

Interviewee: Orville "Orv" Ethier

Interviewer: Thomas Saylor

Date of interview: 1 September 2001

Location: living room of the Ethier home in St. Paul, MN

Transcribed by: Dan Borkenhagen, March 2002

Edited by: Thomas Saylor, August 2002

Orville Ethier was born 1 October 1921 in St. Paul, Minnesota. After high school he enlisted in the Naval Reserve. In January 1941 Orv's unit was activated and posted to the destroyer USS *Ward* (DD-139/APD-16); the ship was stationed at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, and was the vessel which fired the first shot against the Japanese on 7 December 1941, sinking a two-man submarine outside the harbor in the early morning hours before the main Japanese attack.

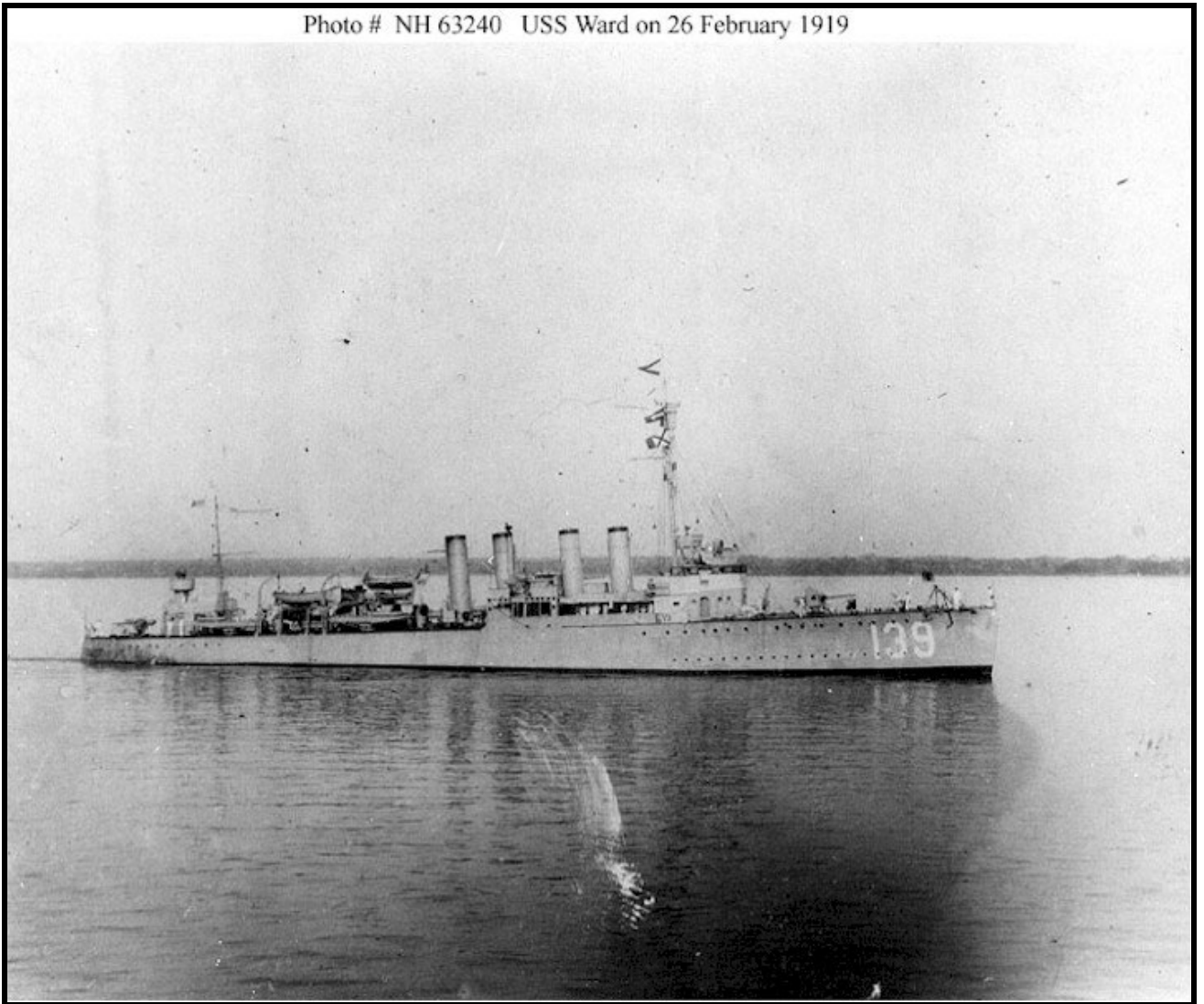
Orv remained on the *Ward* until she was sunk in December 1944 while in the Philippines; during these three years the ship participated in numerous Pacific island invasions. Home in St. Paul on leave in January 1945, Orv married Pat Cavanaugh, who was then serving as a US Navy WAVE in San Diego. Orv's final duty station was Mayport Naval Air Station, Florida, where he remained until he was discharged in October 1945 as Machinists Mate 1st Class. In May 1945, while stationed at Mayport, Orv learned his brother, Lloyd, also serving with the US Navy, had been killed in action off Okinawa. Lloyd was one of almost 400 sailors that perished when Japanese kamikaze aircraft struck his ship, the USS *Bunker Hill*. Following his wartime service, Orv then re-joined the Naval Reserve and was called to serve during the Korean War, spending part of 1950-51 on a destroyer.

After discharge in 1945, Orv worked several years as a pipe fitter before taking a position as an inspector with the City of St. Paul, a job he held until his retirement. He was active for many years with the Pearl Harbor Survivors Association, a national veterans organization, and a USS *Ward* veterans group, the First Shot Naval Veterans. At the time of this interview Orv and Pat Ethier lived in St. Paul.

Orv Ethier passed away on 20 April 2004.

This interview provides detailed descriptions of life as an enlisted sailor serving aboard a destroyer in the Pacific Theater, 1941-44. Also the various military actions against the Japanese in which the USS *Ward* played a role.

Photo # NH 63240 USS Ward on 26 February 1919

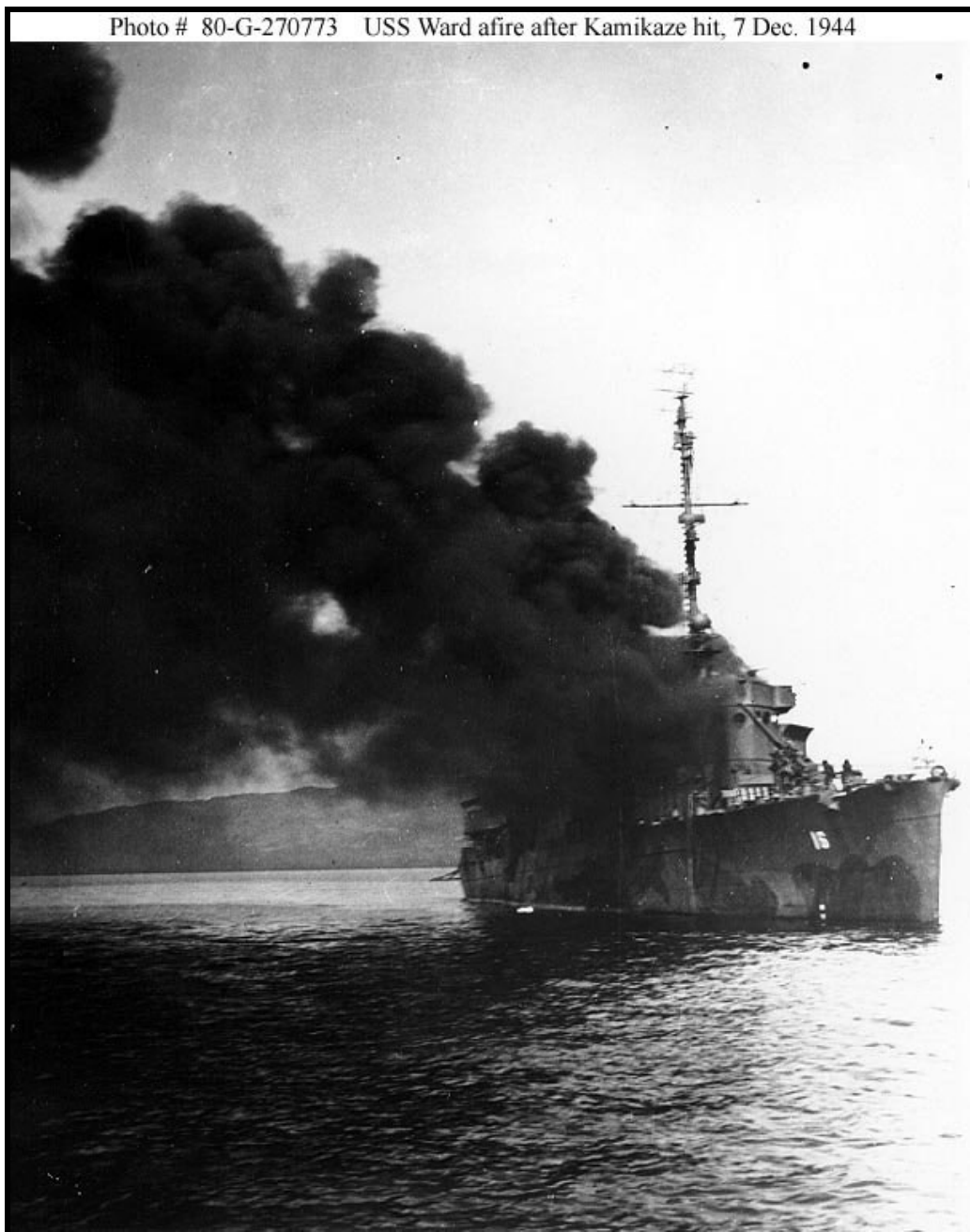


USS *Ward* (DD-139) Launched and commissioned in 1918. Recommissioned 1941.
Reclassified High Speed Transport APD-16, February 1943.
Sunk by Japanese Kamikaze Attack off Leyte, Philippines, 7 December 1944.

Photo source: official US Navy photo.

From NavSource Naval History, <http://www.navsource.org/> Accessed 31 Jan 2016.

Photo # 80-G-270773 USS Ward afire after Kamikaze hit, 7 Dec. 1944



USS *Ward* (APD-16) on fire after she was hit by a Japanese "Kamikaze" in Ormoc Bay, Leyte, Philippines, 7 December 1944. She sank later in the day.

