

National Museum of the Pacific War

Nimitz Education and Research Center

Fredericksburg, Texas

Interview with

Mr. Jim Teague

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Interview in progress.

Ed Metzler: This is Ed Metzler; today is the 19th of September, 2007. I'm interviewing Mr. Jim Teague at the Nimitz Museum in Fredericksburg, Texas. This interview is in support of the Center for Pacific War Studies, archives for the National Museum of the Pacific War, the Texas Historical Commission for the preservation of historical information related to this site.

Let me start, Jim, by thanking you for spending the time today to share your experiences with us, and let me get you started by having you just introduce yourself and tell us when and where you were born; what your parents did for...your living; those kinds of things.

Mr. Teague: My Jim...name is Jim Teague. I was born and raised in a little town in northeast Texas...Dangerfield...who...at that time was named after an Indian fighter not the Jewish comedian. (laughter)

Ed Metzler: Not Rodney...(unintelligible).

Mr. Teague: Yeah, I grew up in the little...in Dangerfield and went through school there and...and didn't leave until I went away to college.

Ed Metzler: Tell me again; did you give your birth date?

Mr. Teague: My birth date is October 10, 1924.

Ed Metzler: Okay. Did you have brothers and sisters?

Mr. Teague: I had one brother; no sisters and...

Ed Metzler: Older brother?

Mr. Teague: Younger brother...

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Teague: ...who was...who was in the Army when I was in the Navy. And he lived in California when he retired and after breathing all that smog out there, he...he died several years ago from lung cancer.

Ed Metzler: Oh dear! And what did your folks do for a living?

Mr. Teague: My father...when he was very young had what they called the Infantile Paralysis.

Ed Metzler: I know as...known as Polio.

Mr. Teague: That's known as Polio; he must have had it when he was about four years old and his parents were hard-scrabble farmers and he couldn't do much from the farm and somewhere along the line they taught him to be a shoe repairman. And during the...during the early part of the war, he was...he...he continued to be a shoe repairman. And then after the war, he was elected County Treasurer and was County Treasurer of little Morris County for about eight or ten years. Then Lone Star Steel was set up just doing a lot of stages of the war because we had a lot of iron ore in the...in the hills around there, and he became postmaster there. And my mother was a telephone operator when I was in...in school and then she became the chief telephone operator at Lone

Star Steel, so Lone Star Steel played a pretty important role in our economic...

Ed Metzler: Right! That whole region!

Mr. Teague: ...yeah...that...that's right; the whole region!

Ed Metzler: Yeah. So you...did you go primary and secondary school in Dangerfield or did...?

Mr. Teague: Yes, I went through high school in Dangerfield. And as I said...I...that's when I met Nelda, my future wife. And we were steady dates through...

Ed Metzler: How old were you when you met her?

Mr. Teague: Ah...about seventeen, sixteen or seventeen.

Ed Metzler: Right, right; so this is in high school then?

Mr. Teague: Yeah. And like most small towns football was the thing that sort of held the town together. And in my senior year I was...I was the quarterback and captain of the football team and Nelda was a cheerleader, so we had just sort of a typical high school experience and...during that time.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, absolutely!

Mr. Teague: And after...some...some point in there, I had heard...President Roosevelt's informing the nation that we had been bombed at Pearl Harbor.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, I was going to ask you...were you still in high school when December 7th came along?

Mr. Teague: Yes, I was. Yes...I was with a bunch of guys; I...I think it was on Sunday afternoon...we heard it but it didn't mean anything to us; we had no conception of how it was going to affect the country or...or our personal lives.

We knew there was big war going on in Europe but the war really hadn't touched us.

Ed Metzler: It was a long ways away.

Mr. Teague: Yeah, we were just coming out of the Depression which influenced all of our lives and still influences the way I think about money and savings and...

Ed Metzler: Absolutely! You're a son of the Depression! That's right. So you...were you a senior then or do you remember in high school when Pearl Harbor came along?

Mr. Teague: I think I was...I think I was a junior, but I'm not really sure of that.

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Teague: I know in my senior year...I...I worked part-time in a bank and I probably would have remained in Dangerfield except my coach, who was a basketball star at North Texas State, persuaded me to go there and apply for a scholarship on football and track. And that's the reason I went to North Texas State. And I weighed about a hundred and thirty-five pounds and I'd worked in the bank all summer and I'm sure I was pale. (laughter) I worked...I...as I recall...two workouts...I was...naive but I wasn't stupid, so I pulled out of that very quickly.

Ed Metzler: You realized you weren't quite big enough maybe?!

Mr. Teague: That's right! But I did run on the track team.

Ed Metzler: So you went ahead and graduated from high school?

Mr. Teague: Yes.

Ed Metzler: Although the war was going on?

Mr. Teague: Yes.

Ed Metzler: And you weren't old enough to be drafted at that point?

Mr. Teague: No, in...in my freshman year in college it became obvious that I was going to be drafted and I hadn't been drafted, I think, primarily because I was in college. But around the end of my second semester, some Navy recruiters came on campus and they were recruiting for Navy pilots. So, I had never seen the Navy; I had never been even close to an airplane, but it seemed like a better idea than sloshing around in the mud in the Army. So I took all the tests and I have scar tissue on my right eye which...which...division is not good and...but I faked that on the preliminary but they caught me when I went to Dallas for the...for the main examination.

Ed Metzler: Oh dear! You could only fake it so long!

Mr. Teague: Yeah, so I didn't get to go into pilot training, but I did get the opportunity to say when I'm drafted I would rather go in the Navy. Now here again, you know, I'd never seen the ocean, but it just seemed like a better, cleaner way of doing it...than...than sloshing around in the mud!

Ed Metzler: So what did your parents think about you wanting to go in and go in...in the Navy? Were they...?

Mr. Teague: Well they were...they were prepared for it because most of my friends and most of the boys in...in my class had already been drafted. So they knew what was coming 'cause they, you know, they were...they were apprehensive but supportive.

Ed Metzler: Right, 'cause it was happening to everybody I guess.

Mr. Teague: Yeah, yeah.

Ed Metzler: And what about your steady girlfriend? What did she think about all this?

Mr. Teague: Well, we didn't talk about it a whole lot. When...when I went to North Texas, she went to Harding College in Searcy, Arkansas and we kept in touch but we could only see each other on the holidays because of, you know, you didn't do a whole lot of traveling during those times because the of the gas rationing and everything.

Ed Metzler: Right!

Mr. Teague: And we just didn't have the money to do a lot of...lot of traveling anyway. But we...we corresponded and kept in touch and kept the romance going...(laughter)

Ed Metzler: From afar!

Mr. Teague: From afar, yeah.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, yeah. So when you went into the Navy, where did they send you for training?

Mr. Teague: Well, when I went in...I left Dangerfield on a bus and they took me to Corpus Christi Naval Air Station for boot training.

Ed Metzler: So this is what...late '42 now?

Mr. Teague: Uh, yeah, it...got...maybe...maybe...

Ed Metzler: Maybe (unintelligible) '43?

Mr. Teague: ...mid...mid '42.

Ed Metzler: So it was '42, okay.

