviewer: Where would you go when you were ashore? What other places have you been?
Veteran: In the states, I was in Seattle for a time, and then when we came back from the war, I was in Philadelphia. The ports that I was in included Pearl Harbor, Wakihama, Japan, Singapore, Kolombo Solon, and Cape Town, South Africa.

Interviewer: You said the last time I talked you that sometimes you were able to leave the boat at night. Where would you go?
Veteran: That would depend on what the conditions were and where it was. In several ports, I was able to leave overnight. While we were in Seattle at the Bremerton Navy Yard, even when I wasn’t on leave I was able to get overnight leave several times. In Philadelphia, I was able to get overnight leave about once a week. In some of the foreign ports, like Cape Town, I was able to spend two or three nights ashore. Other than that, you usually had to come back to the ship.

Interviewer: Where did ya’ll go when you got off?
Veteran: The usual thing. {Laughter}

Interviewer: Such as?
Veteran: Looking for a good place to eat and something to drink, sightseeing a little.

Interviewer: When did you have to report back to the ship? Were you given a particular time?
Veteran: Oh, yes, we had a certain time that we had to be back.

Interviewer: What was your status with the girls back then? Did you have a girl waiting for you back home?
Veteran: I had one in Cleveland that I thought I was going back to, but I was still looking.

Interviewer: Did you ever write?
Veteran: Oh, yeah. Of course, you hoped you would get letters, so to get those you had to write usually.

Interviewer: What kind of things did you write about?
Veteran: We weren’t allowed to say too much about where we were and all, but just made conversation primarily.

Interviewer: How many battles did you fight in?
Veteran: I was in the battle covering the landings at Leyte in the Philippines. There we were in the battle of Surigao Straits, which was one of the biggest sea battles of the war. We also covered the landings at Okinawa and Iwo Jima, so that was the three engagements that I was part of.

Interviewer: Where was the first place you fought?
Veteran: At Leyte, in the Philippines.

Interviewer: What were your orders there?
Veteran: We were waiting for the troops to go ashore to cover the troops. Of course, while that was going on we took part in the battle of Surigao Straits.

Interviewer: When did the fighting start?
Veteran: The battle of Surigao Straits started about two o’clock in the morning, and it only lasted about fifteen minutes. There, we sunk almost the entire Jap navy that was coming in, and we sunk two battleships, four cruisers, and about four destroyers. We did all that in about thirteen minutes.

Interviewer: When did the fighting stop?
Veteran: Just after that few minutes. While we were in Leyte, we had air strikes every day. The Japanese were sending airplanes over almost every day, so we were fighting those almost constantly.

Interviewer: Was your ship damaged?
Veteran: No, not at the Philippines. The only time the ship was ever damaged was at Okinawa.

Interviewer: What did you think of the fight?
Veteran: We didn’t want it, but it was something we knew we had to do.

Interviewer: What was the second place you fought at?
Veteran: The second place was Iwo Jima.

Interviewer: When did you get notice you had to fight somewhere else?
Veteran: I don’t know. It was an ongoing thing. We pretty much knew after we left each place where we were going, but to say when we knew, that would be hard to say.

Interviewer: When did the fighting start there?
Veteran: I’d have to look at my notes to even know.

Interviewer: Do you know what your orders were there?
Veteran: That changed every day. Your orders were to do whatever it took to repel the enemy. We knew that there would be air strikes at each place, so we were constantly on the lookout for that, but our main orders were to bombard the islands prior to the landings and then cover the landings when the troops were going in.

Interviewer: Did you still have the same position as you did before?
Veteran: During the Okinawa engagement, I was transferred from the 40 Millimeter Division to the 5 Inch Division, but that was the only two changes in orders or duties that I had on the ship.

Interviewer: Was your ship damaged by any of the fire?
Veteran: It was at Okinawa. We took a suicide plane that killed 25 and wounded 100 and knocked out several guns on the ship. A bomb went down below decks and exploded and tore up a lot of the officer’s rooms. Fortunately, mine wasn’t
touched. We took quite a bit of damage at Okinawa, and that was the only time that our ship was damaged while I was on it.

Interviewer: What did you think of the whole fight at Okinawa?  
Veteran: It was rough. It was something to see, but something you wouldn’t want to do again.