Source: US National Archives photo 80-G-270773, a US Navy photo, now in the collections of the US National Archives.

Interview key:

S: Thomas Saylor

E: Orville Ethier

S: Today is the 1st of September, 2001, and I'm pleased to be sitting here with Orville Ethier, here in St Paul, Minnesota. Orville, if you could just tell me a little bit about your background—where were you born, your date of birth, where you grew up, that kind of stuff.

E: Well, my name is Orville Ethier and I was born here in St Paul, on Oct. 1st of 1921. And I was born on the East side of St Paul, but at the age of 10 we moved closer to downtown, to Willow Street. That's where I was living when I was 17 years old and joined the Naval Reserve. We trained underneath the south end of the Wabasha Street Bridge at the Minnesota Boat Club building there, on Raspberry Island. And we cruised the Great Lakes every June for two weeks. And I had two cruises before I was called into active duty. I joined the Reserves while I was still going to Mechanics Arts High School [in St Paul]. I graduated in 1939, and in 1940 we got our orders to leave. I left St Paul on January 21st of 1941. With the rest of our 47th division of the Naval Reserve, went aboard the USS *Ward* as the main part of the crew of the *Ward*. There were 82 men and two officers from St Paul, and there were about 18 Regular Navy and fleet reserves. And four or five other officers, regular officers on the *Ward* when we took it to sea.

S: Did you join the *Ward* stateside, here in California?

E: San Diego, California. We took it out of Red Lead Row and re-commissioned it. It sat between World War One and World War Two in a bank of four stacker destroyers in San Diego Harbor. It was 20 years between the two wars.

S: So the *Ward* had only recently been re-commissioned when you joined her.

E: We re-commissioned it.

S: Okay. And that was in 1941?

E: Right.

S: Now when was the *Ward* sent out to Pearl Harbor?

E: Right away. As soon as it was re-commissioned and ready for sea, we took it out on a couple of trial runs. Then we were ordered to Mare Island, which is just upstream from San Francisco. There we took on stores and ammunition, and we were ordered to Pearl Harbor to become part of what they called the Hawaiian Sea Frontier. We joined the division which was made up of four destroyers, the *Allen*, the *Chew*, the *Schley*, and the *Ward*. And our duty, as a division, was to guard the entrance to Pearl Harbor and keep all ships and boats clear of the area from Honolulu to Barber's Point. That was the Navy training area and that was our duty. We would be out there for a week, and then we'd come in and work on the ship, or we'd go some place else, or we'd get some leave or recreation. Then we'd go back out for a week again on this harbor patrol.

S: So the harbor patrol was a seven-day patrol.

E: Right.

S: And it was pretty regular—you went down for patrol, came back, and then went back out again.

E: Right.

S: And all four of these destroyers were essentially doing the same thing?

E: That's right. That was our duty. Destroyer division.

S: At that time, this was early, mid-1941 and even later, was there a perception in your mind, or the guys onboard your ship, that something was going to happen?

E: Oh yeah. We knew that something was going to happen, but we didn't think it was going to happen at Pearl Harbor. We thought that the Japanese were going to go into the Philippines, or into Borneo and New Guinea, and that they were working their way into becoming the dominant country in the Far East. The same that Hitler was doing in Europe. And [the Japanese] were moving more and more, and going into China. They had to be stopped someplace, or maybe they would stop. We were hoping they'd stop by themselves, but they didn't. Eventually, because we were more or less blockading them and keeping them from getting the oil and iron that they needed to go on with their war effort, they decided that if they took out our fleet that was in the Pacific, that they would have a year or two that we wouldn't be able to bother them, and that they could go on with their conquest

(1, A, 110)

S: It sounds like there was a perception on your part that the time that Pearl Harbor was likely just a stepping stone to something else. There was going to be a wider involvement for the United States in the Pacific before too long?

E: We were warned that there was going to be, yes. In fact they changed the patrol about three months before the Japanese attack [on 7 December 1941]. They changed our patrol from an ordinary guard-like patrol, to what they called a war-time patrol. From then on, we didn't keep our lights on at night, and we could no longer smoke on deck at night. It was darkened ship patrol. Up until that time we did it just as a patrol to keep other ships out of that area, because the PT boats and destroyers and carriers and submarines were coming in and out of Pearl Harbor all the time. We had to keep that area clear of all other shipping.

S: Not just enemy ships, but all small vessels.

E: All ships, all boats. There was no fishing allowed or anything, from Honolulu to Barber's Point and out, for about five miles. That was strictly U.S. Navy area.

S: For you, what did this change of status, these new regulations for no lights at night and so on, did this affect you in a different way from the older patrols that you were running?

E: Well, it really didn't make too much difference to us, except that we couldn't have the freedom on deck that we'd had before. We'd sit up at night on a nice, beautiful moonlit night, off of Oahu. And one of the guys had a guitar, and we had a little songfest, but we could have lights and flashlights and everything. And after that it all had to be done in the dark.

S: Did that bring a sense of impending conflict with it? That the Navy would only do this if they thought something really was going to happen?

E: They expected something to happen, but not at Pearl Harbor. They figured that maybe Midway [Island, in the Pacific], the Philippines, and of course against the English at Singapore, and all the places that the English were. And some of the other countries that operated equipment and plantations there. The whole coast of New Guinea, the Japanese moved into New Guinea, and they moved down the coast. And they were just about to take Port Moresby [a city in New Guinea], which from

Moresby they could attack Australia. But instead they attacked Pearl Harbor to do away with our fleet, and that started the whole thing. One of our biggest naval battles came right away, when the Japanese were going to try to make a landing at Port Moresby. Our biggest naval battle so far was, was . . . what was the name of it?

S: Was this in 1942?

E: Yes.

S: At Midway?

E: No, Coral Sea. The Battle of the Coral Sea was the first naval battle in history where two navy units opposed each other, and never saw each other. It was mostly aircraft. And we sank a Japanese carrier, and they sank one of ours. But they turned around and went back up the coast of New Guinea; they didn't make the landing at Port Moresby. That saved Australia from being bombed.

S: Was the *Ward* involved at the Battle of the Coral Sea?

E: No, we were still in and around the [Hawaiian] islands. We didn't leave Pearl Harbor until December of 1942. We stayed on that patrol out there, and anti-submarine patrol, and we started to escort ships between the islands, because the Japanese were sending out submarines. The shipping between the islands and the [United States], and the [United States] and the islands, could be jeopardized. So we started doing convoy duty and patrol duty around the islands, and we stayed there until December of 1942. Then we were ordered back to the United States to be made into an APD [Auxiliary Personnel Destroyer].

(1, A, 196)

S: Before you were ordered back to the States, that one year of duty between the islands and on convoy duty, was there Japanese submarine activity during that time?

E: Yes, yes there was. Every once in a while one of our destroyers would make an attack on a submarine around the islands.

S: And an attack on a submarine was precisely what brought the *Ward* into action on 7 December [1941], right?

E: Yes.

S: Can you tell us a bit about that?

E: These [Japanese] two-man subs, and as far as we know there were five of them, were brought into the area on the back of a large regular navy submarine. And they were . . . The large submarine laid off the islands, and launched these midget subs. And they were all to go in and try to get into Pearl Harbor, or to block the ships coming out of Pearl Harbor. And their duty was to sink anything that came out of Pearl Harbor, or if they could get into Pearl Harbor, to sink ships. Do the same thing that the planes were going to do [on 7 December 1941].

S: Were these little midget submarines armed with torpedoes?

E: Yes.

S: They weren't the kind of submarines the Japanese used later in the war that were essentially manned torpedoes, were they?

E: No, it was a regular two-man submarine. They had two torpedoes that they could launch, and then they could, in theory, escape and get back to their mother sub. But it was a one-way trip, and I think they knew it.

S: Now what exactly transpired on the morning [of 7 December 1941] between the *Ward* and one of these small submarines?

E: On December 5th, we still had the patrol. We had been out on patrol from the Saturday before, and we were relieved on the 5th of December to go into the harbor and pull up to 1010 dock, and there we were going to have a ceremony in the change of command. Hunter Wood, Jr., who was the skipper of the *Ward*, was being relieved by W. W. Outerbridge, a lieutenant who had just come back from Chinese duty. And he was to take over command of the *Ward*. He thought, and we thought, that we would be in the harbor for at least a week, so he could get to know the ship and take over; it was his first command. But the *Chew*, which had relieved us out on patrol out there, had some mechanical problems and asked to be relieved. The *Allen* was out visiting another island, and the *Schley* was in for repairs, which just left the *Ward*. So we were ordered right back out on patrol again on that same evening, the 5th of December.

So on the 6th of December, the skipper, getting used to having command of the destroyer, his first day on the ship, he put us through all the ordinary shipboard activities that you do. Abandon ship and general quarters and fire drill and man overboard and this and that and the other thing. So we went through all our paces on the 6th of December. Then on the morning of December 7th, when the anti-submarine net was removed from the harbor entrance, the *Condor* and three other minesweepers came out, which they did every morning, to sweep the harbor. Not only for practice, but actually to see if there were any floating mines. At 4:00 in the morning they spotted a periscope. Now all American submarines had orders never to come into that area underwater; they were to come in on the surface, and we were to know that they were coming in. So as soon as they spotted this periscope they radioed to us, and we hastened over there, went up to high speed, and went over to check this out. And we did have what we believed was a sounding on a submarine, but it might have been a fish or something. But, anyway, we lost it and we no longer had soundings on this submarine. We believe it got into shallow water, and we lost it. So we secured from general quarters and went back on our patrol again.

Then at 7:00 in the morning our lookout, Ambrose Domagall, spotted what looked like a floating oil drum or something in the water, but it looked like it was moving, so he reported it to the officer of the deck. The officer of the deck took a look at it and, while he was trying to make up his mind, the man on the wheel, who was steering the *Ward*, also spotted it, and he reported it to the officers. And they decided that it was moving, so they called the captain to the deck. As soon as he got up there, he took one look at it and he says, "It's the conning tower of a submarine, and it's not supposed to be here." And they said, "Well, what are we going to do about it?" And he said, "We're going to sink it." So we went to general quarters and manned the guns and depth charge racks, and proceeded to fire upon the sub. The first shot from number one gun missed. Number three gun hit and put a hole right through the conning tower at the waterline. Now at that time we were approaching the sub at 15 knots, so we crossed over the bow of the sub and dropped four depth charges on it, and it rode up to the surface and sank.