Mr. Teague: Yeah, yeah, I graduated in '41, so this was mid...mid '42. And that's the first time I'd seen Navy airplanes because we were in a naval air station but we...we weren't part...we just in boot training and boots didn't have much...much influence on anything! (laughter)

Ed Metzler: No, you were pretty much the bottom of the totem pole, I suspect.

Mr. Teague: That's right.

Ed Metzler: So tell me about boot camp; what was that training like and how did you react to it?

Mr. Teague: Well, it was all very strange to me, and I got in trouble a couple of times. And the punishment was...they make you carry your seabag around the barracks for couple...or three hours. So that was motivation enough to get in trouble. And when I graduated...or when I got through boot camp I guess they didn't know what to do with me, but they made me a plane captain. Now that's a fancy term for a person who made sure that the parachutes were in the little SNJ trainer that they used for...and that you would have the engine warmed up. The first time I got into the cockpit they showed me how to start the engine and all that. So the next morning...

Ed Metzler: Right. Now all of this is still at Corpus, right?

Mr. Teague: ...at Corpus. I came out to this little SNG, uh, J...and I started the engine and flames started coming out of the exhaust! So I did what most people normally do, I cut the engine off...and the flames kept going and the fire engine came and they put out...of course what they told me which I didn't...they didn't have to tell me a second time...is when the flames come out, you advance the

throttle and blow the flames out. So that...that was my memorable exper...experiences as a plane captain. And I was there maybe...a month or so. But all that time they were giving us tests trying to figure out where we were going to go.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, where you would fit in the best and...and what have you.

Mr. Teague: Yeah, yeah.

Ed Metzler: Well, so you were what...living in barracks or something there on...?

Mr. Teague: Yeah, yeah.

Ed Metzler: Was that the first time you had been down...on the sea...on the seacoast, you know...a boy from east Texas...was that...?

Mr. Teague: First time, yes.

Ed Metzler: So that was a bit of an eye opener, wasn't it?

Mr. Teague: Right. Well I had made several trips to Dallas...on special occasions, but I had not traveled much, but...the football coach did, for some reason, load us all into a school bus and took us to Monterrey, Mexico; got there and came right back. I...I never understood the purpose of that, but that...that was the longest trip. And my grandparents lived out in Slaton in west Texas and we'd go out there occasionally. But I had in my...my territory was about a fifty-mile radius of...of Dangerfield.

Ed Metzler: Yeah. So, roughly, how long were you in training down there in Corpus...at the Naval Air Station?

Mr. Teague: Oh, I would say maybe two months.

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Teague: It wasn't long. I think boot camp was six weeks or something like that. And then I was...the plane captain thing for...seemed like a month or so. The times are...are a little bit...(unintelligible) and hard to remember back then.

Ed Metzler: Hey, it was a long time ago!

Mr. Teague: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: So...where did they...where did they assign you first?

Mr. Teague: Well, I was picked to go to Aviation Radio School at a small naval station in Millington, Tennessee which is a few miles east of Memphis.

Ed Metzler: Sure.

Mr. Teague: And during the time that I was there, Nelda had a roommate who lived in Memphis, so she got to come with her roommate a couple of times so we got to see each other a couple of times...

Ed Metzler: Keeping that romance going!

Mr. Teague: You betcha! (laughter) And after I got through with the radio school...in which I learned a lot of things that I never had occasion to use like sending and receiving Morse Code; Semaphore and battle flags...but we had...it was part of the Navy Corps so we had to learn it, but I...I never used any of that being a...a Radioman on a torpedo bomber.

Ed Metzler: So that was a couple of months then?

Mr. Teague: Yeah, maybe three months.

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Teague: Something like that.

Ed Metzler: And then...?

Mr. Teague: Then after we finished there, we went to...most of us went to Gunnery School in Hollywood, Florida which was a small...we lived in a small...it was a boys college...a boys school, so we had fancy place to live while we went to Gunnery School. And we learned to shoot the machines and...and that was probably a month or two. And then after we got through with that, we went over to Fort Lauderdale Naval Air Station, and there we were assigned to the plane that we were going to fly in. And for some reason, they put me in a torpedo bomber. And I met my Pilot and...and the Gunner...and we became a team then. But before I did that, I wanted to make I have experience in the torpedo bomber, so I hitched a ride in the...in one...and...and was down in the bay where the Radio...Radioman sat...and a plane went down in the ocean and we circled for...well now it seemed like six hours...probably an hour and it was rough...and I got sea...uh, airsickness.

Ed Metzler: Your first experience with that?

Mr. Teague: My first experience, but it wasn't my last! I got airsick every time we went up for about a month and I guess I was on the verge of washing out when...when it suddenly stopped.

Ed Metzler: Isn't that strange how the body finally adapts?!

Mr. Teague: Yeah, but you know, being down in the belly of that thing with no air circulation and it...it wasn't the ideal way to...to fly in an airplane!

Ed Metzler: Tell me about the torpedo bomber; tell me all about that aircraft; what was she like and...

Mr. Teague: Well it...it was the...the largest stick-guided plane, you know, you didn't have wheels...you had a...a stick, and it had a...lots of room for a Pilot and my Pilot was an ex-football player out of Michigan so he needed the room. And we had a Gunner who had a fifty caliber machine gun in the turret. And the Radioman had a little stinger...a thirty caliber that could shoot down and...and to the back.

Ed Metzler: And you're kind of down in the belly then?

Mr. Teague: Yes, I...I had two little ports and I could see down through the back. And I understand that that machine gun was put on there after the Japanese planes had started attacking from the lower rear...and they put a little thirty caliber in there which was pretty effective. But it was useful only to me in strafing and... 'cause...the Radioman had a bench he sat on which could be lifted, and the radio equipment was on a...a shelf...a part of the plane at about eye level. So you sat on the seat and worked the dials and stuff on...but...and I'll divert here a little bit. When you work the machine gun, you had to lift the sheath and you laid on your belly and...and you could strafe with the machine gun.

Ed Metzler: Okay so you had...so you had get the seat out of the way...

Mr. Teague: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: ...and then get down on your belly to be able to use the gun...

Mr. Teague: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: ...and...yeah.

Mr. Teague: And then when we were catapulted, which was a very unpleasant experience, you sat on the...on the bench seat and they had two handles so that you could

bend forward and keep your head below the level of the equipment just in case something wasn't secure because when you...when you were catapulted, you started at about sixty miles from zero!

Ed Metzler: Yeah!

Mr. Teague: So you wanted to hang on good and fortunately I never had any bad experience other than maybe wet my pants a couple of times. (laughter)

Ed Metzler: (Unintelligible sentence).

Mr. Teague: Also, we wore a flight suit that had our...our parachute harness, and it had a survivor's pack on the back just in case we had to land in China. But if the plane was ever hit and had to go down...what the Radioman had to do was reach up there and get his parachute and clip it on; it was a chest parachute...then try to work his way up past the turret and jump out. And that, I'm sure, is the reason that the crewmen on George Bush's plane never got out, you know, it was just impossible!

Ed Metzler: Just...just too long.

Mr. Teague: Yeah. If...if you were in a crisis, you couldn't get out...and it just (unintelligible).

