

Interviewee: Ted Troolin

Interviewer: Thomas Saylor

Location: kitchen table of the Troolin home, Esko, MN

Date of interview: 9 August 2002

Transcribed by: Linda Gerber, September 2002

Ted Troolin was born 20 November 1920 on a farm near Sandstone, Pine County, Minnesota, and lived in town during his youth. After graduating from Sandstone High School in 1938, he worked at Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camps in northern Minnesota during 1938-40 and held several jobs in town until early 1942, including as a laborer for the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MNDOT); in July of that year he enlisted in the US Navy and was sent to Great Lakes Naval Training Center in Chicago.

Following Basic Training, Ted had additional schooling at bases in Florida and California, learning to be an aviation radio technician, before he was posted in late 1943 to the Aleutian Islands. After a brief period on Adak Island, Ted was on outpost duty on Umnak Island (November 1943 – July 1944) and at Dutch Harbor, Unalaska Island (July 1944 – May 1945). He flew occasional patrol missions in a PBY Catalina aircraft, and helped to operate radio facilities. In May 1945 Ted was transferred to Fleet Air Wing 8 and returned to the US mainland for re-training; he was in school in Minneapolis when the Pacific war ended in August 1945. In October Ted was discharged, and he returned to Minnesota.

Ted worked for MnDOT after the war, in the surveying department, retiring in 1981 with 40 years of service. After many job-related moves in the 1940s and 1950s, Ted and his wife Lorain (married 1946) ultimately settled in Esko, Carlton County, Minnesota.

Ted provides details on everyday life at a remote island outpost in the Aleutian Islands.

Interview key:

T = Thomas Saylor

D = Ted Troolin

[text] = words added by editor, either for clarification or explanation

(*) = words or phrase unclear**

NOTE: interview has been edited for clarity

Tape 1, Side A. Counter begins at 000.

T: Today is the 9th of August 2002 and this is the interview with Mr. Ted Troolin. First, Mr. Troolin, on the record, thanks very much for taking time to talk with us. Are you from this area, Mr. Troolin, up around Esko?

D: I'm from this part of Minnesota. I was born in Sandstone, Minnesota, and I was there from 1920 to 1938. That's when I went in the CC [Civilian Conservation Corps] Camps. I was in there from parts of '38, '39 and '40, a total of about eighteen months.

T: Is Sandstone a farming community?

D: They had a quarry there. In my estimation, this part of the country was never meant for agriculture. There's a line about at Cambridge and across there that they can make money but like my wife's folks were on a farm and that was a tough life. It just didn't pan out. In fact, dairying around here isn't much anymore in my opinion.

T: What did your folks do?

D: My dad worked in the quarry. He was a laborer.

T: Was he from this area or had he moved here for work?

D: He was down in the Braham area originally working for his father. That was in the lumber business I believe. His parents had emigrated from Sweden. My mother came from Sweden when she was fourteen years old.

T: So on your father's side it was two generations back but your mother was an immigrant herself.

D: Yes.

T: You attended high school in Sandstone as well and what year did you graduate?

D: 1938. We lived through the Depression all the time there.

T: Was work hard to find when you finished high school?

D: There was no work. Yes. The answer to that is definitely yes. We had a class of about thirty-two, and I know at least a half dozen of us went right in.

T: To the CCC?

D: Yes.

T: Was working in the quarry an option for you? Where your dad worked?

D: No. It was petering out at that time. Concrete block construction came in and kind of ruined the quarrying business there. It's a sandstone rock product that they were making and using.

T: So life in Sandstone was rather difficult.

D: Very difficult. Still is probably, isn't it?

Wife: Oh, yeah. Not like it was.

D: It isn't a good farming area. I don't know what it does do down there except exist. There is a federal prison there that was built in 1936.

T: So that provides some jobs, did, and still does provide some jobs.

D: That's their biggest employer down there. I forgot all about that.

(1, A, 62)

T: You were in the CCC between '38 and '40, two different times you said. About a year and a half. When you got out of the CCC in '40, what did you do then?

D: That's when I went to work. I got a job. They were building a bridge down in Sandstone and I got on working for a contractor there working as a laborer. I saw the survey party go by for the Department of Transportation and I went and applied for a job and I got in there in 1941.

T: Working part time or full time?

D: For a contractor everything was part time in those days. There was no full time. Even with the highway department it was part time.

T: When there was work you were paid and when there wasn't work you didn't.

D: Hourly pay. No benefits. No nothing.

T: So in the summer for the construction must have been a chance at work and in the winter then...

D: There wasn't much of my type of work there in winter. When the snow started coming you couldn't do any more construction work. You'd quit and wait till spring. Work in a rutabaga warehouse or something like that.

T: I have to say that you're the first person I've talked to that worked in a rutabaga warehouse (*all laugh*). Did they have rutabagas around this area?

D: Not any more. That was a good crop down in that area at that time, but it's a crop that destroys the soil.

T: Rutabagas do that? They're hard on the soil?

Wife: So now they hardly have them at all. Nobody raises them as a crop. And it was big business. It was big business at that time.

D: They over-farmed it. There was no crop rotation or anything going at that time.

T: It sounds like a difficult place to make a living down there.

D: It was.

T: When did you join the service?

D: On July 13th of 1942.

T: So when the attack on Pearl Harbor came you were not in the service.

D: No.

T: What were you doing when you first heard the news about the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor?

D: I can just remember it was on a Sunday. I think I was with some friends or something. I wasn't at work of course. We really didn't know where Pearl Harbor was at that time.

T: So even when you heard the news about the place, it was a place you weren't familiar with?

D: That's right.

T: How did the news, when the news started to sink in, how did you react to this sudden turn of events?

(1, A, 103)

D: They already had the draft going on account of the situation in Europe. Everybody registered for the draft.

T: Yourself included?

D: Oh, yes. Waited to get called. In the meantime my younger brother and the kid next door and I enlisted in the Navy.

T: So for you, the thought of waiting to be drafted was not as good as going out to enlist yourself?

D: I really hadn't given much thought to enlisting until my younger brother more or less talked me into it.

T: What was your younger brother's name?

D: Robert. He's passed away. He's the one who talked my friend and myself into going the Navy. I probably had it in the back of my mind. I knew were going to go into something.

T: So without your brother Robert, you might have waited to be drafted or maybe not?

D: I don't think I would have, no. I think I'd have gone in the Navy anyway.

T: So all three of you went down and enlisted?

D: Great Lakes, Illinois, yes.

T: For training. Did you go down to Minneapolis to enlist?

D: Yes. We swore in in Minneapolis at the federal building there. Then took the train to Chicago. They split my brother and I up right away.

T: Did you sort of expect they would do that?

D: No, not right away, I guess. Not yet. Not that quick.

T: How did your folks respond to you and your brother enlisting in the service?

D: There was no problem, no. There were two other brothers. Vince couldn't get in because he'd had infantile paralysis. Oscar couldn't get in, he was married. But my

brother Vince registered for the draft but he didn't make it to the first doctor because his situation was that dire.

