

Franz Schlottman

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Question: Name is Franz Schlottman and born in Olympia?

Answer: Born up on 300 block of North Decatur.

Question: So born in Olympia in what year?

Answer: 1917, March 28.

Question: So what is your first memory of Olympia, so you were born there, grew up in that neighborhood?

Answer: I went through the 6th grade I believe in Garfield school and then went to a country school out at Regnal

Question: Now where was that?

Answer: Regnal is this side of Steamboat Island. There is a little grange hall out there and the school is down there about a half of mile towards Steamboat. A little one room school. It was a lot of fun.

Question: That was before the Griffin School?

Answer: No the Griffin School was there also but it hadn't consolidated with it yet. But later on after we left they consolidated with Griffin and the first day of school they had a little grocery store down there below the grange hall, and on the first day of school it burned to the ground so all the kids were late for school that morning.

Question: Is the school gone completely?

Answer: Oh yeah, the building everything is gone. It in fact my sis took us out there about two weeks ago and we went down Steamboat and down Carolyn Beach and nothing like it was. When we lived out there, there were a bunch of farms but there aren't any farms left.

Question: Did you move out there because your family moved?

Answer: No, my dad worked for Henry McCleary in the Plywood Plant he had down there. Incidentally that plywood plant burned a few years ago Henry McCleary lost one in the same spot. Burned their in 1924-6 somewhere in that area and same place where his burned.

Question: Now is that McCleary

Answer: Yeah, Henry McCleary Timber Company. He owned the town at one time many years ago. And my dad put in all the landscaping in that block where they have the big building and he put in all the landscaping and then he was the gardener for a number of years and when Henry McCleary married his housekeeper well she got too much for it my dad he quit. So he worked for Lou John and Lou John owned a place out there, about twenty acres right in Mud Bay and so he had my dad go out there and be caretaker and one or two days a week he had to work on the place in town and that is where we got acquainted with the water. And of course my mother was water oriented because she was born at Arcadia Point right there in little, well my granddad had a store and post office there.

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Question: So you're related to uhm.. Bridges, because Jean Smith was in here this morning and I didn't know all of her history. I know from Wayne and Jean forward but that would be her grandfather out there too.

Answer: Yeah that's right, Jean is a cousin of mine. Oh it's a small world.

Question: Yeah, because she was describing where the store was out at Arcadia. I didn't know there was a store.

Answer: Yeah there was a store there and my grandfather had the first post office there. I don't remember I'd have to look up the records to find out how long but then of course it was finally it consolidated with Shelton. But he had the post office there and cut cord wood for the steamers and I've got pictures of my uncles and my granddad fishing for salmon with a row boat. A big 18 foot rowboat, probably 18-20 foot rowboat. Got the nets in the back and everything.

Question: Probably caught a few salmon too.

Answer: Oh yeah. My dad, the only ones they sold was the silvers and my dad says they furnished St. Peters hospital with fish. Sold them for 25 cents apiece, great big silver salmon.

Question: The old St. Petes up on the hill?

Answer: The old St. Petes . Evidentially there was one prior to the one on the hill because I don't know when that was built. I have no idea when it was built, but anyway I think he said the original one was a wooden building if I'm not mistaken I think.

Question: I think so.

Answer: Of course the dog salmon they'd put in the garden for fertilizer.

Question: It's a pleasant smell.

Answer: Yeah, what they'd do is plant a hill of potatoes with the dog salmon underneath it. It didn't bother them too much. I've never seen it done myself. Anyway it must have been a good fertilizer.

Question: So you were the high school class of what year then?

Answer: 1934, I never finished but it would have if I had graduated, it would have been '34.

Question: So where were you when Pearl Harbor happened?

Answer: We were living out at Fir Tree. My dad had at least 500 acres out there and we were living on a big farm and had cows and horses. Naturally a couple of pigs, chickens and geese, well you name it we had it probably, even had a guinea hen, a couple of those.

Question: Now where was that where the farm was?

Answer: It was out at Fir Tree, do you know where Fir Tree is? Well, you go towards Rainier, down off the hill, you come down off the hill, east or west of Fir Tree, and there used to be a saw mill down there and you come down through there and then you go back and you

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go up another hill and just down there from Fir Tree about a mile where the road come to.. well it cut across Offut Lake. The Spurgeon Creek school was in there, and this property was on the edge of that. The army has it now and it is of course restricted. Here a few years ago the army sent a baby sitter out, and my family my sisters my brothers and Jack Moody and his wife and one of my nephews and his wife. And the army let us take the baby sitter and go all around where we used to live and look it all over. We spent a whole day out there with the army's permission and of course with their babysitter, so that was a fun deal.

Question: Is there anything there, any buildings?