Ed Metzler: Is this the same aircraft...same type of aircraft that George Bush senior was flying?

Mr. Teague: Yes, yes. He...he flew off of a CVE which was an escort carrier which, you know, you had to be a little bit crazy to land and take off on those things!

Ed Metzler: Yeah they weren't...necessarily long enough all the time.

Mr. Teague: Yeah, yeah; so, he...he was a brave man! And then...it...like most the Pilots who crash landed on...on the carrier decks went...they called them landings. But the...the...all the planes...all the Navy planes had wings that would fold up when they were put on the flight deck or the hangar deck, and all the them had a tail hook which extended out of their rear and then across the carrier deck you had about five or six cables; and if you're really good, you'd catch the first or second cable and then that would bring you to a halt. But when you're in a combat...they...they had a huge crane or something that...if you didn't catch the net and were going to crash, you went into that thing that was there and if you...if you were able you got out and they pushed the plane off the carrier...

Ed Metzler: Ow!

Mr. Teague: ...'cause you couldn't interfere with planes coming in on landing pattern because most of them...coming back from raids...well, you didn't have enough gasoline to...

Ed Metzler: (Unintelligible) or low on fuel or both...yeah.

Mr. Teague: But the...the plane was a pretty big, noisy airplane; not particularly fast. We used it mostly for dive bombing because we were going after targets that required that kind of...

Ed Metzler: So it could...it could be either a dive bomber or a torpedo bomber...go either way?

Mr. Teague: Yeah, yeah. It...it didn't...it didn't go into the dives that the dive bomber, you know, they'd go down at ninety degrees...

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Teague: ...we'd glide in at about forty-five, fifty degrees. Although at...when you're sitting back there trying...hanging on...on that little seat...

Ed Metzler: (Unintelligible sentence.) (laughter)

Mr. Teague: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Oh gosh! So did you say it was Fort Lauderdale when you got assigned to your aircraft and a crew?

Mr. Teague: Yes, yes. And Fort Lauderdale at that time was a beautiful little city; it had the little canals through it and it was known as the Venice of...of America. And we...we trained there, I guess, for a month or so. Then...then we were transferred to San Diego. And I'm not sure why all this went on, but eventually we became part of Air Group Five which had come off the Yorktown, and we filled in what, you know, the people who were...didn't make it. And after we had some training...but it was minimal flight training...in...in San Diego, we were transferred to Alameda and I don't know what was going on there either.

Ed Metzler: Are you beginning to wonder at this point if you're ever *actually* going to see any action?

Mr. Teague: Yes! (laughter)

Ed Metzler: This is about the fifth or sixth location...

Mr. Teague: Yes, yes! And when I got transferred to the west coast, Nelda transferred from Harding to George Pepperdine College in L.A. Now, she was the youngest of twelve children...

Ed Metzler: Twelve?!

Mr. Teague: ...who lived on a big ranch out...and her parents let her do that because she had a...older brother and sister who, at that time, was attending Pepperdine.
So...

Ed Metzler: So where were you when she seemed to be somewhere in the neighborhood?

Mr. Teague: That...that was the...that was the plan.

Ed Metzler: That was the right choice; that's good. So how long were you out on the west coast then?

Mr. Teague: Well, when...when we got through whatever we were in Alameda for, and I remember on one occasion we flew in...formation underneath the Oakland Bay Bridge, and as a result my Pilot was grounded for several days.
But...but...I guess that wasn't terribly unusual, but it was very noisy for those three big planes to fly under that bridge. We were transferred to Santa Rosa, California; they had a small naval air station there. And again, Santa Rosa...beautiful little city about fifteen or twenty miles from the Russian River and the red wood forest...and I realized now, we were trained...we were going to have the first Tiny Tim rockets. And we were getting special training and we did some of the training at Klamath Falls, Oregon. Then we did a lot of night flying...flights out of...out of Fallon, Nevada. And I...I don't remember us ever firing one of those things. They were...they were...

Ed Metzler: Did they mount them on the aircraft?

Mr. Teague: They...they were in the...they...bay where the torpedo was, and I guess they...they rigged the plane so that the torp, uh, the Tiny Tim could drop down and be fired from the bay like the torpedo was.

Ed Metzler: So what was it...a group of rockets and a...(unintelligible)?

Mr. Teague: No, it was one huge...one huge rocket.

Ed Metzler: So, despite the name Tiny Tim, it was not tiny.

Mr. Teague: Yeah, yes, no! And once we...got through the training then it was pretty obvious we were getting close to being shipped overseas because they gave us a fleet address...which was a San Francisco address and they started censoring our mail so that we couldn't tell anyone where we were going to...when we were going or where we were going.

Ed Metzler: Right, right.

Mr. Teague: And Nelda and I had an agreement that when I shipped out, I would send her a dozen roses. So when I found out that we were going to board the Franklin and ship out, I called a florist and they sent the flowers. So she knew when...when I left the States.

Ed Metzler: She knew then when you were officially gone, so to speak, yeah.

Mr. Teague: Right. So we boarded the Franklin...

Ed Metzler: Now...now let's see...give me a rough date here; are we in '44 now (unintelligible)...?

Mr. Teague: That was late...that was late '44.

Ed Metzler: Late '44.

Mr. Teague: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: So you've been jumping around; doing a lot of training at a lot of different locations?

Mr. Teague: That's right, and...and I don't know which month...but it was late in '44.

Ed Metzler: Okay, okay.

Mr. Teague: And we loaded...we...by then had the whole air group. I don't know where the other guys had been training, but they had the whole air group...with our planes on the...on the carrier.

Ed Metzler: Now is this Air Group Five still?

Mr. Teague: Yes.

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Teague: And we trained all the way to Hawaii...they...you know, we doing practice runs and...and when we got to Hawaii, they changed the...I think we had the F6F fighters, and they changed them for the F4U...

Ed Metzler: The Corsair.

Mr. Teague: ...and the landing characteristics must have been quite...little bit different because the Pilots were pretty...pretty...well, they had a hard time landing that plane, and the cracked up quite a few of them.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, it was a...it was a challenging aircraft to fly that...that big thing, yeah.

Mr. Teague: Yeah. And after...after we had trained there in Hawaii for...I don't know...month or so...I...I...the times...

Ed Metzler: So is this...is this around Pearl Harbor? I mean...all the time?

Mr. Teague: Yeah, we were at Pearl Harbor, yeah.

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Teague: And we left Pearl Harbor with some more ships, and we went to I think it was Ulithi, an atoll out...somewhere out in the Pacific where there were, I mean...you know, looked to me like a *thousand* ships, and apparently that's when we joined the task force. And I don't remember whether it was Task Force 48 or 58, but it was a *lot of* ships! And we were close enough to Japanese held island that they would bomb Ulithi regularly...but never...

Ed Metzler: Still bombing it, huh?

Mr. Teague: Yeah, never really did a lot of damage.

Ed Metzler: Was it kamikaze at this point or just...?

Mr. Teague: No, no, as far as I know they would...you know...they...they didn't get too close because, you know, when you got battleships and cruisers and...you had a lot of fire power...fire power, but it was more of a nuisance than anything else.