T: Were your folks, would you say, nervous, worried, proud when they heard the news that you'd enlisted?

D: I think they were proud.

T: Ultimately, was it just you and your brother Robert that served during the war?

D: Of the four boys in our family?

T: Yes.

D: Yes. My brother Vince sailed on the Great Lakes, merchant, a seaman on a tanker. He was up there but I don't think he could handle that either because he didn't do that very long.

T: Why the Navy as opposed to the Air Corps, the Marine Corps?

D: I have no answer for that. No.

T: There was really no preference for you.

D: No.

T: This friend of yours and this brother of yours were pretty good salesmen it sounds like.

D: The three of us just decided we were going to be in the Navy I guess.

T: And you went to Minneapolis and that was it. You went to Great Lakes Naval Training Center by Chicago.

D: Yes.

T: Was that a new part of the country for you?

D: Yes.

T: How was it being in a new location with different people?

D: I don't know. I didn't mind it. I enjoyed my time in the service.

T: Did you?

D: I did.

T: Was that your first time being away from home for a long period of time?

D: Except for the time in the CCs.

T: That's right.

D: We never went home from there. We just in up there and stayed there.

T: Was that in Minnesota?

D: Yes.

T: Up north?

D: Up north of Deer River.

(1, A, 163)

D: North of Grand Rapids, up in that area.

T: How was it being away from home in this military setting? Was it similar to the CCC or was it something completely different?

D: Definitely it was similar. That was a great thing for the service. A lot of people, how many hundred thousand, had been in there and that was a military-type operation.

T: How so?

D: The Army provided the... the Forestry took care of us during the working day time. Outside of that the military had us. So we stood inspections.

T: Was there almost a uniform that you wore there too?

D: Oh, absolutely.

T: Rather militarized.

D: They should still have it today. It should be compulsory. That should have been kept ongoing because it taught the kids like myself, I was seventeen when I went in there, how to get along with other people, how to obey other people, how to produce a day's work without griping. There were no slackers in there.

Wife: Get enough to eat.

D: Yes, good food.

T: It sound like you had a positive experience in the CCC.

D: Very much so. I just got through donating one hundred dollars toward a plaque that we're going to put up there at the old campsite. We're still active in it.

T: Very good point.

D: That was one of the best programs. It should never have been ceased. The war came along and then after the war everybody just kind of forgot about it. They were so glad to get back home. We didn't actually do anything for ten years afterwards as far as relationships with our fellow CC people.

T: Can you recall an incident at Basic Training that sort of was memorable for you either humorous or otherwise?

D: We were at Basic Training for six weeks. During that time, of course, we got all of our shots, learned how to march. One time they gave us three shots at the same time and they put us out on what we called the grinder. Marched you until some of the people started falling down. The medicine had worked in. There was a lot of hard walking. Getting you in shape in six weeks because most of us weren't in shape.

T: In physical shape?

D: In physical shape for that. They did a terrific job. We had one guy who was in charge of a company. A company was a couple hundred people probably. That guy exercised an awful lot of authority. We found out later that he hadn't been in there any longer than we had.

T: He pretended pretty well, didn't he?

D: Yes. He was a seven-day wonder. He had seven days training for how to order other people around.

T: So an extra week of training and he's...

D: Yes.

(1, A, 207)

T: Do you remember when you first arrived at Great Lakes? When you got off the train or off the bus? What happened when you first got there?

D: When we got off the train they marched us to the mess hall because we hadn't had anything to eat. We got something to eat and then we got rid of all our clothes. They took our clothes and shipped them back home. We got issued clothing immediately.

T: Navy issue clothes?

D: Yes. Navy issue. Clothes. They didn't have everything for everybody. Our company got just about everything we were supposed to but some of them came in, during our period there, some of the other ones they'd only have the pants. Other ones would have the blouse. They cut off our hair, of course.

T: I think I'd rather have the pants than the shirt if they're only giving out one half of it.

D: Jimmy Durante came there for one performance. They kept you busy and entertained you.

T: So in the evening there was a structured entertainment?

D: Yes.

T: Do you remember when Jimmy Durante came to the camp?

D: I remember being there. Being at the show. It was compulsory to go.

T: So you WILL be entertained?

D: Yes, you WILL be entertained.

T: The CCC was good training for the military, wasn't it?

D: Yes.

T: Did you learn at Basic Training what your first duty station was going to be?

D: They gave us a series of tests there. While I'd been in the CCs I took typing so I knew how to typewrite. That was a great advantage to me later in life. Anyway, when I could put down an "X" there on "Do you know how to type?" I got to aviation radio school or any other radio school too. That was one of the reasons I got selected.

T: Because you could type.

D: Yes.

T: So one skill that you picked up before...

D: Before. At government expense.

T: Did you go for other training somewhere else then?

D: Then I went down to Jacksonville, Florida, and went until January. From September til January, four months, aviation radio school. We had some aerial gunnery training.

T: Which base was this in Jacksonville?

D: Naval Air Station.

T: Then your gunnery range.

D: I think the gunnery that I had was just at the same place.

T: In Jacksonville?

D: Yes. I got to shoot a fifty caliber and a thirty caliber there. Then they did have another place in Florida there where they shipped some of the guys. You see, you got through with your course, how far you ranked in your class decided where you'd go from there on. I got to choose. My brother was out in San Diego at the time. He was getting ready to get shipped out. There was a class in instrument landing equipment. So I signed up for San Diego and that's where I went. Took us five days to get there by train.

T: Five days from Florida?

D: Yes. We went up through Memphis and every place else. We got out there and that was about a month or six weeks course. By the time I got through with the course the stuff was obsolete. So that was it. Kaput. Radar was coming in. When the war first started we didn't have much for radar. We had hoops and stuff like that. After that school I got shipped up to Moffit Field, California, lighter than air outfit. I had one flight in a blimp. That was my first flight of anything.

T: You hadn't been in a plane or...

D: No, no. That was the first time I had been up in the air I think. I was only there for three months. I went to Moffit Field in March.

T: Of '43?

D: Yes. Lighter than air. I had my tonsils out there. I remember.

T: At Moffit?

D: Yes. I was on a crew there working on radio equipment.

T: Do you remember this incident? Getting your tonsils out?

D: Absolutely.

T: What do you remember about that?

D: Gargling with aspirin. Boy that killed the pain.

T: Really. So you would grind them up and put them in water and...

D: Gargle. I got sick there in Moffit Field. They took me in there and decided to take them out.

T: Was the hospital facility on the same base there?

D: Yes. Usually you had pretty good medical facilities wherever I was at.

T: Were you nervous or worried about getting your tonsils out?

D: No. I'd had problems with them. Somebody told you to do something you'd do it.

T: How long were you laid up with that?

D: Not too long. Not over a month. From there I got shipped up to Bremerton.

T: Up near Seattle there.

D: Yes, for shipping out later. I was on a crew at Moffit Field and a group of us got shanghaied away.

T: Did you select a kind of training that sent you to Bremerton or was it Navy just deciding?