Answer: No buildings, no everything is gone unless you knew from the groups of trees and stuff you wouldn't know it because it is all plowed up, big holes dug out here and there and whatnot. It was quite a deal. Went out there, Jean used to live there to, she used to live in that same area and her dad had put up a swing for her with old messenger cables. You know what that is, old bracing cables that the power company used and the tree it was hung in he must have put it up 30 feet in the tree and the cables are still hanging there and they grew up approximately four feet from where they were when she was a kid.

Question: Wow.

Answer: But it was a fun deal.

Question: So you were out on the farm when you heard?

Answer: Yeah. We didn't have radio or lights out there, we had kerosene of course. We come to town, I think it must have been Monday morning and they was hawking extras on the street, from the paper. Found out that Pearl Harbor had been bombed. That was the first I knew of it and that was on probably the let's see the 7th was on Sunday wasn't it, yeah that would have been on Monday morning when I come to work.

Question: Do you remember what your thought was at the time?

Answer: It wasn't good, I can assure you of that, because.. it was the end of everything, and it didn't turn out to be that way for me anyway.

Question: Is that kind of what your perception was?

Answer: Oh yeah, pretty much, because war.. war was something that you didn't want to think about. But anyway, it wasn't until well let's see that was the 7th of December and I was drafted in April, the second of April.

Question: So which branch did you get drafted into, in the navy?

Answer: No in the army.

Question: Oh, in the army.

Answer: I went and tried to sign up for the air force and I didn't have enough teeth to suit them and they didn't serve soup at that time I guess, so they wouldn't take me. So I figured if I'm not going to do that I might as well go to Alaska and make some money. They were hiring everybody with big pay and everything about that time and so I was just about set to go and I got a greeting from the army so. Of course that's another long story.

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Question: How did that happen because here you are a water person and here you're going to be in the army.

Answer: Well, of course, water was just my hobby and of course I'd been crazy about boats and my mother of course she couldn't swim, I never learned to swim. One time she took a shingle boat, you know that's a chunk of cedar they make shakes out of, and took a paddle and paddled across Big Skookum. My dad standing on the shore almost and having a fit. You can imagine. That's another story. My mother when she was born down there they had quite a family I don't remember now how many they had probably a half a dozen kids or something like that. When my mother was born they hadn't picked a name for her and so just about the time she was born Clara Brown was going into Shelton so they named her Clara after Clara Brown, the Steamboat.

Question: So you ended up going into the army then?

Answer: Yeah. I was drafted on the 2nd of April. That's when I went in. There'd been preliminary physicals and all that stuff and of course the physical is kind of a joke, and you probably have heard this before. But anyway there was a big bunch of us and you go in the capitol building you go in the door off of Legion Way the one on that end of the building, east end of the building. You go in and first door to the left and there were two doctors sitting in a chair and you strip down of course. You go in there and break off one guy go to this doctor and the next guy behind you go to that one and he looks you up and down like that and says you're in you know if you can wiggle your fingers you are in. That was the physical I had. Honestly when I went in the service and I never had a physical when I got out either.

Question: And that was at the old capitol building on Sylvester?

Answer: Yeah, down in Sylvester Park.

Question: I hadn't heard that one.

Answer: I read something just recently about somebody that had the same experience why as long as they had both hands, both arms, both legs, why they were in the army, so.

Question: So where did they send you for boot camp then?

Answer: Well, I went and stayed a few days at Fort Lewis and of course the first guard duty I pulled was guarding a transformer with a baseball bat. Give me a piece of a baseball bat and march around. I suppose it was just basically to give you an idea to do what you are told, but that was funny.

Question: When the Japanese came you had your baseball bat.

Answer: I had my bat. I could fight them with my baseball bat. And then of course I went from there to Camp Callan, it was a brand new camp, it was just 13 miles north of San Diego, out of La Joya, just a short distance from La Joya, it was quite a camp. Of course I trained on 155's and 40 millimeters, it was coast artillery that I was in and went from there to Angel Island and spent I don't know a month or two I'm not sure I'd have to look things up. But on Angel Island of course was marching, didn't have any big parade fields there, but it was one of the oldest camps I guess. It was an old camp in World War I, and when you walk into these two story buildings and the door jams were worn clear away from walking in on the wooden floors. We spent a time there and of course when we go on a pass we go to San Francisco on an army boat, they had a ferry, just a passenger type ferry, and you go to town.

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And of course you got pretty well acquainted with Market Street and some of the cable cars and what not.

Question: Was that the first time you were away from Olympia or had you traveled as a kid?