Ed Metzler: Yeah. So approximately how long were you in...Pearl Harbor area before you shipped out on this task force? I mean was this just a couple of weeks or...?

Mr. Teague: Yeah, yeah...a very short time.

Ed Metzler: What...what did Pearl Harbor look like? Were there a lot of...?

Mr. Teague: Well the...the damage was still evident.

Ed Metzler: Is that right?

Mr. Teague: Yeah, and they had...they had submarine nets still across the harbor, and...I...as...as I recall we had to moor out because we couldn't get to a dock. So whenever we got to go on liberty, we...we were motor boat...they

took us in on motor boat. But we didn't stay there long enough for me to have any...Hawaii experience of any type.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, you were on pretty short leashes (unintelligible).

Mr. Teague: It was...yeah, pretty short leash...and...and they were getting ready to get us over to where we could do what we were trained to do.

Ed Metzler: What can you tell me about the Franklin [USS Franklin], was she a new ship or...?

Mr. Teague: No, she had been out previously and had been damaged. And she came by the...the number CV-13 honestly I think. (laughter) So, she had been put back in service...and I...I guess they took the...the part of the crew from the Yorktown which was Air Group Five and just put us with them. And so we had some experienced guys; some of the guys that I became very close friends...had been on the Yorktown.

Ed Metzler: Oh, I guess they could tell some stories!

Mr. Teague: Yeah, yeah, and this was their second cruise. So we had the...the advantage of having some experienced people there that...which was very helpful.

Ed Metzler: So did the pilots and crews and all become close? I mean you guys had been together for awhile.

Mr. Teague: Well, we...we were close...the air crewmen...and of course when you flew on an airplane you were on first name...there was no formality between the crew and the pilot. And a matter of fact, when we were in Hawaii or someplace, we used to play volleyball; it would be the crewmen...they'd lower the elevator that they brought planes up...down about eight feet and

we'd put up a net and we'd have volleyball games. And there were a lot of broken fingers and it...it was serious, but it...but it, you know, it was the pilots against the crew, so it...but it was all in good friendship and it...it...part of helped develop the comrade of the...

Ed Metzler: Yeah, so were...were you with the same crew the whole time through the war?

Mr. Teague: Until...

Ed Metzler: Or some of you switch off or what?

Mr. Teague: ...well after...after our experience in Japan, we...what was left...were...were separated. So I...I...was on a close relationship with all the crew members in the torpedo squadron; didn't know as well the gunners in the SB2C. The SB2C had a gunner...pilot and a gunner. And we...we sort of kept to ourselves...it...matter of pride or something, but...but we were very close as...as a group. I was in the torpedo (unintelligible).

Ed Metzler: Right. Now let's go back up to when you and the task force were in Ulithi. What was Ulithi like? Is that just a small island; highly fortified at this point or (unintelligible)?

Mr. Teague: Well I...the only thing I could see was a...was just sort of a ring of islands and we were sort of in the middle of this ring and as far as you could see there were ships. And I guess at that point in time they were sorting us out; determining who...whose going to be with which group and we became...I believe we were the flag ship of this task force.

Ed Metzler: Well you must have a...an admiral or something on board...?

Mr. Teague: Yeah, and...and I...I always thought it might have been Bull Halsey, but I don't know. I...I wasn't privy to it.

Ed Metzler: He didn't come...(unintelligible)?

Mr. Teague: He didn't come down to see me, no.

Ed Metzler: (Unintelligible)...one on one? (laughter)

Mr. Teague: But we knew we...we were special because we were right in the middle of the...of the task force.

Ed Metzler: Okay, but...and you don't remember whether that was Task Force 48 or 58?

Mr. Teague: No, I don't. I...I thought it was 48, but I...I'm just not sure. I...it...it could be confirmed I guess but...

Ed Metzler: It's okay. So at this point you've got ships as far as the eye can see and you don't know where you're going to be going or what you're going to get into?

Mr. Teague: No.

Ed Metzler: You're just there...on call?

Mr. Teague: That's right.

Ed Metzler: Now are you still training or...?

Mr. Teague: Yes, every...every day we...you know...you never really learn how to...land a plane on a carrier; it's an unnatural thing. And somebody somewhere called it a controlled crash which is...but my Pilot...in all the time that I flew with him never got a wave off, so he was *good*...which gave me a great deal of comfort sitting down there where I couldn't see anything.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, you...you can't see out anywhere to speak of...

Mr. Teague: No. Well, I had a port on each side...a small port, and of course I...the door, the hatch...

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Teague: ...was there, but it...the only...the only way I could see out was the little ports on each side and...and down where the gun was.

Ed Metzler: So, the first landing that you made on a carrier was just a big bump (unintelligible)...or anything.

Mr. Teague: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, no. I...

Ed Metzler: Were you a little bit uneasy on that first one?

Mr. Teague: Yeah, I think you could say so. (laughter) I...I...

Ed Metzler: That's an understatement.

Mr. Teague: ...it took me three days to *unpucker*... and it...!

Ed Metzler: ...as they say, yeah! (laughter)

Mr. Teague: But, you know, there's not a thing you can do; all you can do is just...you know...hope that he knows what he's doing...

Ed Metzler: Yeah!

Mr. Teague: ...and that the...the landing...the...the man that's bringing you in knows what he's doing.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, really...since you're on the belly of the aircraft, you're the first guy that tastes splinters if something goes wrong, you know!

Mr. Teague: That's right; that's right. And it...it...was a pretty violent landing, and...and the planes took a lot of punishment...and...but I guess they were built to

withstand that. And if you had a good level deck, it was...it was better, but when you had a rough sea it...it was a problematic on whether you could...

Ed Metzler: Yeah. Now I guess when you were on the Franklin you guys were five...five high sleeping facilities and...all crammed together.

Mr. Teague: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: How'd that work?

Mr. Teague: Well, we were up in the bow of the ship. The Air...the Air Group had very little relationship with the ship's crew. You know, we were two separate entities and they called us Airdales which I don't think was a complimentary term, but the...the racks they called it were five high...

Ed Metzler: Bunks huh?

Mr. Teague: Yeah, and we were up near the...the catapults. And the catapults...every morning about four o'clock would launch a...a dawn patrol flight, so you didn't do much sleeping after four o'clock.

Ed Metzler: I'll bet that was a noisy thing, huh?

Mr. Teague: Yes, it was. But usually you were so exhausted that when you got in your bunk...and you know, they...you only (unintelligible)...if you had tendency of claustrophobia, you...you had a problem. (laughter) But you...you grow used to it after awhile; you get into a routine. And being on a carrier, as I know now, is a lot better than being on a destroyer! 'Cause...

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Teague: ...'cause we had a lot better food and...

Ed Metzler: So the food was pretty good?

Mr. Teague: Yes. Somewhere they picked up some mutton or goat and when they'd have that...it smelled up the whole ship. But we had the same kind of meal every day. On Wednesdays I think we had Navy beans and something else for breakfast – that was traditional! But then when we were...when we went to go on a raid, we'd...we'd get up at four o'clock and we'd go in and we'd have steak and eggs for breakfast.

Ed Metzler: Steak and eggs before a raid.