D: You were on the West Coast. You were trained by them. You were going to go someplace. Another reason I went, they were sending a lot of people up there at that time. That was right after Kiska. Shortly after Kiska. Tattoo was first, then Kiska. But they still thought that there was going to be some work needed up in that area.

(1, A, 280)

T: So therefore they were going to keep a number of people out there.

D: Oh, absolutely.

T: That's the reason that you were sent there. When did you arrive in the Aleutians?

D: I got up there in September. To Adak.

T: Did you go by plane or by ship?

D: Ship. The USS *Monroe*. It was one of the president lines. It was a big ship and we were fully loaded with people. Army, Marines and Navy. I don't think there were too many Marines, but there were a lot of Army going up there.

T: Was this ship part of a convoy of other ships?

D: No. We weren't part of a convoy. We went up the Inland Passage to Kodiak and went on out the chain. We may have had some escort because when we went by boat from one island to another we did have an escort but it wasn't very big. It was probably one destroyer.

T: How long did that journey take to get from Bremerton to your first stop in the Aleutians?

D: I got up there on September 28th. I can't really tell you. I know on some of the ships that went out there in the Pacific they took about three times as long.

T: The distance wasn't that great as far as...

D: No. There was no delay in our route.

T: You could just go straight.

D: We went up to Kodiak. We got in a storm before we got to Kodiak and lost the kitchen. They didn't have facilities for feeding that many people any more so we just kept on going.

T: Was that your first time on board a big naval vessel?

D: Oh, yes.

T: What about that experience? How did you feel about that?

D: It was different. You were sleeping about three feet away from four other guys. One here, one here, one here.

T: Were you in a large compartment or was it smaller compartments?

D: We were in a fairly large compartment. Lots of people in there on bunks. Most of the time when you didn't have to sleep you'd be someplace where you could sit down or get up on deck or something.

T: Was it a little cramped in the bunk?

D: Oh, yes. Very much so.

T: So were they stacked floor to ceiling, that sort of thing?

D: Yes.

T: How many high?

D: I don't know. Not over six I suppose. We had a few people that would get on there and get seasick and they'd just stay right where they were at. They didn't get up out of their bunk for a few days.

T: What kind of smells were wafting around this compartment?

D: Not good. Not good. I didn't get seasick though myself. I never have really gotten seasick or airsick.

(1, A, 314)

T: Lucky for you. It sounds like some of these guys were getting seasick. That bunk compartment must have smelled like vomit and...

D: The heads smelled worse. There wasn't much maintenance.

T: It was just a big cattle wagon or something.

D: Yes.

T: Packed them in there. So could you spend time topside on this ship?

D: Oh, sure. If I remember right when we had to go to eat. We didn't eat there. We had to go someplace else to eat.

T: How do you kill time on a ship like this? Were there organized things to do or were you left kind of to your own?

D: You could gamble if you wanted, or play cards or read. That's where I found out I wasn't a gambler. *(laughs)*

T: At least not a good one?

D: They'd be playing poker on there. More poker on the way back home than going home up there. On the way home everybody was happy. They had all kinds of money coming home. You hadn't spent a nickel.

T: Not many places to spend it when you're on a mountain.

D: No.

T: At this point you're heading to what could be considered a front line area. Did you detect that guys were nervous or quiet or anxious about going up there?

D: No. I don't really think so. There was no concern.

T: How about yourself?

D: No. I didn't have any problem with it. Outpost duty. I was out there for about four months or so. That was no problem.

T: So on your way up there on the ship you were anxious to get started or just taking what comes?

D: Taking what they wanted.

T: The first island that you went to was Adak.

D: Yes.

T: What kind of place is that? Big, small?

D: At that time it was in the process of getting much bigger. I wasn't there too long before I got shipped back to a couple islands. They were building an airstrip up there at that time. They blew the side of a mountain one day while we were there for material or area. I don't remember which one it was for. Probably for material. They had all of us leave the camp area, the base. We walked a mile or so and watched it all go.

T: They wanted you out of the way of the explosions.

D: Yes. We watched it all go and went back to our barracks area where we were working.

T: So the Navy was expanding the Adak facility pretty quickly.

D: Yes, right.

T: You didn't stay there very long you say?

D: Then I went back to Dutch Harbor on Unalaska. I stayed there for just a matter of weeks or something like that. Then I got shipped to Umnak Island. That was on outpost duty.

T: You didn't spend much time at Adak or Dutch Harbor.

D: No. Right. We were moving back and forth.

T: Where was the first place that you really settled in? Was that Umnak Island?

D: Yes. That was on Umnak on outpost duty. I went up there in November 1943.

T: How long did you stay at Umnak then?

D: I was assigned Umnak until July of 44 but I did get battered up up there on the mountain. I spent quite a bit of time in the hospital.

T: What was your duty station and your actual description of what you were to be doing there?

D: At Umnak? We were up on top of the mountain. There was supposed to be four of us there. One radio technician chief. He ended up being a chief petty officer. He was a technician. There were two radio operators and a cook. That was it.

T: Just the four of you?

D: Just the four of us. Then the cook didn't make it so we decided we'd do our own cooking.

T: Down to three of you then.

D: Then there were only three of us at the time when I got hurt.

T: You mentioned outpost duty. This was a real outpost.

D: Oh, absolutely. We had our Quonset hut. We had a radio room where we had our two transmitters, YG and YH equipment.

T: What is that? YG and YH equipment?

D: That was a directional beam that the planes followed in route. In fact, I believe the Russians were using it also. The Russians were flying a lot of planes from

Montana to Russia at that time. We were sending them supplies, war materials. We were up there to maintain it and monitor it.

T: Can you describe for us what kind of place Umnak Island was physically?

D: Just a big rock. There were no trees.

T: Could you say just a few sentences about the weather or the place itself? Sort of create an atmosphere.

D: To get to the place where we were we had a four by four Dodge truck and we had about a D-6 cat. No dozer. Just to get there. We had the winch on the cab so we could winch up when we got stuck or couldn't make it with the truck. Then you'd winch on up. The Army had a base on that island there too. They delivered water to us because we didn't have a well or anything. We had a telephone line that came on up there over the rocks. Once in a while we'd get some droppage, some supplies or something. Somebody would drop it to us.

T: Was the Army post bigger than yours?

D: Yes. Absolutely. We were a naval air facility.

End of Side A. Side B begins at counter 389.

T: Again about the facility?

D: They had an airstrip there when Dutch Harbor was bombed. That was in '41. They already had that in there.

T: So Umnak was big enough to have an airstrip.

D: Yes. Every one of those islands, Nanchitka, Adak, Umnak, Unalaska. They all had an airstrip. Not very long. On Dutch Harbor, in fact, they had a catapult system there if you needed it.

T: It was really short then.

D: Really short. We could take off with our PBY [Catalina aircraft] there.

T: You were there throughout the winter. Was it cold? Or windy?

D: Windy. Windy, windy. That snow just blew. Between our four buildings... we had two generators. One ran on gasoline, one on diesel. Then we had our toilet. But they were all connected by cable so when the wind was blowing, you'd go by cable.