Answer: Well, yeah, any time at all. Now wait a minute, I got that a little mixed up, I went to Camp Callan first and then to Angel Island and at Camp Callan of course was training camp and we were there for five weeks. And got the basics of the rifles and the guns and what not and marching a lot of marching and close order drill and all that stuff. Then what they did, I'd had a sore throat and I was feeling miserable for the whole week and I figured I'll wait until Saturday and go on sick call Saturday and then I wouldn't miss any training time so I goes to work and maybe give me a couple of aspirin you know or some medicine or something and instead of that they put me in the hospital. And so that weekend my outfit shipped out and those guys spent the whole wartime on the West Coast. So I was in the hospital so I stayed there until the next group went out and then we went to Angel Island. And from Angel Island after being there for a period of time we went to, loaded on the train and went to Virginia, Camp Patrick Henry in Virginia. And when we stepped off the train we stepped in a foot of mud and that was in November of '42 and, December 25th of '42 we loaded on the ships in Hampton road Virginia and boy. I tell you it was cold, that was a cold place, and the ship we were on I drew a berth out on the open decks, and the only thing between you and the cold was a curtain that dropped down. And of course we put on everything we owned to try to keep warm and you couldn't keep warm. But anyway we pulled out on the 26th of December '42 and of course about three days or so I was in the Caribbean, and then I thought I had an ideal spot man I was out there watching flying fish and it was a nice trip. It took us 30 days to go to Australia. Went through the Panama Canal and stopped at Gatun Lake and got a fresh shower, fresh water shower.

Question: Was it a Liberty ship you were on, or what type of ship was it?

Answer: Well, I don't know, you may not have read about it or knew about it. There was two Italian ships that were interned in Panama just after the war started and this was one of those ships. It was they called it the Hermitage, and the other one there was in our convoy at first and then it broke off and went to San Francisco when we got over to, into the Pacific. But it was one of the Italian ships, it was an Italian luxury liner you could still see, course they made everything into bunks, pile bunks up and down, and put pipes up and hung the bunks on them. You could still see the beautiful wood and old staircases and stuff that was on the ship but it was quite a ship.

Question: So it still had a little bit of the feel, you could tell it.

Answer: Yeah, you could look into the officers country and you could see what. They still had the silver and stuff on it. I don't know what ever come of it. I don't think it was sunk. They probably finally just scrapped it. I think the name of the other was Monticello. That wasn't the Italian names, that was what the navy named them. The Monticello and the Hermitage.

Question: Was it just packed, I mean did they shove as many soldiers on?

Answer: Yeah, they were just well you've seen these narrow bunks about so wide with the pipe frame around them and canvas bottom and they fold up, well they was stacked about so high on the outer decks. I drew one about well it was above the rail so I could see over the

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rail and I wasn't up where I got too close to the overhead. So I had an ideal one when I could finally roll the curtains up.

Question: The first couple of days must not have been too .

Answer: It was so cold. It was so cold you couldn't move, you leave a D8 cat sitting on the ground over night. You couldn't move it. If you didn't set it on boards or something it would be froze tight, froze to the ground.

Question: So where were you headed?

Answer: We didn't actually know where we were going.

Question: Is that right?

Answer: And then we wound up in Brisbane Australia, and of course we went by Caledonia. I think in Caledonia they stopped for fuel if I'm not mistaken and we went past Diamond Head, we saw Diamond Head, but that's as much as we did we didn't stop in there.

Question: What was the mood on the ship? I mean was it heavy, serious mood, were people afraid of where they were going or worried about where they were going?

Answer: No, I don't think so, it didn't bother me, of course I was wondering what was going to happen and where we were going and all this good stuff. And we didn't know where we were going until we landed in Brisbane, Australia. I've been trying to find some charts of the areas where I was at over there but I haven't been able to do it. It runs to my mind we went up a river where we tied up. And from Brisbane we spent just a short time there and then we took a narrow gauge railway and loaded us all on that and we went to Sydney. And in Sydney we started training for what they call the ship and gun crew outfits. And they put the army guys trained in anti-aircraft and that sort of thing they put them on merchant ships as gun crews and some even went as crew members and this is kind of outfit we got into. So we trained for that kind of stuff for a little while and I don't remember the date we went to left Sydney, and we left Sydney and went to Milne Bay And Milne Bay we stayed a short time in Milne Bay and we loaded on LST's and went on up and landed in Finschafen New Guinea and I spent about two years there in Finschafen running tugs. And then well what happened instead of going on ship and gun crews some of our guys did but then they came back to the outfit but the. Lost my train of thought. They formed these harbor craft outfits. On the way up there they decided they was going to have these small boats and so they formed the harbor craft outfits and had the build up of the organization and it was all ready to go there when we unloaded in Milne Bay. Of course by this time we'd gathered up stuff like shafting and different things we used for boats and orders came through to load on the boat, on the LST and get going and we didn't have time to take our supplies with us. When they got in such a big hurry. And I don't know why the hurry was because when we got to Finschafen New Guinea, we didn't have any boats so all we did was digging foxholes for the officers. Pre-war we dug then we had to dig them for the officers, kind of funny. But anyway, then later on the boats started coming in and fortunately I was the only one that had any experience around the water. And on the way up I got two rating advances, I went from corporal to staff sergeant just on the trip up there. I don't remember how long it took us. Those things I should have written down but I was a young guy. But I was the oldest guy in the outfit. I was twenty-five. I was old, I was the old man.