Interviewer: Did you fight at another place?  
Veteran: When we left Okinawa—this is was before the war ended—we thought we were going to be invading Japan, and would be a part of that. We did a lot of patrol duty off the coast of Japan, and fortunately the war ended. We went into Japan itself to Wakihama, which was one of Japan’s large naval bases. In that area, the admiral in Wakihama surrendered the whole area to our admiral aboard our ship. That was the end of the war.

Interviewer: When that suicide plane hit the ship, do you know how long it took to repair the ship? How much actual damage was there to the ship? Could it still sail?  
Veteran: Oh, yeah. We went back to Ulithi, which is an island in the Pacific that had a large repair facility, and the damage was taken care of there. We had two or three gun mounts that had been knocked out replaced, and the damage to the ship was all taken care of. It took about two to three weeks, I think.

Interviewer: When did you first receive word that ya’ll were going home?  
Veteran: It was in November of ’45, I guess, when we got our orders to return to the states, so we knew we were going home then.

Interviewer: How old were you?  
Veteran: I think I was 25.

Interviewer: What did you think about it? Were you happy?  
Veteran: We were all happy that the thing was over, and of course we were happy that we had won.
Interviewer: Did you stop at any places on the way home?
Veteran: We spent a week in Singapore, a week at Kolombo Solon, and we spent a week at Cape Town. It took us about, I guess, five or six weeks to get home, but we enjoyed all the stops that we had.

Interviewer: What did you do there?
Veteran: {Laughter} Did a lot of sightseeing and just generally had a good time.

Interviewer: Did ya’ll go to any clubs or anything and hang out?
Veteran: Oh, yeah. Singapore had some night clubs that were nice, and Kolombo Solon was interesting. We did a lot of sightseeing there. One place we visited was Kandi Salon, which was the headquarters for Lord Mountbatten. It was an interesting place. There were elephants walking up and down the street. In getting to some other area, we passed through an area that was noted for its headhunters, so our guide wouldn’t stop in those areas, because he said it wasn’t safe. That was real interesting.

Interviewer: When you finally got home, were you relieved from duty?
Veteran: It took me another three or four months to get out. We were released under a point system, which was determined by the length of service. We got back to Philadelphia in December, and I didn’t get out until April.

Interviewer: What did you have to do since you couldn’t get out until April?
Veteran: Generally, stood watches and stayed out of the way of the civilian workers that were coming aboard to take the ship out of service. There was very little to do really.

Interviewer: So you helped them take the ship out of service?
Veteran: We had nothing to do other than just keep things working until they were finished. The actual work was done by civilians.
Interviewer: Can you give me a description of the USS *Tennessee*? What were the living quarters like?
Veteran: Living quarters, for the officers particularly, were nice. Most of the time, until the last few months I was aboard, I had one roommate, and we had a room that was comparable to a small motel room. The last two or three months I had a room to myself. Full lieutenants and above always had a single room. A few of the senior lieutenant jgs were able to get a single room, but ensigns and junior jgs had to share a room. I guess during my time on the ship I had three or four different roommates.

Interviewer: Did you have a certain kind of ‘lights out’ policy?
Veteran: It depended on where you were. If we were out of the battle zone, there was no deadline for turning off lights. If you were in a battle zone, you had to be careful.

Interviewer: Why?
Veteran: You didn’t want the ship illuminated at night, although most of the rooms had no external windows or portals.

Interviewer: Did ya’ll have nicknames for each other?
Veteran: Not really that I remember.

Interviewer: I brought a photo of the USS *Tennessee*, and it says, “USS *Tennessee* bombards Okinawa as troops approach the landing beaches.” Do you remember this?
Veteran: I remember Okinawa. This evidently shows *Tennessee* guns being fired. It shows a landing craft going by, and I remember that very well. I don’t remember this particular picture, but that’s typical of what was happening during the landings.

Interviewer: And where were you stationed on the ship as they were shooting?
Veteran: At the time of the landings, my battle station was topside. I was on a platform that we called sky-half, which was over the starboard side of the quarter deck, so I was able to see everything that was going on at that time.
Interviewer: Did you see any of the island at all?
Veteran: Well, yeah, we were within visual sight of the islands at almost all times.