T: Really. Hang on to the cable.

D: Yes. Exactly right, because everything was flying. Our Quonset hut was buried.

T: In snow?

D: In soil. When they put it in. It was half underground.

T: So the wind was quite strong.

D: Oh, absolutely. Yes. She got up to a hundred miles an hour there at times.

T: No kidding. So if you didn't hold the cable you might just likely get blown away?

D: Yes.

(1, B, 413)

D: We used indoor buckets at night. We didn't go out to the toilet there after dark.

T: So chamber pots were the way to go. There are only three of you on this station here. It sounds like a pretty lonely existence. How did the four of you, to begin with, cope with what was a pretty demanding location?

D: Just took it as it came.

T: Did some people take it better than others?

D: The cook didn't quite make it. He didn't quite fit in or didn't do a good job. We didn't need him.

T: What happened to him?

D: Drove back down to the Navy base down at the water level.

T: Was it that he got tired of it or you got tired of him?

D: I suppose we got tired of him and the guy I was working under said we didn't need him.

T: So you'd rather do without him.

D: Yes.

T: Can you describe a typical work day for yourself at this post?

D: We monitored it. We kept track of when the beams were being used.

T: Did you have to sit at a radio location to do that?

D: Our technician had it amplified so we had it monitored with a speaker. You could sit there and listen to it. When they turned on the beam you could tell they were using it. When you were flying the beam at this time it set it off. It dipped left to right. So it wasn't too hard to monitor. Just kept a record of it.

T: Was it boring?

D: No. They had a lot of stuff to read. They had the radio of the Aleutians up there, a broadcasting station.

T: Something to listen to.

D: Yes.

T: It sounds like you had spare time on your hands.

D: Absolutely.

T: How did you fill that time?

D: Reading. Studying.

T: What did you like to read?

Wife: Anything that isn't fiction.

D: I don't read fiction. No. I don't read pretend.

T: You like nonfiction. Did you prefer...?

D: History and geography.

T: And there was a radio station as well?

D: Yes.

T: Was that news or music or both?

D: We got our news by radio from the United States. They had what they called the tape system, the Boheme tape system. They shipped out all the news, what was going on around the world, at midnight so it would come by tape. Then you'd run the tape through a machine and it would come out printed. That was on more

refined bases. Up on the mountain we didn't worry about stuff like that. We just knew what we had to do and that was it.

T: Altitude. How far up from ground level was it?

D: I've been trying to figure that out and I never have since I came back.

T: If you're using a four by four and a cat, it's up there a bit.

D: Yes.

(1, B, 477)

T: What were these Army guys, what was the Army post doing? They were down at ground level?

D: Yes. They were down below us. They helped us with the water supply.

Wife: Tell him about your oil barrel experience.

T: Is there an oil barrel story here?

D: I was up there only a few months. I was there sometime after Christmas in '43. These other two fellas had gone down below. They went down to get a holiday meal. Down below.

T: So you were alone up there.

D: I was up there alone. I had to refuel one of the generators. One of the tanks. Our fuel came in fifty-five gallon drums. I was manhandling one of those things and I got a hernia. I had a ping pong ball or golf ball bulge come out when I got done with that. When they did get back up there with our food they didn't make it. They came back without what they went after.

T: So there was no food. No holiday food.

D: No holiday food. I had to go down below. It scared the hell out of me. So I went down there and they shipped me over to Dutch Harbor. I was over at Dutch Harbor for a while.

T: Did you have a hernia operation? At Dutch Harbor?

D: Yes. I was at Dutch Harbor. It took about ten days before they did the surgery. I was in bed for thirty days before I got out of bed. I don't know why, because I've had a hernia operation since then and it's not needed any more.

T: Didn't take thirty days.

D: It didn't take thirty days. Then after that you got shipped to a recuperation ward.

T: Still on Dutch Harbor?

D: Yes.

T: So you spent...?

D: I can't remember exactly.

T: So you got to know the Dutch Harbor hospital facility pretty well?

D: I got a C number out of it, claim number, zero disability.

T: Was it frustrating being in the hospital for what seemed like and awfully long time?

D: Yes. It sure was. They were air-sea rescue and they had the biggest hospital at Dutch Harbor. I was never at the one at Adak so I don't know anything about that one. They'd pick up Russians. We had Russians in there coming in and out. They got sunk up there, too. Four of them came in one time and it looked like they had their shoes still on, but their feet had been frozen. So they were in there getting their feet thawed out. Toes dropping off and stuff like that. That was when I first got in the hospital. After the surgery another little Russian kid came in there and he had a hernia operation or something. At that time they'd bring extras. He collected a few apples. He ate more than one apple one time when he wasn't supposed to. He got sick. Little accidents happen, you know. It was a pretty good size ward... a number of nurses catching hell from doctors. Stuff like that.

T: For people getting sick?

D: Stuff like that, yes.

T: Would you say that medical care that you got was...?

D: Very good. I think we had two or four female nurses at the hospital.

T: Was that the first time that you had encountered women in uniform?

D: I believe so.

T: What different positions did you see women holding there or elsewhere?

D: That's about it. I got down to St. Louis for a month after V-J Day, then I got shipped to Chicago. I got shipped to St. Louis to bide time until they got my paperwork ready. I'd had a class B allotment for my folks because they needed money. So some of my money was coming out and being shipped home all the time. I got out relatively quickly afterwards.

T: You mentioned, was it October?

D: October.

T: That's pretty fast.

(1, B, 548)

D: Pretty fast, yes. I was down there in St. Louis, Missouri at Lambert Air Station. They had some lady operators there then. Radio people.

T: Did these women, did you interact with them as far as on the job or not?

D: I never dated them. (laughs)

T: I mean, did you work with them?

D: Probably so. When you're sitting on a radio or something like that you're just part of the radio. It's a unit.

T: Were most guys comfortable, do you think, working with women?

D: I worked with women afterwards. In the highway department. It was different. During my working career, it was at the end of my working career. Things were easing off. I was District Surveys Engineer. I used to have typing that I'd want done and I'd have one heck of a time getting it done because it was three o'clock in the afternoon. Four o'clock was the time we'd go out the door. You don't want to hit her hard.

T: For the last hour. In the service then, do you think that the guys that you observed, were they comfortable having women in different official positions?

D: I can't really answer that. That's the only place it was. The last couple weeks I was in the service. Down at Lambert Field there.

T: So you had nurses up there in the Aleutians...?

D: Yes. I respected them. They were good people.

T: Did they get respect from other guys that you saw too?

D: Yes. Sure.

T: How about minorities, blacks, Hispanics?

D: I didn't get involved much with blacks either. We had one radio operator on Dutch Harbor that was a radioman just like myself. He was black. No problem there.

T: So for the most part there weren't any blacks in the units that you came into contact with?

D: When I first went in the service, the blacks were working more or less in the service departments. They housed them in a service department. Even with the whites in the CCCs you know, if you worked in the kitchen you were housed as a unit. I think that the coloreds housed as a unit too. One thing I can remember about it, up in the Aleutian Islands. We had blacks in our barracks area. I can remember he used to sleep with a stocking cap on at night. That works pretty good. I've been doing it all my life since.