(1, A, 292)

S: So it came up and then went back down?

E: It kind of rolled up and over, and went back down. Because these depth charges exploded below it. We immediately radioed into Pearl Harbor that we had attacked and sank an unidentified submarine in the restricted waters of Mamala Bay, at the entrance to Pearl Harbor. And they sent back, "confirm your report." Well, the report was already confirmed, because there was a PBY [Catalina aircraft] on patrol that saw what we were doing, and they dropped a marker buoy there, where we sank the sub, and they reported to their base at Aiea [on Oahu] that the *Ward* had attacked and dropped depth charges on a submarine and that they had dropped a marker buoy on it. So that was the second warning. The third warning was from two Army guys that were just practicing with a new radar that had been set up in the hills. They spotted these planes coming in, and when they reported the planes, the officer on duty told them to ignore it, that it was the B-17s [four-engined bombers] coming in from the States. So the three warnings, but not. . .

S: Not taken seriously?

E: Not seriously enough. If they would have paid attention to any one of the three, and gone to general quarters in the harbor. . . It would not have stopped the raid; those [Japanese] planes were already on their way. The planes at that time only flew at about 200 miles an hour, and they were 200 miles out, so the planes were already on their way. But everybody would have been loaded for bear as far as knocking down their airplanes, opening up with anti-aircraft fire and that. So we would have been a little better off. And the ready duty destroyers would have started up, and been out on patrol and helping us out. As it was, they didn't come out until after the first raid [on the morning of 7 December].

S: Let me ask a what-if question: What if the *Ward* hadn't been out on patrol, where would your ship have been? In the harbor anchored?

E: Yes. Or visiting another island. Sometimes we visited other islands. We practiced convoying, and things like that. In the ten months that we were there before the war started, we visited Hilo, and Wailuku [on Maui], and Kaunakakai [on Molokai].

S: So traveled around to different islands.

E: Yeah, when we were off, not on patrol duty, and we didn't need any work done on the ship in Pearl Harbor, the skipper would get permission to go and visit another island for a week. Then we'd come back. So we traveled around the islands and saw [the island of] Lanai, and we had liberty on Lanai and on Maui, and on the island of Hawaii and Molokai.

S: And your ship was smaller than a lot of other naval vessels, so it was easier for you to anchor at some of the islands?

E: Oh yeah, we could pull right up to the docks in those places. It was only 1200 tons, and 300 feet long, and 31 feet wide. It was small. Compared to the newer destroyers, it was only half the size. The next [class of destroyers], the *Farragut* class of destroyers that started being built between the wars, were twice as big as the *Ward*.

S: As far as how long they were you mean?

E: Yeah, and water displacement; they displaced 2250 tons, and ours was 1200 tons. They were a much bigger ship. They had five-inch guns on them, they had a lot more anti-aircraft guns, 20 millimeters, and 40 millimeters, and they carried more

depth charges, and they carried twelve torpedoes. They were a much bigger ship. The ship I was on in Korea [during the Korean War], the USS *Chevalier*, PDR805, was even bigger. It was 2750 tons.

(1, A, 354)

S: More than twice as big as the *Ward*. What's a present day destroyer displace, something built today, do you know?

E: They are entirely different. They're not necessarily bigger, but they're just as fast, and they're fueled with aviation fuel. Their engines are actually airplane engines, which do nothing but create electricity; they're generators, big generators. And they're actually electric drive, really. Electric engines drive the screws on them. Where on our ship, we used direct steam turbines. They are entirely different now.

S: I guess they would have to be. You said your ship was originally built, what, 1918?

E: 1918.

S; Different type of world. Now after Pearl Harbor, you mentioned that for a full year, until December of '42, you did convoy duty and patrol duty.

E: Right.

S: How did life on board the ship change from before Pearl Harbor?

E: Well, it didn't change very much, actually. Nighttime, of course, was different, because everything was battle conditions. But we still had the same number of men, and we did the same things, we practiced the same types of things. Except that we were more on the alert. We probably doubled up on our people on the bridge, lookouts, and we had our ammunition in ready lockers all the time, ready to load. Before that we had it stored.

S: So you were ready to go, really at a moment's notice now, it sounds like.

E: You could sound general quarters and we could be firing the guns in minutes.

S: Now in December of '42, the *Ward* was in a sense transformed into a different kind of ship.

E: Yes.

S: Maybe you could say a little bit about how the ship itself changed.

E: Well, we pulled into [the Puget Sound Navy Yard naval base at] Bremerton, Washington, the day before Christmas [1942], and they immediately started work on it. They removed two boilers, number one and two boilers, and removed the smoke stacks from them. They installed sleeping quarters and living quarters in that space for troops. They took the torpedoes off of the ship and put in additional depth charges. They took all the four-inch guns off—that's how come the one gun is up in front of the [Minnesota] state capitol [in St Paul], because it was removed in Bremerton, Washington. They put three-inch 28 anti-aircraft guns aboard in place of the four four-inch guns. They installed 20 millimeters, ten of them. And, actually, we got a new radar system, and a better depth sounding system. We took on a few more crewmembers to operate the new devices that we had on the ship, but otherwise it was still the *Ward*. Taking off the two boilers slowed us down a little bit, but not too much, because the main reason for the four boilers was the immediate response you got with the extra steam. But as far as our top speed when we were cruising, it slowed us down to about 28 knots from about 32 knots. But it was still a fast ship.

S: Is it safe to say the *Ward* was now more heavily armed, or just armed in a different way?

E: Oh, it was more heavily armed, except for the torpedoes. Torpedoes gave us the ability to attack a much bigger ship. I mean, the destroyers that were made for World War One were made so they could sink cargo ships or other destroyers or cruisers or anything, with their torpedoes. But after we became an APD, then we could only fight against a ship that was maybe our own size, but it gave us much more anti-aircraft protection, and that was the main thing that we needed. Because at the time of Pearl Harbor, we didn't have a chance against aircraft.

S: Did the *Ward* have any anti-aircraft guns before the refitting?

E: Just .50 caliber machine guns, that's all. Two of the Japanese fighter bombers actually attacked the *Ward* that morning, after we had dropped the depth charges on the submarine and we were out getting soundings on other submarines. And two of their planes peeled off and dropped bombs on us. One hit off our starboard side and one off our port side, but both missed by just enough that they didn't do any major damage to the *Ward*. Knocked out a few light bulbs and shook the crew up, but didn't do any real damage.

S: You know what, I never asked you. What exactly was your job on the ship?

E: I was a Machinist Mate; I ran the throttle on the *Ward*. I ran the engines.

S: So were you in the engine room, then, as a general rule when you were on duty?

(1, A, 427)

E: No, not all the time. When I was on duty, regular watch duty, yes. But at general quarters, a lot of the engineers and black gang men [who shoveled coal into the boilers] manned some of the guns, too. I was the loader on a 20 millimeter gun for quite a while when we first hit Guadalcanal [in the Solomons, in June 1943] and the first islands that we made landings on. I was on the 20-millimeter gun. Then I got transferred back down into the engine room, and I was on the throttle when we got sunk [in December 1944].

S: You mentioned the island landings. Was the transformation of the ship completed up there in Bremerton, Washington?

E: Yes.

S: And from there where did the *Ward* go next?

E: We left Bremerton and went right back to Pearl Harbor, but we were only there for two days, enough for them to paint the ship in camouflage. They camouflaged the ship and we joined up with a convoy headed for Espiritu Santo, New Hebrides [now Vanuatu]. We stopped at Johnson Island and Suva and Fiji Islands [all in the Pacific]. And then we got to Espiritu Santo, New Hebrides, where we took on troops, and then we went up to Guadalcanal. We arrived in Guadalcanal after the first landings had been made, but Guadalcanal was by no means completely under our control. It wasn't secure.

The first trip we made up into Guadalcanal, we not only carried troops, but they were having a hard time getting gasoline tankers in the Guadalcanal, because the Japanese were coming in every night, and bombing and shelling Henderson Field. It was still under attack. And the same with Tulagi [Island, in the Solomon Islands]. So the first couple trips we took up, we would attack 50 gallon gasoline, aviation gas drums, to the decks of our ships, and when we unloaded the troops,

then we'd go in close to shore and we'd dump these 50 gallon drums out and they'd float in. Then the Marines and Army would take them, and they would have to refuel our aircraft and fighters by hand.

S: Wow, it seems to me if you had that aviation fuel on deck that, boy, had you been hit by one of those aircraft . . .

E: It would have been the end of the *Ward*.

S: You guys would go into a million pieces probably.

E: That stuff was terrible.

S: Now Guadalcanal is 1943, right?

E: Yes, about the end of February 1943. We left, the end of January we left Bremerton, and we arrived at Guadalcanal the end of February.

S: How long did you stay in that general area?

E: In Guadalcanal?

S: Right.

E: Well, we'd operate between Espiritu Santu, New Hebrides, and Noumea, New Caledonia. Those were the two places where the big troopships would bring the troops in, and then ships like ours and the LSTs [Landing Ship Tank] and that, would pick the troops up from there and bring them to Guadalcanal and to forward islands, until Guadalcanal was secured. Then we moved our base of operation up to right off of Tulagi, in a place called Purvis Bay. And in between island landings and that, we would come back to Purvis Bay and we would pick troops up from Guadalcanal and Tulagi and bring them forward to forward islands.

(1, A, 473)

S: So it sounds like your ship was in motion a lot of the time?

E: Oh yeah, we made about fifteen initial beachheads [invasion landings] in the Pacific, besides making return trips to these same islands, bringing more troops in. We started out in the Green Islands, and the Russell Islands, and Emirau, and Morotai. These were all little islands that the Japanese had airbases on, and we'd have to take these islands and move our planes up forward. Because we were working our way up toward the Philippines. And we had about four landings on New Guinea, at Aitape, Finchhaven, and Hollandia [and several others]. And then when Hollandia was secured, we moved our base of operations to Hollandia, New Guinea. And from there we took troops to Cape Gloucester, New Britain. Also Biak, the Celebes Islands [now Sulawesi, Indonesia], Bouganville, the Marshall Islands. We made landings on all of them.

S: You really had a tour of the South Pacific on board that ship, didn't you?