Mr. Teague: Yeah, yeah. And we had ice cream on the ship. And when...occasionally...when we...like in Ulithi...where their tin cans were near, we would ship some ice cream over to them...

Ed Metzler: (Unintelligible.)

Mr. Teague: ...(unintelligible) had a way...of making the ice cream.

Ed Metzler: So they couldn't so...make it so...but you did have a way?

Mr. Teague: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: So when did the task force leave Ulithia...approximately? Is this...?

Mr. Teague: Well, it...it...again, it was late '44.

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Teague: And...

Ed Metzler: Did the whole group of ships all go out together or...?

Mr. Teague: All...all I know is that...a whole bunch of ships left and we were in the middle of it and that was our task force. And our...we were headed towards Japan and our initial assignment was to eliminate the kamikaze bases and the kamikaze planes. And that's what we did for...couple of months. And

there...there wasn't much defense that the Japanese could put up. When we'd see a Zero occasionally, but they wouldn't dare attack the...the group, you know, they'd just turn away. Maybe I'm getting ahead of myself, but the main threat was the Japanese artillery...uh, or anti-aircraft. We were told that somewhere the Germans had provided them with radar-controlled guns, and they were...they were pretty effective when we got over the coast of Japan. And I...I was trained to jam the radar; and we would have submarines that would actually go into the bays and pick up the frequency that the radar-controlled guns would operate on. And I would get up at four o'clock and they would say, "the...the guns or either this frequency or this frequency. So I would be given the frequency, and as we flew over the coast of Japan, the...you know, the puff started coming right...right at us, and I would turn on the receiver at the frequencies I was given, and one of them was always right. And I could hear the radar; it sounded like a...a rusty gate swinging back and forth. And when I...when I got the frequency, then I turned on my transmitter at that frequency and you could see the aircraft...puffs drifting off. It was a very effective way of doing...it was pretty primitive radar, and it was very simple. But the...the amazing thing was that we had submarines that would go right into the harbor and pick up the...the frequency and then report back...so that we could counteract their...their radar (unintelligible).

Ed Metzler: So you could turn your transmitter onto that frequency and then what...just beam out a signal at maximum power?

Mr. Teague: That particular...just...just leave it on; maximum of power and leave it on until we got back to the ship.

Ed Metzler: And so it was always one of two frequencies (unintelligible)?

Mr. Teague: That...as I recall they said it's going to be this...or this. And...and they had picked it up that night, so they were fairly sure they...if they changed it...it wouldn't be...and...and they were always right, and probably the Japanese never did figure out what...what was going on.

Ed Metzler: Right. So on your first sortie, under combat conditions, that was into what part of Japan? Is this on Honshu or do you remember?

Mr. Teague: Uh, Kagoshima and really the southern part of ...of Japan...

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Teague: ...where the Jap...where the...the kamikaze bases would be closest to the...

Ed Metzler: To Okinawa and Iwo Jima and those areas.

Mr. Teague: ...yeah. And we would go in and bomb and strafe the air fields. And on one occasion we were in a dive bomb...we were diving, and our plane got hit and the gunner got...started getting kind of panicky and I didn't know where we were hit, and I thought maybe...the pilot wouldn't say anything because he was busy...

Ed Metzler: Yeah!

Mr. Teague: ...and I thought maybe the pilot had been hit, so I figured, "Well, you know, I'm going to be a dusty spot down there!" (laughter) But he...he pulled out and we were hit in the wing just about a foot from the mechanism that caused the wing to fold, and very close to one of the gas tanks.

Ed Metzler: Right!

Mr. Teague: So we were very fortunate!

Ed Metzler: Near miss!

Mr. Teague: Yes it was, so we...we allowed to land first when...in the sequence when we got back to the carrier. And they patched the plane up and we went out again the next day.

Ed Metzler: So the task force must have been what...fairly close in to the coast of Japan?

Mr. Teague: Yes.

Ed Metzler: Fifty miles...?

Mr. Teague: Fifty miles. When...when our event happened, we were forty miles off the coast of Japan. And I guess we were ready for that. We were told...and this was on March the 18th, 1945...we were told that we were going to have another target. And the best that I can recall, it was a Japanese cruiser which was in a fortified position...some...somewhere on the coast of southern Japan.

Ed Metzler: A cruiser?

Mr. Teague: Cruiser...and that was going to be our first occasion to use our Tiny Tim.

Ed Metzler: Ah ha!

Mr. Teague: But it was...it was had mountains around it with anti-aircraft guns and we were going to have to come in and stay in formation, so it was going to be a near suicidal kind of thing for...for a lot of people. But on about six o'clock on the 19th, we had all the planes loaded on the flight deck ready...to...to launch. And the sequence of the launch was the fighters were first and they

would be catapulted off; then the SBTCs, the dive bombers; and then the torpedo planes, the big planes were on the rear, the last to go. We had launched one fighter when a Japanese bomber came out of the overcast...now remember, we were in the middle of Task Force...whatever it was...

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Teague: ...and he dropped two five-hundred pound bombs that went through the flight deck...taking some planes with it and exploded on the hangar deck which was loaded with planes with high octane gas; ammunition; Tiny Tims...so the whole middle of the ship...apparently just came up. And I could hear all the noise and vibration, and I thought we were being shelled from shore since we only...

Ed Metzler: Right...wherever you...you were on your aircraft (unintelligible).

Mr. Teague: (Unintelligible)...right; we...we were...

Ed Metzler: Back at the back of the line, so to speak.

Mr. Teague: So our...the pilot said, you know, we'd been hit; get out of the plane. Fortunately I was in the last row right over the catwalk on the fantail, so I opened the door and hopped down on the catwalk. Now all...all the guys in the middle with the...with the wings folded and with the props going I'm sure that many guys ran into props trying to get out of there because you couldn't see...

Ed Metzler: (Unintelligible).

Mr. Teague: ...it's...it's...well, it's four o'clock in the morning, but the...the wings were folded and they're nose to tail with the props going. And to get out, you'd had

to go under the plane. And if you panicked a little bit when you went under one, you'd come into the prop of the next.

Ed Metzler: Hmm!

Mr. Teague: So I was extremely fortunate; I jumped down on the catwalk, and walked back to the fantail which was underneath the flight deck. And I don't know whether I was blown over the rail or whether or not I jump; I know that I fell a long way and went in right over the screws 'cause the ship was still underway...and I went head over tea kettle, so I was..pulled pretty close to the screws. But we'd been trained enough on...on all kinds of emergencies that I knew *not* to inflate my Mae West till I was in the water. Some guys did and the results were broken necks and they talked... But as soon as I hit the water I had the presence to inflate my Mae West and I popped to the surface and I came up in burning gasoline, but I still had on all my flight gear, helmet and gloves, so I could disburse the gasoline. If it had been oil; it would have been a different matter. So I floated around out there, I guess, for three or four hours and...and then...I think the swells were about four to six feet...and when I'd come up on the top of one I could see the debris and the bodies in the water, but I could always see that carrier with those Tiny Tims going out through the...and they were perforating it just like it was paper.

Ed Metzler: My goodness!

Mr. Teague: So I floated around, but I had on my regular clothes and a nylon flight suit and a leather jacket and this harness with a survivor's pack and a thirty-eight caliber gun, and a knife. And that Mae West and...and I were getting pretty

water soaked so it was getting pretty difficult to keep my nose above the water.