T: Was this at Dutch Harbor?

D: Yes.

T: In your opinion, did blacks receive equal or decent treatment from the white fellows?

D: Yes. They could march better than we could. They were much better at a lot of stuff than we were.

T: Do you think they were discriminated against in any way? By some people?

D: Not where I was at I don't believe. No, I think everybody was compatible.

T: At this time in the Aleutians, being in the Pacific, you were part of the war against Japan. How did you yourself perceive the enemy? In this case the Japanese.

D: None of us liked what they'd done and what they were doing. Tokyo Rose...

T: You could hear her on the radio?

D: Oh, absolutely. That was very entertaining. She had more knowledge than we did.

T: How did guys around you perceive the Japanese? What kind of ways were they described? The Japanese themselves?

D: They were the enemy. That was it.

(1, B, 610)

T: Any portrayals of them as sneaky or underhanded or were they just kind of this abstract enemy?

D: Abstract. We knew what happened out at Kiska. The suicides. They took their own lives in lieu of being captured.

T: Let me ask you about times when you were not on the job. When you had either leave or time off.

D: You mean liberties? Not leave because we didn't get any leave from July one year until three years later. I didn't get a leave.

T: No wonder you had time built up. For liberty or...?

D: When you're off duty, like radio operators, when you're off duty in the States, when you weren't on watch or something, you could go on liberty. Your liberty card was your ID card. You'd check it in and check it out. Pretty nice in the States.

T: You were at a number of places in the States, too?

D: Yes.

T: Jacksonville, San Diego, Moffit , California. What kind of things do guys do?

D: You went to a bar, associate with other people, look for girls.

T: Typical stuff.

D: I had some friends. Dorothy Dulling was out there.

T: So people you knew from outside the service.

D: Yes.

T: How about when you were up in Alaska then?

D: There were no women involved. There were no women up there.

T: What do you do when you have liberty? Were there outlets, things to do when you had liberty or time off the job?

D: Go for a hike. Walk. There was no liquor.

T: On the subject of alcohol. Was there officially no alcohol or was there no alcohol?

D: We had beer. The Navy supplied beer up there and you could buy it. There were two bottles for a quarter or something like that. When I was on outpost duty we were given, because we didn't have access to any so-called entertainment down at the home base down there, we got a case of beer a month.

T: Per person?

D: Per person.

T: Was other alcohol then not to be had on your post? Could guys bring their own bottle or something?

D: Not up in the Aleutians. There wasn't any. Once in a while some of the officers would have it up there or fly some in or something. I heard about people being able to buy some for about sixty-five dollars a quart. I didn't have any liquor up there.

T: So the beer ration once a month and that was it.

D: That was when I was on outpost duty and didn't have access to provided entertainment because they did have USO people come in once in a while. They had boxing matches. A ship would come in and the home base guys would box with the ship-based guys. And movies. We had movies at least once a week.

T: Could you go down to the home base pretty easily or pretty regularly?

D: Not too much because we didn't have many people up there to go.

(1, B, 654)

T: There were only three of you. Four or three. You had time on your hands. How did you stay in touch with family and loved ones back home?

D: Wrote an awful lot of letters.

T: Were you a regular letter writer?

D: Yes.

T: Were you a good letter writer?

Wife: Yes.

D: Yes.

T: How important was mail to people away from home?

D: Sometimes it was about three months' supply so it you'd stack it up.

T: So you wouldn't get it with great regularity?

D: Right. I don't know if it was three months but it was periods of time there when you waited.

T: And then you might get a whole bunch of letters?

D: At Christmas packages wouldn't get there on time. That kind of stuff and when they did get there it would be a mess. Cookies and stuff like that.

T: Stale maybe too?

D: Oh, yes.

T: When you got a bunch of letters, how did you deal with those? Did you read them all at once or...?

D: Read them all at once.

T: In order?

D: Yes, I suppose so. I didn't have that much communication but my sister wrote.

Wife: Did your mom write a lot?

D: Yes, she did.

T: So you got mail and you sent mail back.

D: Fellow service people. Little communication I had with them, like my brother Bob and Sparky McNeal, the other fellow that went in the same time as me. We were probably all on our own those three years.

T: Was your brother Bob in the Pacific as well?

D: Yes. He was a Marine. He was attached to a Marine outfit. He wore a Marine uniform and ended up a chief petty officer, no first class.

Wife: He was in the south Pacific.

D: Medical.

T: A corpsman?

D: Yes, a corpsman. He was on Guadalcanal for most of the time. I think he got to Guadalcanal about the time it was just winding up. They still had all those wounded there. Of course, everything had to be taken care of afterwards too.

T: Lucky for him he got there when it was just about over.

D: Yes. He left in January and I think the big battle was in January.

T: He came back from the service about the same time you did?

D: He came back before I did. Then he went to Peru, Indiana, and worked in a hospital there. I had twenty months up there. When they shipped you out you were supposed to be there for so long. I think it was eighteen months up there. But I know guys that had been up there eighteen months and had done home on R and R leave and then they came back up there again.

T: They posted them again?

D: Posted again. If they'd been a little late coming back they'd definitely get shanghaied again.

T: Was the duty that you had viewed as desirable or not so desirable?

D: Needed, you mean?

T: I guess there are what you would consider good postings and bad postings.

D: I enjoyed my work. Is that what you're saying?

T: The reputation of it. If the average guy heard that he was being posted to Umnak Island would that be like: "Oh, great!" or "Oh, man!"

D: That was kind of a bad thing. Nobody really wanted to be there. The weather and the activities and the length of time. It was bad.

T: It turns out the more the war went on it was a safe place to be.

D: Yes. It sure it was a safe place to be. They had an awful lot of people up there.

T: But it was a little slow... or a lot of slow. You went for your hernia operation to Dutch Harbor. Did you then go back to Umnak?

D: Yes.

T: You stayed there until July of 1944.

D: Yes about that. Then I went back and sat on the radio desk there for quite a while.

T: At Umnak?

D: On Dutch Harbor.

T: After July of '44?

D: Yes.

T: You went back to Dutch Harbor?

D: Yes.

T: Would you say you were content being up there in the Aleutians or were you...?

D: What was the use of not being content because you couldn't get out of there! There was no two ways about it. You were there. You couldn't ask for a transfer or something.

T: You were just there until they moved you out?

D: Yes. Right.

T: Would you say you're kind of a stoic person by nature? You just kind of take what comes? You were up there and that was the way it was.

D: I was part of it.

T: How long did you stay at Dutch Harbor then?

D: I was there from July of '44 until I left there in May of the following year.

T: 1945.

D: Yes. That's the time I was at naval air station and I operated, stood a radio watch.

T: At Dutch Harbor?

D: Dutch Harbor. Very interesting. It was fun. In radio you have what you call skip distance.

T: What's that?