Question: So was that a central clearing place, I mean it sounds like they had a port set up there moving boats in and out?

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Answer: Well, what it actually turned out to be later on it turned out to be a forward base. It was a forward base and of course once we got our boats. The thing of it was we had a bunch of green kids most of them from New York. Biggest share was from New York. Some of them I couldn't hardly understand because they had that Brooklyn accent in fact. One of the fellows got his ship shot out from under him. He was on a gun crew and he got a Purple Heart so he turned up with his Purple Heart missing. He got a trip to Sydney when his ship got sunk out from under him well he had a Purple Heart but he gave it to one of the goils in Sydney, you know that kind of language. But we had a swell bunch of kids, average age was probably 18 or maybe 19, I didn't average it out, but many were 17, 18years old, 19 maybe. We had one man that was 35 years old and they finally sent him home. When it came to calisthenics and that sort of thing, he couldn't keep up so they figured he was too old sent him home.

Question: So you ended up running a tug there? What was the tug like? Was it steel hulled?

Answer: No wooden boats, these were built in New Zealand. The WT's were all built in New Zealand. And then we had a bunch of.. did you happen to notice that old black knight at West Bay, that was one of the tugs we had, an MTL.

Question: Really.

Answer: That particular one wasn't, because that one never got over seas. But that was the type of boat we had and ours had Chrysler Royal engines in them 8 cylinder engine. And it was a, they were a good pulling tug but they weren't as good as WT's because they were deep keeled and hard chined and they didn't turn very fast. They had too much keel and hard chine and wouldn't turn where the WT's were built where the MTL's had an 11 foot beam and 45 feet long the WT's had a 15 foot beam at 45 feet and they were just, just a sweet heart of a boat to handle. Had a barn door for a rudder and then it. Well they had Cummins engines in them. We had one that had a 100 horse Atlas Diesel in it and it was direct reversible and it was a mean thing to run. It took two guys to handle it if you were going to make any quick maneuvers because you had to.. if the skipper ran it.. like the others were all wheelhouse control.. but on this particular one, it was a 45 footer but she sat about 6-12 inches deeper than the other ones and it would pull like you wouldn't believe because it was so deep in the water but you had to turn loose the wheel and turn around and work the levers and turn around and work the throttle and you know go. You had to give yourself time to stop or else you didn't get it stopped. In fact, we had a ship that we brought into the inner harbor and they used it for barracks or I don't know for what. Anyway it was the old.. it was called the Mexico, and it was a riveted plate ship. You know, riveted plate, well when we pushed it in that particular tug was on the job but he pushed one of the plates in. It had too much power for him.

Question: Oops.

Answer: Oops is right.

Question: So is that a lot of what your duties were, moving ships in and out, or?

Answer: Docking ships and servicing the water barge, the fuel barge. When we unloaded ships with the crane barges we'd take the loaded barges and take them to the docks. Some of them would unload out in the stream and if they did why then they put it on barges and we shuffled the stuff around and. We was plenty busy when we was a forward base, in fact we

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lived on the tugs of course and worked 24 hours a day and 7 days a week. Of course, I enjoyed it. In fact, I wouldn't even go pick up my pay, had no place to use it so old man would let it go for maybe two months and then he'd send down word to get my money or he'd get me court marshaled so. I didn't do any gambling, well, I shouldn't say I didn't do any gambling, I'd take a five pound note, and that was my poker money for the month and if I lost it that was the end of it but we had some guys that would be broke within the next five minutes after they got their pay.

Question: So where would you gamble?