Interviewer: What did it look like?
Veteran: When we arrived there and the Navy started bombarding, the island looked real good. It had a lot of trees, and you could tell there were a lot of fields that were cultivated and all, but by the time we got through bombarding, practically everything was burned. We were shelling the island for three to four weeks before the landing started. During that time also there were U.S. air strikes on the islands every day. From their bombs and our shells, almost everything was destroyed that you could see. I never did get ashore on the island myself, but it looked like a real nice place.

Interviewer: How have your views of our government changed compared to your past and the present now? Have they changed any?
Veteran: Of course, during wartime things are always different, but I couldn’t comment on that.

Interviewer: What did you think of the president at the time of the war?
Veteran: We were all for him. We thought he made the right decisions.

Interviewer: Do you think it was a good war per se, or do you think it helped us?
Veteran: I think it was something we had to do. It was pretty much forced on us.

Interviewer: When you were aboard the ship, did you receive word at any time about what was going on back home?
Veteran: Oh, yeah. We had letters regularly. From the letters and by radio, we pretty much knew what was going on at home.

Interviewer: How would the letters come?
Veteran: I guess mostly by air. It normally only took anywhere from a week to two weeks to receive mail.
Interviewer: When did you first hear about the depression?
Veteran: It wasn’t much of a depression back then.

Interviewer: Was it easy to get a job after the war?
Veteran: Oh, yes. I had no problem at all.

Interviewer: What was your job?
Veteran: I had a job before the war, so it was open for me although I didn’t take it after I got after the service. I decided to get into something else, but I had no problem finding a job.

Interviewer: What kind of job did you have when you first got out?
Veteran: When I went into the service I was a sales engineer for a company out of Cleveland, Ohio. I was working out of Chicago at the time, and I could have gone back with that company, but I decided not to. My first job after the war, I had some friends in the Navy that encouraged me to come to Los Angeles, so I went there and spent six months working there. I didn’t like it, so I came back to Cleveland and took a job with a company in Toledo, Ohio, that sent me down south. That’s why I ended up in the southern part of the states.

Interviewer: Can you further explain what life was like after the war?
Veteran: The first few years there was a shortage of a lot of items. It was even a little hard to get good clothes. It was hard to buy a car. Eventually, as time went on, that got better and better. After two or three years, things were back to normal.

Interviewer: How old were you when you first came to Crosby?
Veteran: I came to Texas in 1950 and came to Crosby in 1978.

Interviewer: What made you come here?
Veteran: I liked Newport and what I saw about it. I liked to play golf and was able to get a home on the golf course, so that’s where I decided I’d like to retire to.
Interviewer: Were you still working when you came here?
Veteran: When I came to Crosby, yes.

Interviewer: Where were you working?
Veteran: I moved to Houston in 1969, so I had the same job when I moved to Crosby. My office at the time was in downtown Houston, and I later moved to an office in Baytown, and it was still there when I retired.

Interviewer: How did you meet your wife?
Veteran: I met her on a trip to the South when I first was transferred or assigned to work in the South. I met her in Mobile, Alabama, through a friend that I met in Mobile that had a date the first weekend I was there. He told me that his girlfriend was living with two or three other girls, and that she might be able to get me a date, so we ended up going out on a Saturday night. I ended up talking more to Bobbie than I did to the other girl, and she told me she was being transferred to Birmingham and gave me a card. Two or three months later, I happened to run across the card, and one weekend when I was in Birmingham I called her.

Interviewer: Was that where you were stationed?
Veteran: My headquarters at that time was in Birmingham.

Interviewer: So it was really convenient for you.
Veteran: Right. But I was working five states out of Birmingham, so I wasn’t there much.

Interviewer: How many children have you had?
Veteran: We have three.

Interviewer: When did ya’ll get married?
Veteran: We were married in 1948.

Interviewer: Is there anything else that you would like to tell me about your life that I haven’t covered throughout this interview that you would like to share with me?
Veteran: No. I guess I’ve had pretty much an ordinary life. It’s been a good one. We’re looking forward to our 52nd anniversary very shortly, so I guess I’ll have to keep this old gal.

Interviewer: At this time, I would like to end this interview with Boyd Lamb. Again, my name is Marie Chamblin, and this is my first interview with Mr. Boyd Lamb.

{END OF INTERVIEW}