D: People down in south Pacific or someplace would be communicating. They couldn't talk to each other if they were across the road. But we could hear them up where we were at. So then we'd just step in and help them.

T: How did your job in this period, mid-'44 to May of '45, your job at Dutch Harbor, how did that differ from what you were doing on Umnak Island?

D: On Umnak Island I'd been on outpost duty and then I went in and had my surgery. Then I went back there and sat at the naval air station and operated radio, code, messages, weather. After that I got shipped over to Unalaska, Dutch Harbor.

T: The same basic thing but there were more people working there?

D: We had probably seven people at this table there.

T: That's a huge group after working with only three.

D: Yes. Even down on the radio table at Umnak Island there were only about two on a watch. Two people.

T: At Dutch Harbor were there other options, more things to do when you had liberty?

D: Not really. No. You'd go buy some beer if you want to. Go to a movie. Go to a boxing match. Walk. Read. Listen to the radio.

T: The kind of things that you liked to do anyway.

D: Yes.

(1, B, 730)

D: Military-type of life. Same thing we did in the CC camps. It was just a continuation.

T: That was okay with you it sounds like.

D: Yes. I could have made a career out of it but I didn't want to.

T: The Navy?

D: The military, yes.

T: Was there an option for you to re-up or stay in the service?

D: I hadn't been home for three years so I was ready. And then I met her.

T: When did you meet your wife?

Wife: I first remember him when he worked in the grocery store.

T: So you're from Sandstone, too.

Wife: Yes. I'm five years younger and I used to buy candy from him.

T: For the tape, Mr. Troolin's wife Lorraine is sitting right here too. She is also from Sandstone. So you knew this character before he went in the service?

Wife: Yes but he didn't know me. But I thought he was just the best-looking guy I'd seen.

T: Then he comes home in uniform of course. When did you make your first trip back to the Sandstone area, then? After you got out?

D: When I left the Aleutian Islands I was assigned to south Pacific from there. Fleet Air Wing 8. I'd been up in the Aleutians in the later part of '45. I put in for PB2Y School which was the four-engine plane. I got accepted. I was a pretty good radio operator. I used a speed key. So I got selected but I didn't know that so I got sent home on R and R, rest and rehabilitation, home for thirty days. I was assigned to the Pacific. I was to report to Alameda, California, which I did. I got there and they said, "Where have you been? You were supposed to be back in Minneapolis going to school?" So I stayed there overnight and the next morning I was on a train back to Minneapolis. That's when they dropped the A bomb.

T: So now it's August and all this is going to become superfluous anyway.

D: Yes.

T: So you were in Minneapolis then on.

D: V-J Day night. I was with an old friend.

T: Let me back up just a step. When President Roosevelt died in April of 1945, where were you then? Do you remember?

D: That's the time I was attached to VPB43.

T: That's at Dutch Harbor then.

D: Yes. We'd flown from Dutch Harbor to another island. We picked up the plane and brought it back and I was with that plane until I got orders to go home.

T: VPB43 then is a two-engine or a four-engine?

D: Two-engine. The Catalina.

T: So you were at Dutch Harbor when the news came that President Roosevelt had died. How did you and those around you react to that news?

End of Tape 1. Tape 2, Side A begins at counter 000.

D: Couldn't hardly believe it. And who is Truman?

T: How would you characterize your response? Nervous, worried, upset?

D: I was upset, sure. Franklin Roosevelt had been up in the Aleutian Islands when I was up there but I didn't get close to him.

T: Oh, really? He had visited.

D: He'd been up in that area.

T: Did different people react to the news about the president's death in different ways?

D: No. I don't think so. We were all surprised. Nobody was happy.

T: Was there a ceremony or anything at the base you were at, at that point?

D: I don't remember.

T: Were you also at Dutch Harbor on V-E Day, May the 8th in 1945?

D: I think so, yes.

T: How was that news received up there in the Aleutians?

D: Very good.

T: Why were people excited about that news that the war in Europe had ended?

D: Getting tired of war. I had a few friends get killed there. A cousin, Charley Junk.

Wife: Pete Wilson.

T: So you knew some folks that had been killed in Europe and people that were there. Did the news about Japan surrendering make more of an impact on you?

D: I believe so. Absolutely. Out in the Pacific, there was just the US of A and Canada. It wasn't everybody else involved in it.

T: When the war against Japan ended you were back in the States.

D: Yes. In Minneapolis, and I hadn't gone to school there for two weeks. I was kind of amazed there with what they were trying to teach us. I was just amazed that I knew as much as I did. I didn't need that training. They were trying to teach me stuff I already knew. It was just a refresher course is what it was. I flew a couple times there, but not in a big one. I was on flight pay and we had to fly so many hours every month or you didn't get your flight pay. So we flew up to Duluth a couple times from Minneapolis.

T: What do you remember about V-J Day?

D: I was downtown Minneapolis, of course, because Wold-Chamberlain Field is in downtown Minneapolis. Everybody was just raising hell and laughing. I remember an awful lot of people. I can remember driving a '42 Buick.

T: On that day?

D: Yes.

T: One of the things that I wanted to ask, before V-J Day the decision was made by the US Government to use atomic bombs against Japan. At the time, did you feel that our government was correct to use atomic weapons against Japan?

D: Yes.

T: Why is that?

D: I figured we had to end the war some way. We didn't know too much about that A bomb. Nobody did. So when they had something that was going to help.

T: How did the sudden end of the war, how did that impact you directly?

D: I got married in February.

T: Of '46?

D: Yes.

T: Did the end of the war speed up your discharge from the service?

D: Absolutely. Sure. When the war was over they really had a speed up system. I was in Minneapolis, then I was in Chicago and I was in Lambert Field. Then back here. I got discharged October 3rd.

T: So less than two months over V-J Day you were out of the service.

D: I was out.

T: I guess your school must have ended in August?

D: That ended with V-J Day. When V-J Day ended a lot of schools ended that day. I am sure.

T: You didn't go back to class any more after that.

D: No. Never went back.

T: But the Navy didn't let you stay in Minneapolis. They shipped you to Chicago first.

D: Right.

T: Then to St. Louis.

D: Yes.

T: Just killing time or what?

D: That's about it. That was the system of course. Wold-Chamberlain was just a small outfit. That was almost like an outpost duty. They shipped them to Great Lakes and they shipped them out. They didn't have any place for us there. Other people were coming in at the same time and they knew what our qualifications were so they shipped you where they could use you to some extent. So I went there and went to a few ballgames and stuff like that.

T: In Chicago?

D: In St. Louis.

T: Did you know by now that you were just killing time until you got out?

D: Well, sure. Yes.

T: Did a lot of other guys around you know the same thing?

D: We all knew what time we had. They had a formula. The point system. Sure.

T: So you knew about when you could expect to get out.

D: I had twenty months overseas or sea pay plus I had that class B allotment and both of those two helped me get out ahead of time. My brother didn't have a class B allotment.

T: How come?

D: They could only have one in the family I think.

T: So he had to stay in longer than you.

D: He was in a couple months longer.