Ed Metzler: Yeah!

Mr. Teague: But then I...I joined up with a...four or five other guys were hanging onto a life raft ring. It actually was a big cork ring about as big as this room that had mostly burned, and we hung onto that thing for several hours...till we were all getting pretty near exhaustion, and then all at once...this...this destroyer...

(end of tape 1, side A)

Ed Metzler: Okay, side 2...go ahead, Jim.

Mr. Teague: ...the...the destroyer had a...a net ladder over the side and I managed to swim over and grab on and when a swell would come, it would wash me up the ladder. But when I got to the point where I didn't have that buoyancy, I couldn't go any further. Fortunately I was near enough to the rail that one of the sailors reached over and grabbed me by the...harness and dropped me like a rag doll on the deck. (laughter) And then they took me below and I stripped off all my clothes and I got in one of the guy's bunks and I must have slept for six or eight hours. And during that time, the Japanese knew they had a wounded carrier, so they drug the Franklin out of the area and in its place they put tin cans and cruisers and battleships. And the Japanese...when they came after the wounded carrier they found...the...the group there that was waiting for them, and I understand it was a turkey shoot!

Ed Metzler: Another turkey shoot!

Mr. Teague: But I never knew that...because I was asleep!

Ed Metzler: You were on the Hunt?

Mr. Teague: The USS Hunt, and when I woke up I asked for my clothes. Of course by then all my flight suit and gear had become souvenirs of the crew...

Ed Metzler: Really?!

Mr. Teague: ...which really didn't bother me because I was alive and I...

Ed Metzler: Why...why was that a souvenir for them? I mean why was...?

Mr. Teague: Well it was flight suits and a gun and knife and a survivor's pack with all kinds of stuff in it and a nylon flight suit and a...a helmet with goggles and...

Ed Metzler: All kinds of neat stuff!

Mr. Teague: Yeah, and I...you know...I couldn't...I couldn't blame them for that.

Ed Metzler: You didn't need it right away, did you?

Mr. Teague: No! (laughter) So somebody gave me...bare skivvies which were about two sizes too large and a...some dungaree pants and a shirt; didn't have any shoes, so I found a pair of old overshoes that I could slosh around in. And I don't know how many people this destroyer picked up, but it was enough...that I think they ran out of about all kinds of foods except canned figs. Canned figs gave most of us a good case of diarrhea.

Ed Metzler: Oh no!

Mr. Teague: And the head to the bathroom on a...on a destroyer wasn't very commodious; it was pretty primitive. So you went in and you did your thing and then you came back and you got in line to go back in again!

Ed Metzler: (Unintelligible). (laughter)

Mr. Teague: So I don't know how long it took us to go from forty miles off the coast of Japan to Guam. It seemed to me like *forever*, but it probably was a matter of weeks. So we...we were taken to Guam, and I think the rest of the...there weren't many of us left out of...out of the Air Group; most of the guys were killed. But I think in Guam they...they assembled us and we, you know, went...went through a lot of...I guess they had psychiatrists...other people that talked to us a lot. And they gave us new...what they called new seabags which...new clothes and...and new flight gear. And at that time Guam had been occupied with...I don't know how long...months...but there were still Japanese soldiers up in the caves in the mountain. They didn't menace us any, but they would come down looking for food in the garbage and so forth. So we were loaded on a troop transport. And my memory of what happened during that time was...is very vague, but they took us back to Pearl Harbor. And there we stayed and...and most the guys ate so much fresh pineapple and stuff that they swelled up...all that acidic acid, so...

Ed Metzler: (Unintelligible)...bit rough, hadn't it? (laughter)

Mr. Teague: And the...the Franklin hadn't gotten...they were...they were going to pull the Franklin back in.

Ed Metzler: So she did not sink...she just burned?

Mr. Teague: No, she had about a thirty degree limp. But she came back into Pearl Harbor, I understand, under her own power.

Ed Metzler: Really?!

Mr. Teague: And I...I have pictures of her coming in, you know, with the deck all tilted with...holes all in it. But I think she went ...under her own power back to the States where she was eventually scrapped because it was just too...the war was near...nearly over and it would have taken more expense to...for repair than to build a new one.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, they didn't really need her at that point anyhow.

Mr. Teague: Yeah. But we came back to San Francisco and for some reason...there was about a dozen of us that were left...they sent us to Lake Tahoe and we lived in little cabins there and we didn't have a...some...some guys would talk to us and ask us about things, but we didn't have to do except enjoy Lake Tahoe. And on the Neva...uh, on the California side where we were, everything closed down at midnight, but over on the Nevada side or something they called state line...it was just...get going. So we...we covered nicely.

Ed Metzler: So was this on the northern end of Lake Tahoe or the southern end, do you remember?

Mr. Teague: I don't remem...I remember state line was the...was the...

Ed Metzler: State line.

Mr. Teague: ...was...was the...departing for...for the...closed down and opened up.

Ed Metzler: That's where...things changed once you got in the divide.

Mr. Teague: And...the...

Ed Metzler: How many of the...you know...of the air crews that were there before she was hit...how many of them survived? Do you...have any of those statistics at all...

Mr. Teague: No.

Ed Metzler: ...at all...out of the total?

Mr. Teague: No. I know if...if they took us all that were on there to Lake Tahoe, there weren't more than a dozen of us.

Ed Metzler: Out of...gee, must have been hundreds.

Mr. Teague: Yeah. Many of the guys I...I think were probably wounded. We never...we were separated. We...we would...there was never an attempt to put us back together other...once...once we got out of Lake Tahoe. And after we left Lake Tahoe, I got to go home on a survivor's leave, and the Navy made arrangements because the...the military was controlling all the trains and things...for me to go through L.A. on the way back to Texas. And they got Nelda a seat and so she went back to Texas with me.

Ed Metzler: Well that was nice.

Mr. Teague: And somewhere during that...one of the trips I took to L.A., we decided to make our engagement official and I had saved up ninety dollars and I figured that was enough to buy the biggest ring you could buy. We went down and the ring she wanted was a simple little diamond solitaire, but it cost a hundred and fifty dollars. The jeweler felt sorry for her and he reduced it to...to a hundred and twenty dollars, so Nelda had to pay thirty dollars for own engagement...(laughter)...

Ed Metzler: So it was a joint investment! (laughter)

Mr. Teague: Yes. Anyway we...we went to Texas together on the survivor's leave. And again, I didn't tell her anything about what had happened; I didn't tell my

parents...I just didn't, you know, it was something that happened. So I was...Nelda went back to college at Pepperdine, and I eventually went back to Santa Rosa of all places.

Ed Metzler: Are you still in the military then?

Mr. Teague: Oh yeah, I'm still in the Navy, and we...we were...now I had a new pilot and a new gunner because they had split us up, and I was now a part of Air Group Eleven. And...

Ed Metzler: And the war is still going on?