E: Oh yeah, but the *Ward* was lucky; a lot of other ships and LSTs would get hit and sunk, and the *Ward* just, well, we just got by. We got machine gunned and bombs dropped on us a couple times, and we were always at full speed and evaded most of that stuff. But those poor ships that were slower got hit bad.

S: So speed mattered?

E: Oh, speed and size mattered.

S: The smaller the better, right?

E: Yes. An aircraft carrier could go as fast we could, but they made a hell of a lot bigger target.

S: So hitting a ship as small as the *Ward* was not easy for a pilot who is also moving.

E: That's right, it wasn't an easy target. And [the Japanese] realized that, too, because when we were laying off . . . We brought four big ships up to Guadalcanal, and while they were being unloaded and waiting to form a convoy to go back to Espiritu Santo, New Hebrides, or Noumea, we were circling around between Guadalcanal and Tulagi to escort them back. And the Japanese came in on a big raid several times. I was on a 20 millimeter [gun] and I swore that they were shooting at us a couple of times there. Then after the action would be over, we would find out that we had pulled in close to a large ship to give them air cover, and they were shooting over us, into an AKA or APA [larger ships].

S: They weren't really even aiming for guys.

E: No, but they looked like they were! (*laughs*) When these Val dive bombers that the Japanese were using at that time—looked just like a German Stuka [dive bomber]; they had non-retractable landing gear. And when they came down, shooting at me I thought, I could see the puffs of smoke coming out of their wings and the plane looked like it was aiming at right where I was. But, actually, they were aiming over the *Ward* and into a larger ship.

S: What kind of feelings did you have when you saw these enemy aircraft, what looked like coming right at you?

E: Well, I thought a couple times, this is it, this is the end of the *Ward*. (*laughs*) And one time, in a major air action against Guadalcanal and Tulagi, we were caught in that same position. We were in between Tulagi and Guadalcanal, waiting for a convoy to go back. Ten Japanese torpedo planes came right down the slot, directly at us. I was on the 20 millimeter [gun] again and I thought, this is it, we've had it. Because these plane were only about 150 feet off the water, and you could see the torpedoes hanging down underneath the planes. But afterwards, when we figured it out, they could not have sunk us with their torpedoes, we don't think, because they probably would have been set too deep for our ship.

S: So the torpedoes would have run at a certain depth, and since the *Ward* didn't displace enough water, it would have gone underneath you.

E: That's right. But we didn't realize that when they were coming at us! (*laughs*) We knocked one of them down, but the rest of them just went right around us. Some went around the bow and some around the stern. And I thought, my god, that was as close as we'll ever come.

S: So you could watch, literally watch, these planes just flying right around you.

E: Right around us, and of course, we were shooting at them, but they did not drop their torpedoes at us. They went up the slot; they were looking for bigger ships.

S: Thank goodness for you, eh? Nonetheless the *Ward* was sunk in 1944, and you were still on her.

E: On December 7, 1944, exactly three years to the day after Pearl Harbor, we were sunk by a two-engine Japanese bomber, which was already in flames. He just took us with him. He crash-dived into us.

S: What kind of duty was the *Ward* on in December of 1944?

E: We were hauling troops to the various islands. We had just hauled troops into (*pauses four seconds*) Ormoc Bay in the Philippines. This was about our fourth trip into the Philippines. History is not absolutely correct when they say the first landings in the Philippines were on Leyte. Four days before that we made an all

volunteer landing on an island called Dinagat Island [north of Mindanao]. It was the island that was close to Leyte, and close to Mindoro, and it was blocking the entrance to the straits that the fleet had to go through to get to Leyte. The [U.S. military] believed that they had some long range guns on there that could attack our fleet when it was making the landing on Leyte. so we took the 7th Ranger Battalion and the Australian commandoes and New Zealand commandoes, and made a landing on Dinagat four days before the landings on Leyte. Their orders were to take and hold the island of Dinagat for four days, until our fleet accomplished the landing on Leyte.

(1, A, 553)

S: So the *Ward* also carried troops that weren't Americans.

E: Oh no, we carried Australians and New Zealanders.

S: And with some regularity, or was this kind of out of the ordinary that you were doing this at this time?

E: Well, mostly it was American troops, but whenever there was an initial landing, some of the APDs would carry Australians and New Zealanders. Not always us, but you know we'd have eight or ten APDs in on these landings, and we each carried 150-200 troops. So when we made the initial beachheads, our Higgins boats [used to transport troops from larger ships to beaches] were the first to hit the beach on these landings.

S: The guys got on these Higgins boats, and then hit the beach.

E: Then they would forge their way into the jungle and form a perimeter, and then the LSTs and the other landing craft would come in with the main body of troops.

S: Well, maybe you could describe the sinking of the *Ward*. You mentioned that a two-engine plane that was already on fire crashed into the ship. Give us your perspective on this—where were you, and what did you see?

E: We had just formed up and made our landings at Formont Bay, on Leyte. It was an encirclement landing to get in behind the Japanese troops that were cutting off our troops on Ormoc peninsula. The peninsula of Ormoc is like Florida is to the United States—there's a long island-like peninsula, and our troops had the Japanese bottled up at the land end of the peninsula. But they weren't making any forward progress, so we made an encirclement landing and landed troops in behind the Japanese.

(end of tape 1, side A—counter re-set to 000 for tape 1, side B)

S: This is side B of the interview with Orville Ethier. So the encirclement landing took place, and the *Ward* was part of landing the troops for that?

E: Yes, we lowered our Higgins boats, and lowered the troops, and took them in. Then we picked up our Higgins boats again, and we were on our way back to form up the convoy to go back to Hollandia, New Guinea, when we were attacked by the Jap bombers. There were about twelve Japanese twin-engine bombers that were going in to strafe and bomb our beachhead that we had just made, and in the process they were getting shot at by the P-38s [American twin-engine fighter aircraft] and the Navy fighters, and of course we were shooting at them, too. Three of them had their engines shot out or were on fire, and they all happened to be right

over the *Ward*, so they figured the *Ward* was a good target and they were going to take it with them.

S: So more than one of these aimed at the *Ward*?

E: Three of them. One of them just missed us off the bow, and one just missed us off the starboard side, but the third one came in at about a 45-degree angle and he hit us in the one place on the ship where he wouldn't kill anybody. He actually hit us in the safest place it was for us to get hit, and that was in the empty troops space. He hit just above the waterline and below the deck. If he had hit eight or ten feet higher, he would have hit on top of the deck and cleaned off a lot of men and gun crews and probably the whole bridge of the *Ward*, but he didn't. He hit and exploded inside of the ship.

S: Which was now empty, because you'd unloaded those men.

E: Yes, but what actually sank the *Ward* was the fact that, when the plane exploded and gas was in there, it ruptured the bulkhead to our fire room, and now we had only one fire room. Now we had only one fire room, because the other one had been removed [when the ship was re-fitted at Bremerton]. And the *Ward*, the four stackers, all had what we called compressed fire rooms, meaning they under air pressure. Our steam turbine blowers kept the old fire room under air pressure, and that was the air for the men below and also to feed the fires. We had to have air for our fires and our boilers. And when it ruptured that bulkhead, it put our fires out in the boilers and our steam pressure went down and we lost way. The *Ward* was not actually sinking, it was burning, and it would have eventually sunk.

S: It would have sunk eventually you think?

E: Oh yes, but it wasn't sinking right at that time, but most of our guys had abandoned ship right away when we got hit, because they saw the bomber coming and crashing into the ship. I was down in the engine room and didn't see that. So then we knew we were hit, because it knocked us up against the bulkhead and that. *(pause in interview)*

But immediately we started to close all the valves and shut down the engines, to try to save the steam pressure, because the steam pressure was the life of a destroyer; you had to have steam pressure. But we lost the steam pressure, and therefore we were dead in the water. We lowered the Higgins boats and they started taking the casualties; we did have some badly burnt men.

S: So there were casualties from the plane hitting the ship.

E: There were casualties but not deaths. They lived.

S: Really, nobody was killed when the plane hit.

E: They were badly burnt and had to go back to the States, and they were discharged and that. The rest of the crew that was still aboard went by boat over to other ships, except about ten of us that stayed on board and tried to fight the fire. We started out with the gasoline handybillys, and pumping seawater down into the fire room and into where the bomber had gone, but we weren't getting anyplace.

S: The fires were continuing to burn.

E: The gasoline was floating on the water and burning. And we also had diesel oil tanks down there to fuel our Higgins boats, and those were on fire, so we couldn't get the fire out. So we were all ordered to leave the ship. One of our Higgins boats that had dropped some of our men off on another ship came back, saw us aboard

there, and we started hollering and waving to him. And he pulled up alongside the ship, and the ten guys that were left on the ship got on the Higgins boat, and he took us over to the USS *Crosby*. And when we got to the *Crosby* we all went aboard, and the skipper of the *Crosby* told us to pull the plugs on the Higgins boat and sink it, because he had no way of taking it aboard. So we all got off the boat and we let it drift off, and they sank it with the 20 millimeter [gun]. That was the end of the *Ward*. It was still a floating hulk, but they didn't want to leave it floating like that. So the USS *O'Brien*, which had taken some of our men aboard, pulled off and sank it with a couple of five-inch shots from the five-inch guns. And the *Ward* sank.

S: You mentioned that there were some casualties from the flames and the fuel that spilled. What did those injuries look like, a guy that was burned?

E: The skin was black and peeling and ugly.

S: Are wounds like that painful?

E: Oh, they must be extremely painful. But of course the medics get to them right away and they give them morphine and start bandaging spots with ointment. They start working on them immediately. They were already working on them when they were in the Higgins boats being brought to another ship.

S: So they were evacuated first

E: They were the first ones.

S: And then back to behind the lines to a Navy hospital.

E: To a hospital ship or a hospital, whichever they could get to.

S: That's still amazing to hear that no one was killed by the impact of that plane.

E: No, in all history of the *Ward*, there was only one man that we lost, and he fell overboard during one of the landings, and the sharks got him.

S: That's the only guy that was lost from the *Ward*? That's quite a record.

E: We put a Higgins boat in the water and searched for him for a couple of hours, but never found him.

S: Well for you, the end of the *Ward* meant some kind of a change, because the war was still on. What happened to you as a result of the *Ward* being sunk?