Answer: Oh, just amongst ourselves you know, but we had one fellow that set up a dice table and he'd worked in a gambling casino and of course he. I never did understand dice, but he would take a rake off of the money that would come off the table and I guess he did pretty good. One of my crew members, my engineer, man named Buzz Eisenhard, he'd be broke and then come around and want to borrow somebodies.. two for one, some guys would do that two for one, but if you didn't get your money when he came out of the pay line you'd never get your money back, he'd lose it for you when he got back to the barracks. Anyway, he came to me one time and he says sarge he says.. I'll make a deal with you.. I want to make a deal, ok what do you want? He said, you meet me at the pay table and he says.. I'll take out, I forget what it was, 20 pound note or something like that he'd take out to spend or gamble with, and I give you the rest of it, but don't give it back to me. I says ok, there's only one thing, I won't give it back to you. You know I can be ornery, so I wouldn't give it back to him. The first pay day we had I took his money and put it in my foot locker and locked it up. And soon as he lost what he had he come over and well just ten pounds or five pounds or whatever he wanted. I said, no, we made a deal, you don't get it. So anyway, I went home before he did because I had more points when time to come home he come to me one day and says well you're going home so I'll pick up my money. I said no, you're not going to pick up your money, I says we're going up to the post office and we're going to send it home. We sent home sixteen hundred dollars and he had it when he got home, sent it home to his mother. He had sixteen hundred bucks when he got home.

Question: Pretty good chunk of change..

Answer: He'd get pretty ornery.. unhappy with me when I wouldn't give him his money back but it was fun we had a lot of good times and a lot of scary times too when they were bombing us but that is part of the game.

Question: Did the harbor get bombed?

Answer: Well it seems to me like when they bombed there they come in willy nilly. Didn't seem to, they'd just hit anything. Forward base there they'd bomb it. They didn't seem to pick out any points in particular. We had an air strip there I think the 5th air force was there and when they finally got the air strip built, why then of course they punched holes in the screening they had metal runway stuff that they used but they had to repair that.

Question: Do you remember the first time you saw active combat going on? I mean when you went oh.

Answer: No, I really can't remember exactly the first time, I do remember one thing. When the Australian 9th division hiked over the Owen Stanley Mountains, when they came back from the middle east or whatever they call it over there in El Alameine and all that stuff, they came over the Owen Stanley Mountains and the people said it couldn't be done and they did it and that was the Australian 9th division. And of course we got pretty well acquainted

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with the Aussies and I was over there one night drinking tea with them and here comes an air raid, and I asked one of the fellows well where is your slip trenches. Aw there's no hurry, you've got 7 seconds after they open the Bombay doors so they were sitting there drinking their tea and pretty soon why hear that, click, the Bombay Doors, so they sit their tea down carefully, still have 7 seconds, we go crawl in a hole and let them get done with their bombing.

Question: So you could actually...?

Answer: You could actually hear the Bombay Doors open, the clicking, I don't know what clicked because I'm not familiar with the planes, but they have 7 seconds after they open the door.

Question: Wow. It's interesting how things like that can become, I know they weren't average every day, but they can kind of

Answer: Them guys had nerves of steel. Nothing bothers them at all. Swell bunch of guys. A great bunch.

Question: So did you have a lot of vessels coming through that were limping in?

Answer: Not so many no. We did go out one night and pulled in an Australian Corvette that had taken a torpedo in the engine room and it didn't sink it. When we got them into the dock and pulled along side looking down into there and the guy standing waist deep in the water right through a hole in the ship but that of course was the only one we saw that had battle damage. But then in those pictures there's one Liberty ship that broke in two and we sent out a couple of the bigger tugs to bring it in and then they made a machine shop out of it with the half of the Liberty the bow end and then another one

Question: It broke in two because of war fare or just because

Answer: Just the stress because the Liberty had the habit of doing that the first ones especially. I think later on they cured that but they were building them in a week so

Question: It's amazing in a week, huh.

Answer: Yeah, in a week and then we had another one it was unloading at the dock and something exploded in it and it sunk right at the dock, the pictures are in the album.

Question: So somewhat friendly fire so to speak.

Answer: I mean they had something in there that did the dirty work and she sunk right there at the dock and they finally eventually, but it was a long time before they got it out of there. But we had the little D boats, plywood boats 26 feet long, and had a 24 inch blade with a 4 cylinder Gray engine and you'd be surprised how much work you can do with a little thing like that. And we had a whole bunch of them and then we had the MT's with a displacement type hull with the Buda Diesel, 6 cylinder Buda Diesel. And they were a good boat, but they were an open boat and you just had a cover over the engine and a windshield that dropped down in front. If the water was coming in why you dropped that down so you didn't get hit in the face, or raise it up so you didn't get hit in the face, but they were a good tug boat too. And then the WT's of course were the real work horses we had and they did all the work inside the harbor. We weren't supposed to go out of the harbor, but the civilians were in the big tugs and we never were too happy about that because they were getting big pay five grand a

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month and we were getting I don't remember what our pay was but it was somewhere around a hundred dollars.

Question: Were those US Merchant Marines?