Mr. Teague: Yes, this was probably in June or July of '45 and I...I was pretty sure I had had a belly full of landing on aircraft carriers, so I had the opportunity to take a test for Officers Candidate School. So I took all the tests and passed them but I had to sign a document that...stating that I would stay in the Navy for four years and that I could not be married during that period of time. Well, that was still better than the alternative at that time. But this was late July and on August 7th, they dropped the bomb, and I was astute enough to know that the war was about over and I didn't want four more years of the Navy. So I called Nelda and asked her if she was ready to get married and she said, "When?" So that...was on August the 8th; she was in Santa Rosa on September the 1st; we were married on September the 2nd in a large church there in Santa Rosa built of one redwood tree.

Ed Metzler: My gosh!

Mr. Teague: Santa Rosa was the home of Robert Ripley, so that was one of his features; also the home of Luther Burbank, so it was a beautiful little city. The Red

Cross arranged the church and stuff for...for our marriage and arranged a bus to take us to Richardson's Grove which was a neat little resort up on the Russian River in the redwood forest. So we went on a honeymoon there and we checked in and they...we thought nobody will know we just got married. But when we went back to the cabin, it looked like it had been decorated for Christmas! (laughter)

Ed Metzler: Somebody did know!

Mr. Teague: Yeah. We spent four or five days there and I came back and since I nearly had my eighty-five points...and this was in late 1945...we had...we had shared a house in Santa Rosa with a couple that was native there. He had been discharged from the Army; was a (unintelligible), and Joan, his wife was a gourmet cook. So Nelda learned how to cook and we had our first artichokes and abalone there neither of which I particularly liked till I learned that they were very rare and expensive! (laughter)

Ed Metzler: Right!

Mr. Teague: So I was discharged and we went back to Dangerfield. And the Lone Star Steel was going and General Dynamics had...put in an aerial physics lab there where they were testing rockets for the white...white stone or white (unintelligible)...

Ed Metzler: White Sands.

Mr. Teague: ...White Sands, New Mexico. And I got a job as a draftsman; I had taken draftsman in college. And we lived with my parents while I earned some money. Then I went back to school on a GI Bill which was a great thing.

Ed Metzler: Yeah!

Mr. Teague: And...I majored in Accounting, and my senior year I earned some extra money. I was teaching a lab and then...when I graduated the kind of job I wanted wasn't there, so I went to graduate school and was made a Teaching Fellow; they called us Teaching Fellows because you didn't have to pay Teaching Fellows much money. (laughter) And about that time, our first child was born and I decided it was better to get a job than get a Master's Degree, so...I went with Union Carbide in a financial training program in Texas City. And in Texas City we stayed there for six years and my second child, a daughter, was born and my third child, a daughter was born. And when she was six weeks old, I was told for the second time that I had to be...go to New York because that's what they trained me to do, so we left the gulf coast on...Texas City in November of 1960 something and moved to New York and eventually moved to Greenwich, Connecticut...and I worked in New York City for twenty-five years. And my wife died in '84 and I moved to Horseshoe Bay in 1989. And someone said, "You know your life has been successful if you're loved by the people that you want to love you."

Ed Metzler: Right!

Mr. Teague: So I've had a successful life!

Ed Metzler: You (unintelligible), okay, so you've had a successful life...that's good.

Mr. Teague: And I'm living in Horseshoe Bay, and doing what I want to do when I want to do it.

Ed Metzler: That's good.

Mr. Teague: And I...I guess the thing that really shaped my life was the Depression and the experience I had in...in the Navy and being married to Nelda for thirty-three years, so...

Ed Metzler: How did being in the Navy during World War II shape you?
How...how...talk about that a little bit.

Mr. Teague: Well, what...my...my main purpose was just to survive. I...I wasn't terribly aware of what was going on in the world because we...we were kept pretty busy. And I formed some very close friendships. And...and probably would have maintained those friendships...about...oh, probably in about 1980...one night when I had flu my pilot called me; he had divorced his wife and he was now charge...taking private boats back and forth from New York to Florida. And that's the only time I heard from anybody...

Ed Metzler: Now was the pilot, the first pilot (unintelligible)?

Mr. Teague: First pilot, yeah, Al Gowdy (sp?), yeah, Al Gowdy. And my...when we got married...he and his wife...we...we were still at Santa Rosa...it was at a different...

Ed Metzler: So he survived just like you did then?

Mr. Teague: Yes, ye survived...the...the gunner didn't...and...and a couple of other guys that were in the group survived; they were at my wedding. They also took me out for a Bachelor's Party the night before the wedding in Santa Rosa...and the only thing I remember is about five o'clock they had me in a cold shower...of the day of my wedding trying to sober me up! So, and

they...they were getting pretty panicky and...and they did get me sober but I had the...the mother of all hangovers for three or four days. (laughter)

Ed Metzler: Well that's the way those Bachelor's Parties are supposed to work I think!

Mr. Teague: Yeah, yeah. But, you know, the...the guys...they were...they were extraordinary...came from all walks of life and never a beef; never a gripe; never...I never knew anyone that...that didn't have the motivation to do what they were supposed to do. And we...you know, it...I guess today that they...it certainly is being exhibited in Iraq...when the military probably is more respected as an organization than any other thing. But I...I had learned through the Navy and through the Depression that you had to rely on yourself pretty much and you were....you were disgraced if you had to go to the government to get relief or...so it...it had been good experiences. I wouldn't want to go through it again, but it...I think that it helped me cope with life and have a fairly successful career.

Ed Metzler: Do you ever wake up night thinking about those war years?

Mr. Teague: No, I haven't in a long time. It...it's just sort of faded out. I...I remember vividly everything that happened. Now I have trouble remembering what I had for breakfast, but I can remember everything that happened...and a lot more happened than that...I discussed here today, of course. But it...it's just like it happened to someone else; it...it never bothered me. And I think they...they thought by sending us to Lake Tahoe that we were going to need some sort of psychiatric help, but I didn't. Uh, I...I guess I just became...endured to it and...and it really didn't affect me...except, you

know, shortly after it happened I...I was awfully jumpy and scary and I had nightmares and...but I got over that.

Ed Metzler: Let's go back to when you were bobbing in the water...right...right close by the Franklin while she was blowing up. What kind of things were going through your mind or can you...or do you remember what was going through your mind?

Mr. Teague: The main thing was...just to keep my nose above the water, and I was aware that there were a lot of dead guys floating all around. But I was also aware that there wasn't a thing I could do to help them. And the other guys on...on this little raft with me...we didn't do any talking. We could see the ship and we knew that Japan was only by then...twenty, thirty miles away and we knew the tide was...was taking...there. And I had a...more dread of being washed up on the Japanese shore than anything else. Now we had been running into mines and the destroyers were on the...outside the task force blowing up the mines. And while we were on the raft, something bumped into me and I thought it was a mine, so I held that thing out...for probably an hour till I couldn't hold it anymore and I finally reached down to feel what it...and it was probably one of the big insulators that had come off the ship...it wasn't a mine at all! So, I was...I was very relieved...!

Ed Metzler: I guess so!

Mr. Teague: ...that it wasn't! But again, it...it took a lot of my energy to hold that thing and I was...I was contemplating...uh, possibly drowning because the water was right here and I was getting heavier all the time.