E: Well, the *Crosby*, which was another APD, took us back to Hollandia, New Guinea, and we all disembarked there. They set up tents for us, and we lived in tents there for a couple of weeks. They issued us marine greens [uniforms]—we called them survivor greens. We stayed there for a couple of weeks, helping to unload ships and doing all kind of stuff, waiting for transportation back to the States as survivors of a sunken ship.

So after a couple of weeks, a big troop ship came in that had been a luxury liner, I guess, or a liner. We helped unload it, mostly mailbags and supplies, and then we went aboard it, and it took us back to San Francisco. So then about another two weeks, which is about a month after the *Ward* was sunk, I arrived in San Francisco, at Treasure Island [Navy facility].

S: Orv, were you posted to another ship after that?

E: No, I was posted to Mayport, Florida, a Naval Auxiliary Air Station to Jacksonville, Florida, Air Station. I was in the machine shop and did outside marine work on boats and ships and that until the war was over.

S: That sounds like, the way you described it at least, as a completely different experience than what you'd just had.

E: Oh yeah, it was different. Living in a nice barracks and you were working a regular eight-hour day. Except you had a watch about every third day, you'd have what they called a fire watch. Every building had a couple of people that would stay in them overnight. *(pauses three seconds)* Then towards the end, just before the war was over—I had gotten married in January of '45, after the ship was sunk—my wife came down to Mayport, Florida. So I was living the life of Riley, working eight hours a day for a change.

(1, B, 190)

S: That sounds like heaven after what you'd been through for three years.

E: Yeah.

(brief pause in interview)

S: Continuing the interview. So you finished the war stateside, in Florida.

E: Yes.

S: And were you discharged pretty soon after the war ended?

E: In October 1945. I had all the points [points were accumulated through time in service, combat duty, and other factors—a certain number of points qualified some personnel for discharge] in the world to get out. They shipped me back to Twin City Airport. At that time it was called . . . *(calls to wife Pat, in next room)* What was the airport named?

Pat Ethier: Wold Chamberlain Airport, in Minneapolis.

E: I was discharged from there.

S: In 1945. I guess as an aside, you mentioned that you were in Korea, too. You were in the Reserves, and then called back up?

E: I rejoined the Reserves and when [the unit] was re-formed again, and trained in Minneapolis, Wold Chamberlain Field, until they built the Navy Reserve building on Navy Island, in St Paul. And then I trained there for a year. Then I was recalled to active duty in September of 1950, and went right overseas and picked up the USS *Chevalier* in Yokosuka, Japan [by Tokyo], for Korean duty.

S: And how long were you on Korean duty?

E: About eight months. I was on the *Chevalier* on picket duty on the north end of the Seventh Fleet during the evacuation of our troops from North Korea. We were on picket duty there, and the fighter pilots, the Russian fighter pilots, would come out every morning and they'd fly around us. They'd wiggle our wings to let us know they knew we were there.

S: But they didn't fire on you.

E: Oh no. And we'd follow them with our five-inch [gun], and they'd wiggle their wings again and go back to Vladivostok, Russia, where they were based. What we were on was picket duty, to warn if anything was coming down from China.

S: Let me shift back to your World War Two experience. When you went into the Navy, it was a segregated Navy. And it stayed a segregated Navy for almost the entire war.

E: Well, it was segregated in that colored people did not hold regular rates. We had blacks on board ship.

S: On board the *Ward*?

E: On board the *Ward*, but they were officer's mess attendants. That's why the blacks and a lot of Filipinos joined our Navy, purposely, just to do that duty. They had good duty, actually.

S: How about, refresh my memory, how large was the crew of the *Ward*?

E: It was 100 men and eight officers.

S: And after the Bremerton refitting, did you have more men?

E: About 110.

S: So just a few more. Of those, of the crew on board, how many were black or Filipino or other minorities?

E: Oh, at first, I'd say there were about six. Six blacks and Filipinos aboard.

S: Did that number change at all, up or down, before the *Ward* was sunk?

E: No, it was about the same. We hadn't received any regularly rated blacks or anything on board. I think there were some on larger ships, cruisers and battleships and carriers and that, but we still had just the black and Filipino mess attendants.

S: Are these people with whom the crew of the *Ward* came into contact with on a regular basis?

E: Oh sure, they lived with us in the crews quarters and that.

S: Were there separate quarters for blacks?

E: Oh no, they had . . . Well, mostly they stayed together, but then it was their own choice. They could take bunks next to each other because they kind of. . . you know, they were their friends.

S: Could you pick your own bunk aboard ship, most of the guys?

E: You could pick your own bunk in the compartment that you were assigned to. But you were assigned to a compartment, and then the bunks were kind of . . . We were kind of segregated, too. I mean, the First Class were down in the lower bunks, and the Second Class and Third Class in higher bunks.

S: So there was a pecking order for bunks?

E: There was a pecking order. Same as when we were a destroyer, before we became an APD. We were fed down in the compartments, and there was a pecking order at the dinner table. You went from Apprentice Seamen on up to First Class at the other end of the table. The food was brought to the First Class first and then they passed it on down. You see, we were fed family style.

S: That was my next question, who got the food first, but you answered it.

E: It was a pecking order. Your rank in the Navy, and I suppose the Army, too, your rank meant something to you while you were aboard ship. Chiefs had their own quarters, of course.

S: And officers had their own.

E: They had their own. Each officer had a little bitty, like a stateroom, and some of them were two officers. Two ensigns were in the same stateroom, with bunk beds. But they were nicer beds than the . . . They weren't just steel frame bunk with canvas lacing in it, they were regular beds.

S: With a real mattress?

E: Yeah.

(1, B, 285)

S: How would you describe what we might call the race relations on board the *Ward*?

E: *(pauses three seconds)* We never had any trouble.

S: Was it that once guys were in uniform, it was just . . . ?

E: We all got along pretty good together. Occasionally we had a Southerner that didn't like the blacks and would tell them not to talk to him. We had one guy, I won't mention any names, but he came aboard off a cruiser, and one of the blacks was from the same state that he was from, Georgia. And he walked up and said, "I hear you're from Georgia." And he says, "Yes I am, and don't bother to talk to me anymore." In other words, he would not get along with the blacks. But that was very seldom. The Texans and that, they didn't care.

S: How about you other guys? Originally, most of you guys were from Minnesota.

E: Yeah, 82 of us.

S: Yeah, in those days Minnesota didn't have a lot of blacks. Was this something . . .

E: We had one black go with us. Johnny Cyrus enlisted there. He was a black mess attendant, and he was on board the *Ward*.

S: He was from St Paul?

E: Yes. Went to Central High School.

S: Do you think being from Minnesota made that different for you guys, to adjust to minorities?

E: Oh yeah, we adjusted much faster than the Southerners would. You get a dyed-in-the-wool Southerner, and they just don't have anything to do with the blacks. They won't hurt them or harm them or anything, but they don't talk to them, they don't have anything to do with them.

S: It's a good example you gave about the guy from Georgia.

E: Yes.

S: Let me ask you about women in uniform. Before we turned the tape on we were talking about how your wife Pat was been a WAVE during the war. Did you come into contact with women during your time on the *Ward*, or in harbor?

E: Well, on some of the islands we saw occasionally some Red Cross women, driving cars or trucks or ambulances. And when we did once in a great while get to go aboard a hospital ship, or into a forward hospital, we'd see nurses. See, Navy nurses or Army nurses, they would go into the islands and that. But the WAVES and WACS didn't.

S: They were strictly stateside.

E: Yes.

S: So you mentioned women on board hospital ships, or in hospitals. And you mentioned you saw some women as drivers—were those Red Cross or Army or Navy?

E: The drivers were usually Red Cross, but the other nurses were Army or Navy nurses. And they were all officers, so we didn't have much to do with them either, except they would examine us, or give us shots and stuff.

S: Now how often did the *Ward* actually come back stateside, only to Bremerton?

E: Only once, only for that one month where they made us into an APD.

S: Were there already women in different positions that you saw at that time, in 1942?

E: No, never saw any enlisted women at that time at all. The only women we saw aboard ship were yard workers. Some of the Navy yards had women that would

sweep up and clean up and that after the workers. I heard that they had riveters and that, too, but I never saw them.

S: Speaking about individual people, would you say there were one or a couple of people who had a real positive impact on you during your time in the war? You were there from the very beginning.

E: Our commanding officer from St Paul, Hartwell T. Doughty. I had several confrontations and contacts with him and he was a nice and fair guy. I'd take my tongue lashing and go back to work. He was a 1st lieutenant on our ship after we got (***). And Outerbridge, of course, was our skipper for that whole time, from December 7th [1941] to December of '42.

S: Did Outerbridge leave the ship then?

E: Yes, he left, when we became an APD he was relieved of his command, and F.W. Lemly, another lieutenant, Regular Navy, then became the skipper. He was skipper for most of our action in the South Pacific. We took two trips to Sydney, Australia, for rest and recreation, ten days each time. We hauled troops and officers back and forth on a trip to Sydney, and he was skipper during all that. He was only relieved a couple of months before we got sunk. One of the officers who had come aboard as an ensign before Pearl Harbor, ensign Farwell, became lieutenant, and then he became skipper of the *Ward*. He was skipper of the *Ward* when we got sunk, Farwell.

S: You mentioned Lemly and Outerbridge. What made these guys special for you?

E: Well, you looked up to them, because they were Naval Academy men. They were graduates of Annapolis, and they were your commanding officer. A commanding officer on a ship at sea, he's it. Everybody takes orders from him; he is the boss. He has the military power or policing power to put you in chains if you did something wrong. He has ultimate power until he gets into a base or someplace where he can turn you over to the authorities. We had several guys that went berserk, and we had to put a couple of men in restraining jackets and feed them and that. They had shellshock; they couldn't take it.

S: Was that from a specific incident, something that happened?

E: Yes. The time that I told you about, that the guns were firing down over my head and then at an AKA. The fireman, his duty was to keep the 20 millimeter shells away from our feet and push them overboard and get them out of the way so that we wouldn't trip over them. Because these empty shells were about the size of a good-sized cigar, and if you'd step on one, it'd roll, and you'd go flat on your butt. And the gunner who is trying to fire the gun, he could go flat on his butt. So [this fireman] was the hot shell man, we called him. And all of a sudden I looked down, and he was on his hands and knees, and he was completely out of it. His head was shaking and his eyes were bulging and rolling in his head. And I hollered at the guys, "Get him the hell out of the way!" Because I was loading the gun. So they pushed him back in between a couple of floor housings there, and someone else started to push the shells away. Then after the action was over, we had to put him into the empty troop space. They had a little, like a supply cage in there, and we put him in there and we had him in there for about ten days until we could get back to a base and take him off the ship.