Answer: No they weren't Merchant Marines, they were just civilians. They were hired to run tugs and of course they got combat pay and whenever it was too rough for them to go out and of course they started with 72 footers. They had one or two guys that were pretty good. They were pretty, they were wild men anyway, and but they weren't afraid of anything. And then we had the 84 footer which were called TP's and they were larger, they were a wooden tug. We had one of them come over one time and the wood they'd built it out of wasn't cured and it twisted in the keel some how and the shaft and they had to realign the whole shaft because it twisted when it dried or when it soaked up or something, I'm not sure. The 72's were a very good tug.

Question: It sounds like it was a pretty active harbor?

Answer: Oh, it was, it was, we'd have as many as a half a dozen LST's on the beach, but that was outside the harbor, they couldn't come in the harbor and unload they had to beach out there, nice sandy beach. Of course the sand was all coral no rock stuff, just coral and it we'd unload the stuff and then they'd truck it to the LST's. We'd unload airplanes and tanks in fact we had one ship one time that missed the harbor, loaded with tanks, I don't remember, never knew what kind of tanks they were but they were tanks and he hit the headland out there about ten miles from the harbor you know where the inner harbor was. So we was hauling empty barges out and hauling barges back and it was around the clock. One night I had taken out an empty you could see the lights from the harbor and you can see the harbor lights when you got out to the ship because they were lit up and of course taking chances submarines weren't in the neighborhood but fortunately none were. But anyway we headed back and it started to rain and it rained so hard, when it rains over there it rains, and with a search light on you couldn't see the bow stem. Here I was half asleep, 2 to 3 in the morning, half asleep at the wheel and all of a sudden I realized I didn't know where I was going. I knew the only direction I knew for sure was out to sea so I pointed out to sea and cut the engine down and idled until it quit raining and I could see where I was going and I could find the harbor and from that time on I took a reading on my directions so I knew where to go from and come back to.

Question: Was it out where the ship had missed the harbor were you getting out into

Answer: You was in the open ocean

Question: So you had a pretty good little ride there.

Answer: Yeah, oh yea.

Question: That must have been fun.

Answer: Most of it was ground swells. One night I was sent out to, there was a Liberty Ship coming in and he blew a cylinder and they had steam engines of course and they blew one of the cylinders and it was a rough night. It was actually too much for that little tug, because when we went out there, we hooked onto him alright and they passed down one of the 7" lines, big huge lines, well you couldn't tighten it up and not only that the waves were so short that if you tried to open it up your wheel would come out of the water and your engine would race so you couldn't use your full power, but we managed to keep him off the beach

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and we went about, the current took us ten miles up the coast where he got the cylinder repaired but we were able to do it. It's little things like that and of course really it was no fun. One time I was towing a target for the navy and that's one thing that is no fun because you tow a target about 1500 feet behind the tug and they are shooting at it with live ammunition and 1500 feet isn't very far.

Question: I think I'd keep feeding line out.

Answer: I think that's all I had.

Question: So they are firing what type of weapons?

Answer: I really don't know what type of weapons they had. They were shooting, I can't remember the name, I think 90's.

Question: But they were firing above water guns

Answer: Over the water, yeah, over the water.

Question: So you towed like a

Answer: Well, what it was, just like a big sheet on a raft you know, big square and they were shooting at the square, as I recall they never hit it. They come close but if they hit it all the time it'd be better because then I'd feel more safe.

Question: I was going to say if they were missing it all the time I hope they are missing out to the steering side. See I didn't know they did that, I know with airplanes they go up and

Answer: Oh yeah, they did it there too, but you know it was a funny thing, when we first went in there with the 90 millimeters antiaircraft gun and whenever Japs come over they wouldn't let them shoot at them because they said it'd give away their positions, now what was the use of guns?

Question: Yeah, as long as you are a good shot you can give away your position, but huh. I heard a lot of things like that where there was scenario set up like that a catch 22.

Answer: Yeah, I seen a C47 shot down. The navy had been in some action and they just come into the harbor and this C47 had taken off with a load of plywood going somewhere, I'm not sure where he's going but he flew too close to the stern of the navy ship and they shot him down. I don't know if the pilot got out or not, but

Question: So friendly fire.

Answer: Friendly fire, of course those things happen.

Question: I've heard a couple like that where young kids behind a gun and things happen fast.

Answer: They were nervous and they got within range of them so they brought him down. There's all kinds of things went on.

Question: That must have been a thrill because tanks aren't real light pieces of machinery. Taking them off of a ship and loading them on to another

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Answer: Well the ship's gear wouldn't handle it, they had to take the crane barge up to do it.

Question: So they had to take a crane barge out against the ship

Answer: Tied it alongside the ship and then lifted the tanks and stuff off.

Question: Did they lose any in the drink?