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Teague: So the...the destroyer came just in the nick of time for...I think, for all of us. And my...my overwhelming was...be thankful that, you know, that I had survived when so many others had not. But I had no...no real thoughts about why did I survive and Tommy didn't...

Ed Metzler: Didn't haunt you or anything like that?

Mr. Teague: No, no. We all did the...the best we could to stay alive and...I don't feel guilty about it or...or...it...it's just an experience that happened to me and...had a...had a great deal of influence on my life and I really don't know why I never felt compelled or the desire to let...talk to my children the way I'm talking to you.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, do you think it was just because you didn't want to relive those difficult times or just didn't think anybody would be interested or what?

Mr. Teague: More...more that than...than reliving it. It...it doesn't bother me to talk about it. And matter of fact, I...I had pretty well forgotten it because I had a pretty intense career in New York City and I just didn't have time to think about it. And when you're raising teenagers during the sixties and seventies, you...you had a lot of other things to think about.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, you had your hands full.

Mr. Teague: Yeah, so it's just after I've retired and my wife is gone that I began to realize...maybe my family should know some of the things that went on.

Ed Metzler: How do you feel about the Japanese after what they did to you and your ship?

Mr. Teague: I was very bitter, you know. I...I strafed a lot of air fields and I didn't feel guilty about that at all. We were told that the Japanese...every little house was an industry. They made things, so it didn't bother me to strafe the air fields. And the...and...and we had seen so much literature about the atrocities that I would have...I don't think I would have had any compunction at all to...to shoot Japanese. But after the war was over, there were a lot of mitigating things that...and I...I don't feel any animosity towards the Japanese at all. And matter of fact, that...that...on PBS a couple of nights ago, did you see...about the Nisi (sp?)...the Japanese that were transferred from the west coast and put in these camps?

Ed Metzler: Oh I'm aware of it; I didn't see that show.

Mr. Teague: It...it was a very good show...if you get a chance to see it. I...I've forgotten the title of it, but it was about...centered on this one Japanese man that went into the Army Air Corps, and...you know, we treated them awfully bad.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Teague: But the Japanese...society was just, you know, they...they were just trained to be cruel! And...and we...and we're fighting the same thing right now.

Ed Metzler: Yeah. How did you feel about your officers, the...the people in leadership positions there above you...in the military...in the Navy? Did you have much interaction with them?

Mr. Teague: No, I...we...we had a ready room on the carrier where we would all sit together and we were given pre-flight instructions. And they...there was a lot of comrade...lot of mutual respect; lot of mutual friendship. And I...I

admired my pilot because he probably was the best pilot, in my judgment, in the air group, 'cause he never...he never had a wave off. And a lot of those guys would get wave offs and that's pretty nervous when you...when you get a wave off...when you're...when you're low on gas. So I had...I had a lot of respect. Now there were several chiefs that I didn't have a whole lot of respect for.

Ed Metzler: Okay, chiefs in what...?

Mr. Teague: Chief Petty Officer.

Ed Metzler: And why is that?

Mr. Teague: Well, and I remember from my boot camp experience and...and during the schools that usually you had a chief in charge of the barracks. I can give you one story if you got the time for it.

Ed Metzler: I've got time.

Mr. Teague: When we were in Santa Rose, we had a chief. He was popular; he was...particularly popular with my pilot. Well, he was killed in an automobile accident on the way to San Francisco from Santa Rosa, and he had requested that he be cremated and his ashes spread over the Golden Gate Bridge. Well my pilot volunteered us to do that. So we got in the plane and I was given this little urn of ashes. And keep in mind that the door on the compartment...opened towards the rear so that when the plane was flying...it was hard to get the door open...the hatch open. So one of the guys lay on this bench and with his feet he opened the hatch and I took this urn of ashes and I threw it out. Well obviously the airstream blew it all back in...

Ed Metzler: Oh dear!

Mr. Teague: ...and we had ashes in our hair, ears, eyes, mouth, every other orifice on our body! And the whole inside of the compartment was coated with ashes. So he didn't get to the Golden Gate Bridge, but we flew him over the Golden Gate Bridge...quite a few times!

Ed Metzler: Oh my gosh, what a story! Do you have any...what you would call...humorous recollections of funny things that happened during combat? I mean, I know that is a very tense time, but there's always some...interesting and funny story that come...might come to mind.

Mr. Teague: Well, we had one...one radioman named Stricklen (sp?), Jim Stricklen. He was a...kind of a fat, little guy and when...when you were being catapulted, you sat on this...seat and...and as I mentioned, you held onto those handles. Well they catapulted him when he wasn't ready, and he went head over tea kettles and he was jammed head first in back...where the machine gun was and they couldn't get him out till they landed...he was stuck in there so hard!
(laughter)

Ed Metzler: So hard?!

Mr. Teague: Yeah, he had...he had skin...he bruised and skinned...

Ed Metzler: And embarrassed.

Mr. Teague: ...and embarrassed, but...there are probably other things particularly on...on liberty...things that happened, but...it...it was fairly serious business...particularly when you're landing on a carrier...

Ed Metzler: Yeah!

Mr. Teague: ...it...it's just...as I say, it...it's not a natural occurrence.

Ed Metzler: No, was it...did you ever have any R&Rs where they took you out of...you know...the front so to speak and took you back for a little (unintelligible)?

Mr. Teague: Well we...we were in combat for probably three, four, or five months.

Ed Metzler: Right, before you were hit.

Mr. Teague: Yeah, and so they...they wouldn't take...but there...there are times when we were at Ulithi where we'd get off one of the little islands and we'd have a...what they called a beer bust. They'd bring beer in and...again it would be the pilot versus the crew on...volleyball or foot...touch football or something, so...and...and of course we'd have liberty and I was always in very interesting places; I was very fortunate. We could go into San Francisco. After Nelda and I got married, we...we went to San Francisco and we were going to check in at the Palace. Well, they wouldn't let us check in because we...they...we didn't have a marriage license. So it embarrassed Nelda terribly because they wouldn't...you know...they thought we weren't married and you wouldn't check in. And another story along that is...in...in California the male...the groom has to be twenty-one years old. Well we got married on September the 2nd...I was going to be twenty-one on October the 10th and I had to get permission from my parents to get married; I had to get written permission, (laughter) so that permission came in the day before we were to get...otherwise, I couldn't have gotten married.

Ed Metzler: Had to put it off.

Mr. Teague: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: My goodness. My how times have changed!

Mr. Teague: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Okay, Jim, are there any other experiences or things that you'd like to say before we bring this to a close?

Mr. Teague: No, I think that pretty well covers my...my military escapades and...

Ed Metzler: Boy, I'll say! You certainly had one, didn't you! My word!

Mr. Teague: Well, I was rewarded...more adequately than I had ever hoped. The GI Bill was the thing that put me...put me on the road to having a...a good career and...and just...just the fact that...that I got to be with...with some people who were very loyal and...and committed to doing what was right at the time, so...

Ed Metzler: Right. Well, let me close this tape by thanking you for what you did for our country during World War II, and from our generation subsequent to your generation because things would be a lot different if you guys hadn't stepped up when you did, so we appreciate that.

Mr. Teague: Thank you.

Ed Metzler: Okay.

(end of interview)

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