T: Now, in a sense, you're short and you know it. You're going to be getting out pretty soon. How did that impact the people you came into contact with and you personally? Knowing that you would be getting out any time.

D: What do you mean? The ones I was working with?

T: Once you knew that you had nothing else to do and you're just killing time, how did that impact your kind of daily routine? The way you looked at things?

D: The daily routine. If you're standing a radio watch or doing what you absolutely have to do, when it's time to eat you go eat and when it's time to sleep you go to sleep. It was just a continuation of what we'd been doing all the time right up until the time you got out of discharge. Then you went on home and it was all over.

T: Did the fact that we weren't at war any more change how seriously you took your job?

D: We took it seriously all the time.

T: Did you?

D: Oh, sure. You had to.

(2, A, 154)

T: That's nice to think that way but did everybody do that?

D: As far as the ones I was working with, yes. There were no two ways about it. If you didn't do it you weren't there. They had what they called ship's company on everything if you had people that weren't cutting the mustard. You ended up in ship's company as far as I understand it.

T: Ship's company was a place to kind of park people who really weren't up to the...

D: I can't remember it that well so I'm not going to answer that.

T: We talked about the use of the atomic bombs a moment ago. How have your feelings changed about the use of atomic bombs since 1945?

D: I don't like to see anybody using it. I hope they never have to be used. When you start killing a hundred thousand people at a lick like that. That doesn't make much sense. Of course, war doesn't make much sense.

T: You were part of this one for a number of years. You were in the service over three years. You were discharged in October of '45. How would you describe your initial reaction to being out of the service and being a civilian again?

D: I liked it.

T: You were ready to get out of the service?

D: Oh, absolutely. I didn't have any leave for three years.

T: Were you one of these guys who the Navy tried to convince to stay in?

D: No.

T: Would it have worked if they had asked?

D: I don't have any recollection of the Navy trying to keep anybody in.

(2, A, 178)

T: But you were ready to get out anyway?

D: Oh, sure.

T: You were discharged at Wold-Chamberlain Field in Minneapolis?

D: Right.

T: Can you recall the first thing you did as a civilian?

D: I got my ticket to go home.

T: On the bus or on the train?

D: I don't really remember.

T: You came back to the Sandstone area here. How was it to see your family and loved ones again?

D: It was good. Most of them weren't home yet.

T: You were one of the first.

D: Relatively.

T: Were your folks still alive and living in the area?

D: My dad died in 1950.

T: How was it to see your folks again?

D: Good. I stayed there then until we got married. So I stayed at home.

T: Did your folks come down to meet you or did you see them first at the house?

D: Oh, no. I don't remember. I would imagine I went right on home. I'd been home on that R and R leave though for thirty days.

T: That was in '45 so you had seen them not that long ago. In your opinion what was the hardest thing with readjusting to being a civilian?

D: Getting a decent car.

T: Cars hard to come by?

D: Yes. When I first got out you stayed in Minnesota in the 52-20 club you could draw out twenty dollars. I drew that for a short while. Then I went to work for Great Northern Railroad for a short while.

T: That was the first job you had after the service?

D: Yes. I couldn't get on right away with the highway department. All this stuff happened relatively fast. They weren't geared up for a lot of this stuff. I did get back on the highway department before quite a few of the other guys did.

T: Was that before the end of 1945 or was it already 1946 when you started?

D: It was April 22, 1946, that I went back to work with the highway department.

T: So within six months you were back.

D: In the meantime I'd worked for the Great Northern Railroad bridge and building up in Sandstone and Superior.

T: Did you find the adjustment from the military way of life to the civilian way of life difficult or easy?

D: Easy. I'd already gone through that once before going from CC.

T: So you had made the adjustment. You were an experienced adjuster?

D: Were you ever in the service?

T: Just worked for the military. Just civilian.

D: The camaraderie that we had in the CCs and in the Navy is just something.

T: What was the easiest thing for you do you thing being a civilian again?

D: Living. Getting a job. I didn't have any problems. I hadn't been injured. I didn't have any military problem.

T: So for you it sounds like it was a fairly smooth transition. Within six months you were working again.

D: Very much so.

T: And you got married what March '46 you say?

D: February.

T: February of '46. Your brother got back a couple months after you?

D: I don't remember exactly but it was after I got home.

T: He came back to the area, too, did he?

D: Oh, yes. Yes. He had medical training in the service.

T: Being a corpsman.

D: That was his vocation for the rest of his life.

T: Did he come back and live at your folks' house too then for a while like you did?

D: I suppose he did. My brother Vince was there. Lifestyle was different then than it is now. Everybody didn't have their own bedroom. You had more than one person in the bedroom.

T: Did your brother have a fairly easy time adjusting to civilian life too?

D: I think so.

Wife: He was so glad to get back to Sandstone. He never wanted to leave it the rest of his life.

T: Did he stay?

D: He stayed right there.

T: In the town?

Wife: Yes. He had a chance to go to Texas with Bill Telebon and I think he went down there and came right back.

T: Said no thank you.

D: He just liked his home area more.

Wife: You're more adventuresome. Willing to try new things.

D: The twelve years we were married we lived thirteen different places.

T: No kidding.

D: Construction work you know.

Wife: Back then you moved. Now they drive.

D: We moved, moved, moved.

(2, A, 255)

T: You worked for the Department of Transportation for forty years you said before you retired.

D: Yes. I took an ICS course after I got out, International Correspondent Course, took examinations, state board examinations for registered professional engineer. I passed them. I passed four out of the five tests the first time and I had to take one over again.

T: So you stayed with MnDOT for your entire working career then?

D: Yes.

T: That was '60-'61 when you retired?

D: Yes.

T: From your time in the service did you make lasting contacts, people you stayed in touch with after the war?

D: I kept in contact with Les Winters. That was about the only one. He was one of the guys up on the mountain. That's about it. I was moving around there more or less bang, bang, bang from here to there for short little time. I never really got to establish like some of these guys spent three years on the same ship and stuff.

T: And go to reunions all the time.

D: I was moving.

Wife: My brother Jerry still goes to reunions from his old ship.

D: A lot of guys do.

T: So your brother Jerry was in the Navy too?

Wife: Yes. In the south Pacific.

D: Did he graduate from high school and go in right away?

Wife: He was just seventeen when he graduated in May or June.

D: One of the things that was wrong, well like myself when I went in, in 1942, it was relatively early and I got quite a bit of training. Toward the end of the war there all these young kids were getting in there and they were getting trained in a hurry, and that's what ended up over in the Pacific island invasions. Iwo Jima that was a lot of kids.

Wife: They were just kids.

T: A lot of the Marine kids. They were really young, weren't they?

D: Yes.

T: Is it your impression that the training wasn't quite as thorough toward the end of the war?

D: It was thorough but they were younger. They were unlucky. The war had proceeded to that stage. When I was in there the war hadn't proceeded very far yet.

T: And you were already, what, twenty-one when you went in the service.

D: Yes.

T: Between eighteen and twenty-one is a lot of years, isn't it?