Answer: Not that I know of, I think we got everything off safely and then the Australians had two big salvage tugs, called barge one and barge two. And they would come up there and anchor and then if they were needed the Americans would hire them to pull the ships, whatever they needed done, and I don't remember whether. I imagine they pulled on that one because none of our little tugs went out to pull on it. Another time in that area the current always goes north, it runs at 7 knots, now that is a pretty good current. We had a C-4 what they called the cape ship I think. C-4 was coming in from the states and it was loaded with toilet paper and light stuff. It was a very fast ship. She was doing 17 knots when she hit a reef out there. It didn't puncture the ship or anything, she just slid up on it so we was out there doing the same thing with that. But you can imagine how many barge loads of stuff we had to get off and then they pump the fuel out of it and then they get the big barge out. They pulled her off all right. They made it ok. Doing 17 knots with current going 7 knots going the same direction.

Question: That's moving at a pretty good clip, but didn't puncture it.

Answer: No, they got her off and she went about her business, they probably pulled it out when they got it home.

Question: You had planes and tanks and food and

Answer: Just everything. One of our greatest things that we did, the old Matsonian was over there, and we pushed in fact it's picture is in there that Adolph's got. Pushing.. I took the picture so it wasn't my tug but it was my buddy that he was pushing the Matsonian into the dock. Here was this great huge ship up there and that little tug down here pushing against it.

Question: Wow. Huh, but you see the history books have left some of this out in the fact that the history books talk about everybody on the front line all the time but for everyone on the front line there were seven people that had to get all this stuff to where it was going.

Answer: Yeah well when you figure that we had all at least six of the 45 footers that is the type that I ran and then the MTL's and then there were 2 to 3 Australian built civilian type tugs that had that had a great big Vivian engine in it, beautiful engine, but too hard to run. We only used that when we were really prodded for extra help and then we had one steel tug, no insulation in it. And we only used it when there was a dire emergency because you get in there you just fry, on the deck and everything else, you get below deck you was in terrible shape.

Question: This is a busy active seaport.

Answer: Yeah we did probably as much diversified towing in and around those three harbors in the two years that we were up there. I think we were up there twenty five months

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that you'd have got down here in years and years I guess. Well, they unloaded piling, they unloaded stuff onto the dock onto the barges, we had to put the ships in and pull them out. It was an experience. Not a bad experience, except when they were throwing bombs around. That was no fun.

Question: Now, I take it, you said you don't swim is that right?

Answer: Oh, I don't swim to this day.

Question: And they never figured that out?

Answer: Oh, it doesn't matter to the army.

Question: Just the navy.

Answer: Just the navy.

Question: They didn't put you through any swimming tests or anything?

Answer: No. We had basic training and that's as much as we got. These young fellows we had they made the best darn skippers and crewmen you ever saw because they didn't know anything and they had nothing no bright ideas what it was about and I got the chance to teach them basics and they listened. It worked out just great.

Question: You had pictures of a funeral but you said it wasn't

Answer: The guys that were killed?

Question: Yeah.

Answer: Well, what happened, after the war was over they were getting the one of the cranes, not the big whirly, but the other one we called it a hammer head. They were getting ready to go back to the states and the dumb lieutenant, the barge it was sitting on was about oh twelve feet deep or something like that and they would ballast it with water and they had heavy lifts and they would pump water in for heavy ballast. And this lieutenant got down in there and was going to clean up the all the inside of the barge so he went in there and took a barrel of gasoline and had the crew scrub down.. part of our guys scrub down the walls and the hull inside and then they went over and flipped the electric bilge pump and the arc of the motor blew it. It didn't blow the barge apart but it burned several guys that were down below but they survived. But there was one fellow just starting down the companion way, down the steps, killed him and killed one other and the sad part of it was they were just young guys and then the war was over.

Question: What a tragedy to make it all through the war and

Answer: Yeah they made it all this time and then that happened to them.

Question: Now were you a single man when you were in the service or you had a lovely bride at home?

Answer: No, no I had a lovely girl at home.

Question: Were you two dating?

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Answer: Yup, before the war, yeah, I still have the letters she wrote me.

Question: You do? Now what are the types of things people, you don't have to get into intimate things, but was it more writing about home average day life, what were things you got letters about or wanted to hear about or?

Answer: Well, you know, I've got another small album that partly was army stuff that I had with me overseas and she sent me pictures, my uncle sent me pictures, the guy I worked with sent me pictures, and they're all mixed in there about farm folks putting up hay and that sort of thing, and of course they wrote about what was going on. And about a year ago I was reading some letters up in the attic and opened some of them and read them. Basically they'd tell you about home and of course what we could write back to them wasn't a whole lot you could tell them some things you were doing but how many letters were badly censored do you remember? I didn't think so. You got so you knew better not to try to write something. All they knew was a p o number so that is about what went on there.