S: So he never came back to his duty on the ship?

E: Nope. In fact, the last letter we got from him, we were still overseas and he was in a hospital in California, and he was getting a medical discharge from the Navy. He never did get back into action. I don't know if the others did, either. There were about four of them that went shellshock on us.

S: Kind of similar situations and similar symptoms?

E: Yeah, except that most of them didn't quite get to that point where they were, like I said, shaking and their head was rolling and their eyes rolling and that. They just kind of went into a daze, and didn't obey any orders and didn't do anything.

Sometimes we would try to keep it from the officers, to see if the guy would come back and be all right. Eventually they had to be turned over and hospitalized.

S: A couple of cases that you mentioned, did that seem to happen to guys the first time in a stressful situation, or did it happen almost anytime?

E: No, I would say that the one I was talking about, the hot shell man, he had been aboard for maybe six months or so, and we had been in action before. It never bothered him, but then one day it did. I think seeing the puffs of smoke coming out of the wings of that diving [Japanese] Val [dive bomber] did it. It was right over our heads.

S: Those are interesting stories. You mentioned about one of those guys, who you tried to keep from the officers, hoping he would sort of snap back to it.

E: Yes.

S: That suggests there was a kind of camaraderie between enlisted men. Is that safe to say?

E: Oh sure. Especially us 82 guys from St Paul, you know. We all knew each other and had trained at St Paul together and taken the train to San Diego together, and we were together on the ship. When we were sunk we still had about ten or twelve of us left on the ship from the original crew.

S: Now as crewmembers change, and they did change, people came and went, right? **(1, B, 423)**

E: Oh yeah. As you went up in rate, something had to be done. You couldn't all be chiefs. You had so many First Class, so many Second Class, so many Third Class, and so many firemen and so many seamen. As you went up in rate, usually the guy who you were replacing went on to another ship, a bigger ship. New construction was the thing to try to get to, you know. That's what everybody wanted. Wanted to go back and get a new ship.

S: Why is that?

E: They just wanted to get on a new bigger and better ship, I guess.

S: As these guys changed and you got guys on board who weren't from St Paul, who were from all over, I guess, was it the same kind of camaraderie, a kind of enlisted guys camaraderie?

E: Oh yeah. We all got along real good. You see, we had an ordinary watch—we would have three men in the forward engine room, the throttle man, an oiler, and chief of the watch, and three men in the aft engine room. The same, the throttle man, an oiler, and the guy on the evaporators, and then chief of the watch, for the watch. So you had six men that worked together, four hours on and sometimes eight hours off, but sometimes only four hours off. You had the same guys work together all the time. It was a crew. That was your job. When I was on the throttle, we had an oiler

that went around and took care of all the machinery and that, and you had to run the throttle. And the chief of the watch went back and forth between the engine rooms, seeing that everything was operating all right, and everything.

S: So you saw the same guys pretty much all the time?

E: For four hours, or eight hours a day because if you had 4:00 to 8:00, you were on 4:00 to 8:00 in the afternoon, and 4:00 to 8:00 in the morning.

S: Among the enlisted guys that you met, and you must have met an awful lot on that ship, do a couple stick out in your mind as guys you looked up to, or who made an impact on you, a positive impact?

E: Oh yeah. A couple of the Regular Navy men that were on the ship when I came aboard. One of them in particular was James K. Lovsted. We called him Jake. He was a 2nd class Machinist Mate.

S: Regular Navy.

E: Regular Navy. And I was assigned to him as his . . . He had what they called A Division, Repair Division, taking care of the equipment and that. And I was assigned to him right away, and I became his mechanic. I worked under him practically all the time I was on the *Ward*. He became a chief, Chief Machinist Mate, and I became First Class. See I was, I won't say the only guy that could run the lathe, there might have been somebody else that was on there, but I was a machinist, I ran our metal turning lathe, our drill press, and shaper, and did all the repair work that there was to be done when we were at sea. Otherwise, we'd send it to a repair ship or station if we were in port. But while we were at sea, or tied up alongside of other ships so that we could take down a pump or something, I did it. I worked on it.

S: What made this guy, why'd you look up to him, why was he a good guy?

E: Well, he was smart. He was from Minnesota, by the way, from Breckenridge, Minnesota, and in the Navy. I don't know if that had anything to do with it, but we were just good friends. Then later on another Machinist Mate came on board; his name was Sam Thompson. He was from Dallas, Texas, or Fort Worth. I got along real good with him. We were buddies. We'd go ashore together and everything.

S: You mentioned that you made a couple trips with the *Ward* to Australia. And a couple of those were R and R trips?

E: Yes.

S: What was it like to go on leave, I mean Sydney was a pretty big city even back then. What would a guy do when they're on leave?

E: They have to get in trouble. (*laughs*)

S: Did you succeed?

E: And we also had shore patrol. In fact, I got shore patrol, I was on shore patrol for a 24-hour period there in Sydney. And I didn't like it at all, because I was running into my own shipmates, who were getting drunk and disorderly, and we had to calm them down or something, and they didn't like that of course. Whenever you went into a foreign port like that, unless it was a base, a regular Navy base that had their own shore patrol and military police and that, that were stationed there, the ships that came into the harbors had to furnish men for the shore patrol.

S: So each ship was required to have some guys for that.

E: I was 1st class Machinist Mate then and they put an SP [shore patrol] band on my arm and said, you're now a shore patrol. So you came in and reported to the shore

patrol office, and there they put you with a marine and a soldier and a civilian policeman.

S: And as a group you went around then.

E: So the four of you could handle any situation you ran into. If it was a Navy man, the SP would try to take care of them; if it was Army, the Army would; if it was Marines, the Marine would; if it was civilian, the civilian policeman would.

S: We hear all the clichés about Navy guys on leave. Would you confirm those clichés, or say that guys did lots of stuff on leave?

E: Oh, there were a lot of guys that got drunk and disorderly. They were nine months at sea, and then all of a sudden they were in a town like Sydney. The taverns were open, and the beer and booze flowed freely. You know damned well that most of them aren't going to find girlfriends, so what else are they going to do? Most of them are going to drink. There weren't enough women to go around. *(laughs)*

S: By a wide margin, I'd imagine, when ship pulls into port.

E: See, in Australia at this time, they were under war conditions. Every person, girl, boy, man, whatever that was over eighteen years old had to work. They had to have a work card. If they were caught on the streets and they didn't have a work card, they were brought in for questioning and put to work. They were under military rule, you could say, at the time.

S: That is much different than our experience back here in the States.

E: Oh sure, back here in the States, I think all you had to carry was a social security card, or a card to the base that you were working at, so you could through the gates and that. But these were cards that meant they were being productive, that they weren't loafing.

S: Let me shift later in the war years. By early '45 you were back in the States, weren't you, in Florida?

E: I got to Florida at about in the end of February '45.

S: President Roosevelt died on 12 April 1945. Do you remember that?

E: Oh yeah, we had a big deal. We raised the flag and put it at half-mast

S: You were in Florida then?

E: Right.

S: Do you remember. . . .

E: I have to go.

(pause for a bathroom break)

S: Interview back on. How did you react when you heard the news about President Roosevelt dying?

E: Well, of course everybody was wondering what was going to happen, because he was leading our country. Actually, I didn't even know that he was that sick. I mean, we didn't have that much communications as far as newspapers and radio and that, working on the base. I didn't realize that he was in bad shape at all, and all of a sudden it comes over the radio that we did have, that President Roosevelt had died. Then they told us what we were going to do, we were going to form up on the parade ground, in the central part of the base, and do a parade drill. We all got in our dress uniforms and put the flag at half-mast and they had some speeches and that by the commanding officer.

S: Do you recall yourself being affected emotionally in any way?

E: No, not really. It didn't really make a lot of difference to me on the base who the president was, I suppose. I was mainly interested in who my commanding officer was, or who was in charge of me, and what I was doing.

S: The everyday type of contacts.

E: Yeah, really. You're busy, you're busy. There's nothing more busy than an Army base or a Navy base when its in operation. We took a lot of planes aboard to practice flying, and they were practicing . . . Our airstrip was a short airstrip, almost like an aircraft carrier, so they used it to train pilots for short field landings. So they were busy a lot. I was busy making parts and working in the machine shop, and putting propellers on boats when the propellers were damaged.

S: So this base was still running full steam, wasn't it?

E: Oh yeah, it was growing every month, it was getting bigger and bigger. It's a huge base now. It was a small base when I first got there, but it got bigger and bigger. Mainly it was a base for training pilots, and for air sea rescue units, boats. We had what we called the 70-footers and the 50-footers, and they were fast boats equipped with lifesaving gear to pick up pilots. There were ships being sunk off our East coast by German submarines. They were air sea rescue until that would go out when a ship was hit or a plane was down or something. It was right at the mouth of the St John's River.

S: Is it in Jacksonville or right out of it?

E: No, right out of Jacksonville. The St John's River runs right through Jacksonville and it empties out north of Jacksonville, at Mayport. Into the ocean. It's one of the few north flowing rivers in the United States. It runs from central Florida to Jacksonville and out.

S: You were also there on V-E Day, 8 May 1945.

E: Oh yeah.

S: And on V-J Day. Do you remember V-E Day, May the 8th?

E: Oh yeah, we had a big deal that day, too. Everybody was blowing their bugles and horns and. . .

S: Now for you, you had spent three years in the Pacific.

E: I had never been in the European theater; I was always in the South Pacific.

S: So never having been in the European theater, what did V-E mean for you?

E: Well, my brother was in armed guard, Navy armed guard. And he was taking trips back and forth to Europe. I didn't realize it at the time, but he had just taken a ship and he was in the South Pacific then, but I didn't even know that. And then my other brother who was in the South Pacific, on the [aircraft carrier] *USS Bunker Hill*, he got killed [in June 1945] at Okinawa, on the *Bunker Hill* [when the ship was struck by a Japanese kamikaze aircraft]. My younger brother, yes.

S: I didn't know that. There were three of you, as brothers, that were in the service?