D: Yes. But I feel sorry for the kids on Iwo Jima.

T: At Okinawa too. The same thing. Young kids. I think of myself when I was nineteen years old. I didn't know anything at nineteen. To have to deal with that!

Wife: Talking to friends who were in service like Ernie Jorgenson, really interesting. He was.

D: He was on the Philippines when they got...

Wife: Yes. He just evaded being captured.

D: They were fighting guerilla wars in China. Dan Davidson was also in behind the lines the whole war.

T: As a final question let me ask you, you had a lot of time to think when you were up there on Umnak Island and Dutch Harbor too. What did the war mean for you in a larger sense at the time? Was it a crusade or was it just a job?

D: The war was going to continue and we were just hoping to get out of there and a lot of us to get into it more than we were. We weren't all happy to be there, that's for sure.

T: So there was some frustration for you being stuck on Umnak?

D: Yes. They must have had a hundred thousand people up there. A National Guard outfit from Michigan were one of our neighbors there.

T: So a lot of guys on these islands when you added them all up.

D: Yes.

Wife: That's the forgotten war. That's a book title.

T: So you would say you felt and other guys also felt this sense of frustration being sort of not in the war?

D: I think so. They didn't really want to be there but they had to be there. Nobody could do anything about it. You were there. That was your job.

T: This job at Umnak just sounds so isolated.

D: We were isolated. But I wasn't up there that long either. I was there for a few months, two or three months and I got hurt.

T: So that broke up the time.

D: Art and Les were up there longer.

T: They weren't lucky enough to have a hernia operation and get away for a while.

D: Yes.

T: How do you reflect on the war now, Mr. Troolin? What was World War II all about?

D: Gee, I don't know. The Asian situation over there. The Japanese taking over that part of the world. They'd already taken China hadn't they? The Philippines. I didn't want to be under the Japanese. Nobody did I don't think.

T: Personally, in what ways do you think the war changed the course of your life?

D: It took three plus years out of my life. I don't know what I would have been doing if the war hadn't come along. I probably would still be out on a construction job someplace.

T: On the whole do you think the war changed your life for the better or not?

D: I don't know. I couldn't tell you what I could do. I know that I did an awful lot of self-study in my life. I sometimes think that if I had gotten a college degree I could have made a bigger show. But I also had college graduates working for me and I fired a couple of them one day up in Ely. Not fired them but told them, "We don't want you anymore."

T: The polite firing.

D: The first year of their training in college they could probably stay home till they get squared away. We put three out of our four kids through college. How many of them are in their chosen field? They got a degree. My oldest son did very well but the outfit he was working with he could have worked with this outfit without a degree or anything.

T: So it didn't make a real difference.

D: But he didn't stay in construction. Tom. That's probably what he would have been in without a degree.

T: Last thing, can I ask you to share a favorite story or memory that you have about your time in the service? An anecdote?

D: When we pulled into Seattle on our way back from the Aleutians I was on a liberty ship. We'd all taken home some good stuff.

T: Souvenirs?

D: Souvenirs. Boy that was stuff thrown over the side to beat hell.

T: How come?

D: Because we were all so scared, not scared but apprehensive, that we would be detained someplace.

T: For having this stuff.

D: Absolutely. Yes. We didn't know!

T: So there were a lot of rumors.

D: A lot of rumors. A lot of rumors.

T: What kind of stuff...?

D: Sleeping bags and flight gear.

T: This is Japanese stuff?

D: No American stuff. All American stuff. I didn't have any Japanese stuff.

T: The things people had acquired.

D: All I took off my flight gear when I came home were the labels.

T: So stuff you weren't supposed to have.

D: Yes, right.

T: So guys were literally throwing this stuff over the side?

D: Yes. I know I did. You shouldn't have that on there.

T: The statute of limitations. What kind of stuff were people throwing overboard? What did you see get thrown overboard?

D: You weren't supposed to take pictures.

T: Photographs.

D: Photographs. Everything you got was censored except from home. If you had photographs you didn't believe you should have you got rid of them. I had some photographs of a plane that had crashed close to where we were. We took pictures. That's small stuff now.

T: Then of course people were worried about this. Was there a trade in any kind of Japanese souvenirs up where you were?

D: Some of the Army had stuff of course because some of them had been over there.

T: Is that something you went in for, trying to get Japanese souvenirs?

D: No.

T: Anything else you'd like to share or maybe you'd like to say.

D: No. Russian ships had women on them. You knew that?

T: I did but what can you tell us about that?

D: One of them when I was in the hospital ward was a Russian woman.

End of Tape 2, Side A. Side B begins at counter 380.

T: What was it like having a Russian woman in the same hospital ward?

D: You communicate. You couldn't do it. She was just there and I was here. She spoke Russian and we spoke American. They'd look at you and laugh and we'd look at them and laugh. That's about it.

T: Good natured?

D: They were happy to be alive. They were laying in their beds there and they had their black feet. They were putting powder on them and just letting them deteriorate and rot away.

T: They had to be amputated then, these toes?

D: I was only in that ward for ten days. I don't know what happened afterward.

T: Were there Russian-speaking medical personnel at this hospital?

D: I can't tell you that either. The one little Russian kid that ate those apples that day, he didn't speak English. He knew enough to eat.

T: He was a young person?

D: Real young, yes. Just a merchant seaman.

T: From a Russian ship that had been sunk or something?

D: Yes. Something had happened to it. He'd been rescued.

T: What else can you add for us?

D: I told you about going down for that holiday dinner and didn't make it back?

T: Yes. They didn't make it back because of weather or what was it?

D: Weather. Storm.

T: You were up there by yourself.

D: Yes.

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Wife: But you had wildlife up there.

D: We had foxes up there, caribou.

T: Was there a time up on Umnak that you were scared?

D: No. Not really. I was scared of the weather. Because sometimes when the wind was really blowing she'd pick up those fifty-five gallon drums and just sail them away.

T: Full or empty?

D: Empty.

T: Those are heavy when they're empty?

D: Yes.

T: So the wind could blow up to a hundred miles an hour up there?

D: Yes. I can remember the caribou getting tangled up in our telephone line. Just tore up a mile of line.

T: Was your stuff above ground?

D: Just on top of the ground. Just like it would be on a battlefield or something like that.

T: So the biggest concern you had it sounds like was the wind and weather damaging your stuff.

D: Yes. We had supposedly coming from Adak to Umnak on a small USS ship, its name was *Bresboro* or something like that, we had a destroyer escort that dropped some tin cans. I don't know if they were practicing or what.

T: So you never saw Japanese ships or planes or anything close to where you were?

D: No, we saw more Russians. Once in a while we'd shoot across the bow of a Russian ship or something, make them identify.

T: Really? So there was generally a good relationship between the Americans and the Russians at this time?

D: Sure. We were giving them planes. They didn't declare war on Japan I don't think.

T: Not until 1945.

D: They were getting ships from us, too.

T: We supplied them with a lot of stuff.

D: Yes. We supplied them with a lot of stuff.

T: At this point, let me thank you very much

END OF INTERVIEW