Question: It sounds like from different people I've talked to that was a common theme just to hear about home and normal life.

Answer: You never heard anybody complain. I don't think I ever got a letter where anybody complained and its then of course when finally we got to be way in the rear I had trouble with the crew because I didn't like sitting around. They could sit and play cards all day or something like that and they thought it was great they didn't have to work, but whenever I got a chance, I'd volunteer for any work that came up and they got wise to me because the other guys weren't going out and they'd put a stop to that. It got pretty boring. And then later on they broke up our outfit and left a third of them there and a third of them went to I think it was New Britain Island. And then the third I was with went to Dutch New Guinea and that was a different story. The natives is another story. The natives at Finschafen Were trained by the Australians. They'd pick a chief or somebody and take him to Australia and teach them so they could understand money so people didn't cheat them on money when they sold them something. And they made special coins with a hole in it so they could string them around their neck. And so when this fellow got what education they gave him, they weren't well educated, but they educated him enough so he got a cap, looked like the old salvation army cap, and a stick, a walking stick type of thing, and he was a number one kind of man. He.. you do any business in the group of natives why you'd have to go through him, and he'd keep them straight but they were the most honest people you ever saw in your life. I went up the coast one time. Actually the Australians had borrowed some trucks, some brand new trucks, of course there was three six by sixes and at least one jeep maybe two jeeps anyway I was told to go up there, told to take an LCM and they said if the Australian officer in charge up there will just sign for them give them the Aussies. Otherwise you got to load them up and take them out and dump them in the drink. Well, the Australian captain said they'd have to pay for them. I said whoever pays the United States for anything. I said you never have to pay for them things and they wanted to keep them. Anyway, they wouldn't sign the paper so I loaded them up and dumped them in the drink. Brand new trucks. Talk about hurt. That hurt.

Question: So that was just the tail end of the war, is that when?

Answer: It was winding down pretty much by then, it had gone past. We were supposed to go to Leyte, invasion of Leyte. We were loaded on the ships and everything ready to go and the crew that come in to take our place just come from Seattle and supposedly well trained and we told them that we had a few days and if they wanted us to we'd show them

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around. Different things. How to read the water and different things like that cause you could look at the color of the water and tell how deep it was and so these guys says nah we know what we're doing, fully trained, no problem at all and first thing you know they had ammunition barges on the beach. They didn't know the first thing about actual work. They probably could run the tugs fine but they didn't know about maneuvering them. So they let that go for three days and the orders finally came to get back on your tugs. We were supposed to go to the invasion of Leyte, but they made a stevedoring outfit out of them so they never did get any tugboats. It is just one of those things that happens.

Question: So where were you when you heard the treaty was being signed?

Answer: I was in Hollandia, of course I didn't run any tugs in Hollandia. I had to dispatch the tugs but we didn't have an awful lot of work to do there, but there was some. And then of course about that time they was starting to dispose of stuff and these little twenty six foot boats they would pick them out with a crane set them on a steel barge and burn them and kick the iron into the drink. That's what happened to those little twenty six-foot tug boats.

Question: What a shame.

Answer: Yeah, well, you remember the little Donny D, that was down here in Olympia, that was one of the twenty six foot MT's. Henry Hinkley built most of them over in Maine. They were good little boats. Very good little boats.

Question: So I've seen pictures of pushing planes off of the ships and into the drink so you have room to haul people home.

Answer: Oh yeah, if you go over to New Guinea and in some of the jungles you'll find brand new D8 sitting there in crates. If you can believe it they crated them things and brought them over in crates. I remember one time, oh I could talk all night about different things, but one night I was going down the road. Course you didn't do much driving, but I was acting supply sergeant while the supply sergeant was on furlough and I'd been looking for tobacco for the guys for cigarettes and this low bed trailer had a D8 sitting on it in the crate. So they.. he'd slipped off into a gully just one side of the thing and they couldn't get him out of there couldn't pull him out so they got another cat and shoved the D8 off into the gully pulled the truck and trailer out and buried it right there. And I've seen oil drums, thousands of them stacked up and the jungle grewed clear over them. The jungle of course took over right quick when you didn't keep running over it.

Question: Was that same attitude during the war or did that attitude happen as the war ended? Like oh its just extra equipment.

Answer: Well actually the one time we had LCM's that weren't. They didn't have enough stuff to rebuild them and didn't have the time to rebuild them, we'd take them out to sea and turn the machine gun on them and sink them just to get them out of the way. I guess that was cheaper than to take care of them. There was a lot of waste. That only happened one time. I suppose it was a bunch of them that had been used for an invasion somewhere and they needed more work than they had stuff to do it with.