E: Yes, three brothers. All Navy.

S: Was it your youngest brother who was killed in action?

E: Yes. My youngest brother.

S: V-J Day was 15 August 1945. What did that mean for you, and the place and base you were stationed at?

E: It didn't mean much, except we got the afternoon off. We formed up on the parade grounds and had some speeches and that's about it.

S: There always seemed to be speeches when something happened.

E: Oh yeah, somebody has to talk! (*laughs*)

(end of tape 1, side B—counter re-set to 000 for tape 2, side A)

S: This is tape two with Orville Ethier. So you said that V-J Day was just one of those times when you got the afternoon off. Was there a sense, for you, of relief or excitement?

E: Are you talking about the end of the European War?

S: Well, I actually skipped forward to V-J Day.

E: Well, V - J Day was a bigger day to us, really, because it meant more to the Navy actually than the European thing did. Yeah, V-J Day we had a lot going on. That night, I had liberty, and my wife and I had a car down there at that time. And we got in an accident.

S: On V-J Day?

E: Yes, a drunk ran into the side of our car.

S: Were you hurt?

E: No we weren't hurt, but the car was pretty well smashed up. So that put us out of action for a couple of weeks until we got our car back.

S: Were you in Jacksonville when this happened?

E: Just out of Mayport, at Jacksonville Beach. Do you know the difference between Jacksonville and Jacksonville Beach?

S: No.

E: Well, Jacksonville Beach was the resort part of Jacksonville. It was on the coast . . . on the gulf. No, it was over on the Atlantic CoaSt It was a bathing beach, oh it stretched for miles and miles and miles. It was a beautiful beach. It started at about Mayport, and it went all the way down to, to the end of Florida, I guess. It was a beautiful beach. We had been out on the beach enjoying ourselves, and we were on our way back, I think, when we got in the accident.

S: So you had been to some kind of a celebration before you headed back?

E: Yeah, before we got off the base.

S: What was going on at the celebration? Were there a lot of folks there?

E: Oh yeah, everybody coming out, and blowing their horns, and hollering. Shining their lights and searchlights and just everybody happy.

S: Was . . .do you recall that the celebrations for V-J Day were more intense than those for V-E Day?

E: I remember that they were, because then we knew everything was over with. The whole war was over with, not just the one phase.

S: Well, hooked up with that, V-J Day, was the government's decision to use atomic weapons against the Japanese. And as reported in the paper, we had used the bomb, and we know later what kind of impact, and there's a lot of discussion about this. How did folks feel back then when we heard that this new weapon had been used against the Japanese? Good, bad, or indifferent?

(2, A, 60)

E: Well, I was very happy to know that it made the Japanese give up, capitulate, and then sign the treaty, because I knew a lot of people by this time that were out there

at Okinawa and Iwo Jima. Both in the Army and flying [bombing missions] off of Tinian and bombing Japan. Some good friends of mine were out in the Air Force there, and in the Navy, all looking forward to a very treacherous invasion of Japan.

S: So for you, and a lot of them, it meant we didn't have to do that?

E: No. Immediately it was a letdown for everybody, to get back to ordinary thinking and not worrying about getting killed and having to be part of an invasion. We were hearing that our Navy was moving from the European theater, taking troops with them, and going right over for the invasion of Japan. So this was going to be another big, big operation, and a lot of people were going to get killed. So it was a big deal, V-J Day was a bigger deal than the victory in Europe.

S: Do you think your own feelings have changed since 1945 about the use of the atomic bomb on Japan?

E: Well, I still think it was the right thing to do. It was a tragedy, of course, for the two towns. But I saw a tape of it one time and it said that there were 100,000 people killed between Hiroshima and . . .

S: Nagasaki.

E: Nagasaki. But think of how many people of the Japanese would have been killed if we'd invaded the country. If they kept on fighting, we would have killed a lot more than 100,000 or whatever it was that died there. Actually, it was good for Japan, although they can't see that of course. I think they can now, but they couldn't then. They thought it was a horrible thing. And it was a horrible thing. But when you think of the lives that would have been in danger, had we had to invade Japan.

S: Both Japanese and American lives.

E: And American. And Australian and New Zealand. By that time we would have had other countries putting troops in there, too. It would have been a major operation. I think it would have been worse than [the] D-Day [invasion of France in June 1944]. It would have had to be bigger.

S: Final questions have to do with your life after the military. Now, you were demobilized in October 1945, is that right?

E: Yes. Discharged from the Navy.

S: What did it feel like to be discharged from the Navy?

E: Well, I thought it was great, of course. By that time I was married, and my wife was pregnant and she was going to have a baby. I was happy to get home. In fact, I was offered Chief Machinist Mate if I would agree, I didn't have to sign over or re-enlist or anything. If I would just agree to stay at Mayport, Florida, for six months while all the other guys were going home. Practically everybody at Mayport were guys like me that had done time overseas and had been in the war, and they were being sent to a base for up to a year or eighteen months shore duty before going back overseas again. Well, all these guys had points, they had all the points they needed to go home. So the base was being practically shut down. There was no people there.

S: Guys were all getting out now.

E: And the Chief in my division was leaving, so they had offered me Chief if I would just agree to stay there for six more months. So I went to talk to [my wife] Patsy, and she says, she wasn't going to have a baby in Florida. She was going home.

S: She's from Minnesota too?

E: Oh yeah. She was right across the alley from me.
S: I'll be darned. She was not ready or willing to stay in Florida any longer.
E: No, she didn't like Florida. It was hot and steamy in summertime. It's terrible. So I told the lieutenant, "I'm sorry but I'm going to get out as soon as I can." But the Navy isn't too dumb; they still kept me until October.
S: When did they offer you Chief? Was that in August?
E: Yeah, it was right after V-J Day.
S: So they still kept you on a couple more months.
E: Yeah, they still kept me. *(laughs)* They had to; there was nobody there.
S: Then when you left Mayport, did you come right back to St Paul, both you and Pat?
E: Yep. We came back to St Paul and rented a little apartment. Later on we bought a little house up on James. I was a steam fitter then.
S: Was that your first time back in St Paul since you'd shipped out in January of '41?
E: Yeah.
S: So almost five years then?
E: Yeah.
(2, A, 160)
S: What was it like to see family and friends and loved ones again, after all those years?
E: It was great. Well, I'd seen them in January of '43. We got 15 days leave, while the ship was being made into an APD. I came home.
S: So you were able to come back from Bremerton to St Paul?
E: And back to Bremerton again. But it was only fifteen days, with no traveling time, and the train took about four days each way, so there went eight days of it. So I only had about a week or ten days at home, in those five years.
S: So it was kind of readjusting to seeing people again. What was it like to see folks again, and as a civilian?
E: Well I went back to work at the packing house. I had been working in the packing house as a building maintenance man, a steam fitter, pipe fitter, when I let in the first place. So I went back there for a year, then I went into business with my dad, steam fitting. Then I took the job of steam fitting and piping inspector for the city of St Paul.
S: And did you have that job for a while then?
E: Oh yeah, for 30 years.
S: That's a while. With the exception of when you were in Korea.
E: Yeah. I went to work . . . oh yeah, I had to leave the job for fourteen months during the Korean War. I left the inspection job, but I came right back to it when I was discharged in '51.
S: What was the hardest thing for you readjusting to civilian life?
E: *(pauses four seconds)* Oh, I don't know, being with the family and being able to do anything you wanted. And having a car to get around and go on picnics and do whatever you wanted. See, at one time, the *Ward* was at sea for nine months, and we never put a foot ashore.
S: Wow, nine months straight.

E: Yeah, and for those nine months, from the time that we left Seattle, Washington, until we made our first trip to Australia, the only time we got ashore was to pick up supplies and bring them over to ship. A couple of times I ran the boats in on landings, and I hit the beach and stayed with the boats for a little while, and wandered around for a while with a rifle in my hand. But that's not going to shore for liberty, that's making a landing.

S: No kidding, that's a whole lot different. So having time for yourself, and unstructured time in a way, is that it?

E: Aboard ship you had no time to yourself really.

S: So this readjustment process . . .

E: You stood watch for eight hours a day, and you also had what they called the cleaning station, for another spot on the ship you had to take care of. For me it was the lathe and the machine shop, so you were working on that during the daylight hours when you weren't on watch.

S: So the readjustment to civilian life, of not having this structure, this constant demand on your time was new.

E: Right.

S: What do you think was the easiest thing about readjusting to civilian life?

E: Well, see I'm maybe different than a lot of the servicemen in that I was never without a job. I had a job and had a steady paycheck even before the war, during the bad times that other people were without work. I was lucky; I always had a job.

S: And when you came back, it was the same.

E: I went right to work again.

S: Yeah, that's not the case for all the guys.

E: No, some of the guys had a bad time of it. They had what they called the 52-20 club.

S: Yeah, I read about that. That must have been hard for those guys.

E: Oh sure, I had a couple of good friends that were on it for the whole year. They got \$20 a week, and they looked for work. That's what they got the \$20 a week for, was for trying to get a job. Everybody thinks that, right after the war, all the manufacturing was going and the jobs were plentiful. They were not, because these factories were changing over from wartime production to peacetime production. And they weren't hiring than many people yet, until they got into production, like Seegers and all the big places, hiring around here. Minnesota Mining and Seegers and the packing houses. The packing houses were good because, Superior Packing where I worked, out in Midway [area of St Paul], had a government contract. We were supplying beef to the government, so we worked, we were busy. I had that job to go back to, because I had worked there before I went to the Navy.

(2, A, 236)

S: So you never had a time that you were struggling or wondering where the next paycheck was going to come from, or being on this \$20 a week stuff.

E: Nope, I never got a thing from the government; I never went on any government subsidies in my life.

S: Was there ever any victory parade or celebration here in St Paul, when all the guys got back home, that you were part of?

E: After the war?

S: Yeah.

E: No, not really. After the war, there probably was on V-J Day, but I wasn't here then.

S: I know of a few small towns in Pennsylvania that had one when a lot of guys came back home, because a lot of guys were still gone. A year later, in 1946, they had a big parade then all the guys were able to. They never had something like that in St Paul?

E: No, not really. I don't recall any big major paper parades, or whatever they call it. S; Tickertape.

E: Tickertape parade. They had had a big deal at the depot when we came home in '43.

S: When you were on leave, you mean?

E: Oh, when we came home [from Bremerton] in [January] '43, they had the Great Northern Band at the depot to welcome us. And they did that twice, because half of our crew came home for the first fifteen days and the other half came back for the second fifteen days. I was on the second bunch, and we had a big whoop-de-doo down at the Union Station [in St Paul].

S: So they knew you were coming and they put on a show for you?

E: Oh yeah. They had reporters come on board the train in North Dakota, and they were writing up our stories before we even got to St Paul. So it was in the paper as we were arriving, and what time it was arriving and everything. So everybody in St Paul was here, I think.

S: And that was January '43?

E: Yep. January of '43.

S: I'll look for that.

E: It would have been around the 15th of January that I got home. The other guys got home right away, up to the 15th.

S: So those newspaper reporters came on board in North Dakota, and rode the train down?

E: Rode the train down with us. (*pauses four seconds*) Because we were famous; we fired the first shot of the war.

S: So that was something that was covered, that you were known for?

E: Oh my, it was covered in *Life Magazine* and *World News* and all the big magazines.

S: So you guys were wartime celebrities?

E: Those pictures that are in that book USS Ward Fires First Shot [St Paul: Impressions, Inc., 1983] were printed all over the world. And they're still being used. The picture that I'm in there, on page 41 there [showing members of the crew posing with *Ward's* battle flag, 1944], that was in *Newsweek* just about a month ago [during 2001].

S: The picture, the one you signed for me?

E: Yeah. That picture was in *Newsweek* [a popular newsmagazine]. It was because of the Pearl Harbor picture [feature film *Pearl Harbor*, released 2001] coming up. When the Pearl Harbor movie came out, they had a big write-up on it, and they had that picture.

S: Now I'm going to get my *Newsweek* out and look for that picture. Now, this is the last question, and it has a couple of parts. When you think back, what did the war

mean for you at the time, when you were on active duty in the South Pacific? It's kind of a philosophical question; what did you think you were doing out there?

E: Well, I think it might have affected a lot of people who were drafted and brought in after the war had actually started. It would be a bigger deal for them then it would be for us 82 men from St Paul, because we were already in the service. We already had uniforms, and we were already in the service, and we were already aboard the ship, and we had ten months of service overseas, really, in Pearl Harbor, before the war started. So it was just a continuation of what we were doing. But for somebody that joined or gets drafted, then all of a sudden, boom, to be at a base, with thousands of men, and heavy training and knowing that the war was on, and you were going to be in action, well . . . We had no way of knowing actually when we went in, that the war was going to start, that we were going to get into it.

S: Did you feel when you were down in the South Pacific for three years, that you were doing a job, one day after the other, or in a larger sense, did you feel that you were doing the right thing for your country and for humankind?

E: Oh yeah, we all knew or figured that the war in Europe was raging, and that Hitler was taking over all these countries in a barbaric way. If he'd been taking them over more (*pauses three seconds*) politically, there probably wouldn't have been this feeling. But he wasn't; he was taking it over in a barbaric way. And the same with Japan. We'd heard and read about the Rape of Nanking [Japanese attack and occupation of China, 1937], and how they were going into China and killing the people, and killing civilians, and bombing the cities. And they were taking over Borneo, and all the English possessions in the Far EaSt So we figured we had to stop it, and we were just part of it. **(2, A, 310)**

S: So there was a sense of a larger picture, and not just "me and this crew and this job and this ship"?

E: Oh yeah, we'd get together and talk about where we were going to have to take over next, and whether we were going to take the Philippines or not, and if we'd have to go into Japan. Being the type of ship that we were, we knew we'd be in the middle of it. Four-stack APDs were at Okinawa and Iwo Jima and all over. In fact the *Schley* was at Pearl Harbor and part of our division when the war started, and they went all through the war. The *Schley* went through the whole thing—Iwo Jima, Okinawa and everything. It was decommissioned after the war.

S: They were in it from start to finish then.

E: They were in the whole thing. But we weren't; [because the *Ward* was sunk in December 1944,] we missed [the 1945 battles of] Okinawa and Iwo Jima.

S: Luckily.

E: Yes.

S: Well, let me ask how you think the war changed your life, or has changed your life? Here you are 50, 60 years later, talking to me about it. How did it, or has it, changed you?

E: Well, our club [First Shot Naval Vets, of St Paul] has been going ever since the war, and we get together at least once a year. Most of the time it's at least twice a year. And we do, the few of us that come, meet once a month for breakfast, and in a way it's giving you something that you feel you belong to. I'm sure a lot of servicemen feel that way. They have a reunion every year. I know a friend of mine that flew in

the Air Force over in Japan. He flew, bombed Japan before the big bombs were dropped. Every year he had a reunion with his air group, and we do the same thing with the *Ward*.

S: Absolute last question: Can you . . . do you remember like a favorite personal memory about the war?

E: Well, Pearl Harbor of course was the biggest personal memory. And the fact that our skipper had the nerve and the fortitude to order the sinking of that submarine. If we'd had a skipper who wasn't, let's say, a real Navy career man, we might not have sank that submarine. That submarine might have sank a ship coming out of the harbor and cost a lot of lives. He had the guts, the nerve, and the fortitude to order us to fire on and sink that submarine, even though we were not at war at that time.

S: That's right, we weren't yet, were we?

E: That was a big day, and he was a big man as far as I'm concerned. And he wasn't a big man; he was about 5'6" or 5'7", and not a big physical man, but he was a big man.

S: What was his name again?

E: W.W. Outerbridge. And now I'll go back and explain about how he was the commanding officer of the ship that sank the *Ward* on December 7, 1944.

S: The *Crosby*?

E: No, the *O'Brien*. A new destroyer, a five-inch destroyer. He pulled up alongside of us and took some of the survivors off of us, and then he was ordered to pull off and sink the *Ward*, finally. So he sank the ship that was his first command in the Navy.

S: That's a good ironic story.

E: Yes. W.W. Outerbridge ordered the first shot at Pearl Harbor, and commanded the *Ward* up until December of '42, and then he sank the *Ward* by gunfire on December 7 of 1944, at Ormoc Bay in the Philippines. That's quite a story.

S: When you think of all the ships and all the commanders, that it comes back full circle with him on that day. And that date too, December 7, which adds to the irony.

E: He was commanding one of the destroyers that was in the landing on Ormoc Bay, and sank the *Ward*.

(brief pause in recording)

E: When the *Ward* was sinking, and I was still aboard, we got picked up by one of our Higgins boats and brought to the USS *Crosby*. And having run the boats and that, I was one of the last guys, me and the coxswain were the last two guys off of the boat. And when we climbed up on the USS *Crosby*, we watched them sink the Higgins boat. And I turned around and there was a guys standing there and he says, "I hear some of you are from Minnesota." I says, "Yeah, I'm from St Paul." And he says, "Me too. I'm Arnie Laettner from St Paul." And I knew, I didn't know him himself, but I knew of him. There's Laettner Fuel and Ice on . . . I'm getting bad with names . . . on Randolph Street; it's still there. Gartny Fuel and Ice. Arnie Laettner. His dad ran it, and then he ran it, and now his kids are running it. And he was the first guy I saw when I came on board the *Crosby*, and he was from St Paul.

S: And you didn't know him before this, you just knew the name.

E: Yeah, but I knew the name.

S: That's a good story, too. Anything else, we talked about lots of stuff, anything that I, anything that you wanted to say that I didn't ask, or that we didn't touch on?

E: Oh there's lots of . . . you know, I can't tell you four years of war in an interview. But we had a lot of bad days. Some of the worst landings were at Biak . . . END

end of tape 2, side A—counter re-set to 000 for tape 2, side B

E: You asked about the most exciting times. Well, any landing was an exciting one, of course. And if I was up on topside, on a gun, and I saw everything, it was more exciting than if I was down in the engine room running a throttle. And heading, running the boats on the ship all the time, sometimes I had to take the place of one of the boat engineers and I would make some of the landings. So some of those landings were exciting. until we got back to the ship and got hoisted back up into the davits again.

Some of the most exciting landings were to ones where the Japanese were trying to stop the landing. A lot of these landings we made at dawn, and actually our boats went in and out again without much opposition to the boats. There was opposition to the troops that you brought in, but the boats didn't get into much action. But on some of these landings there was a lot of action, Japanese aircrafts strafing and trying to prevent the landing. But on most of the landings, I'd say that the excitement came after we landed the troops, or just before we landed the troops. As a convoy we'd get into trouble.

S: Did you yourself ever see Japanese ground forces, the ones actually shooting at . . .

E: No, I just saw the pillboxes and that, the ones they were shooting out of. Yeah, I manned the .30 caliber machine gun on the boat when we went in for the landing.

S: Each Higgins boat had a .30 caliber?

E: Had two of them, two .30 calibers in the front of the Higgins boat. And as you went in you manned these machine guns, but actually what we were doing was spraying the woods inland and the beach, just to keep them down. What you were doing was just putting as many shells as you could in the jungle, to keep them hidden, so that they wouldn't fire at the troops as they came off of the Higgins boats.

S: So you weren't necessarily firing at specific people or objects.

E: No, you didn't see a person, you just fired at the jungle. And still, with all that bombing and strafing and everything on the beach, sometimes the first few men that went off the boat went down. Got shot.

S: Because the Japanese troops were still very much alive?

E: Some of them were still dug in or in these pillboxes, and they had to go in and blow these pillboxes up. Throw grenades into them. But I never personally shot and killed a Japanese. I fired at their airplanes.

S: And they returned the favor, too, it sounds like.

E: Fired at their airplanes, but when you're firing a 20 millimeter at an airplane that's coming at you, you're firing at an airplane, you're not thinking of the fact that there's a human in there that you're firing at. You're firing at the airplane, to knock it down.

S: Can you see the pilot?

E: No. Unless afterwards, as they leveled off and went back up to get away, then you'd see them. But the main thing that you're doing is, just shooting at an object.

You're firing at a ship or an airplane or a pillbox. And you know that there's somebody in the pillbox, but you don't think of it as a person that you're shooting at.

S: So it's an abstract thing, as opposed to a real person with a name or face.

E: Yeah, it's not like the Army, where they're actually facing somebody and shooting at them. The Navy didn't do that much of that.

S: I want to thank you for the interview, Mr. Ethier, and at this point I'm going to turn the machine off.

END OF INTERVIEW