

*National Museum of the Pacific War*

*Nimitz Education and Research Center*

*Fredericksburg, Texas*

Interview with

**Mr. Clinton Shoppe**

Date of Interview: December 14, 2013

## **National Museum of the Pacific War**

### **Fredericksburg, Texas**

#### **Interview with Mr. Clinton Shoppe**

Interview in progress.

Ed Metzler: This is Ed Metzler. Today is the 14<sup>th</sup> of December, 2013. I am at the Admiral Nimitz Museum in Fredericksburg, Texas, and I am interviewing Mr. Clinton Shoppe. This interview is in support of the Nimitz Education and Research Center, archives for the National Museum of the Pacific War, Texas Historical Commission, for the preservation of historical information related to this site. So, Clinton, I'd like to start by thanking you for coming in here; I know it's...a cold and windy day, and coming in and sharing your experiences with us. I'd like to start by having you give us your full name and date and place of birth.

Mr. Shoppe: Uh, Clinton Shoppe....Burlson County, Snook...residence.

Ed Metzler: And what was your date of birth?

Mr. Shoppe: September 11<sup>th</sup>, 1924.

Ed Metzler: So, you're a 9-11 guy then?

Mr. Shoppe: Right.

Ed Metzler: My goodness! 1924, so, let's see that makes you...eighty-nine years old.

Mr. Shoppe: Right.

Ed Metzler: Wow! Okay, and...so, what did your dad do for a living?

Mr. Shoppe: Farmed.

Ed Metzler: I see. Was he a...did he own land or was he a...

Mr. Shoppe: For a while he did; have...eventually had to go back 'cause the interest was higher than your rent.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, that was...those...those were tough years to be a farmer anyhow weren't they?

Mr. Shoppe: It sure was.

Ed Metzler: Yeah. Now did you have a big family? Did you have lots of brothers and sisters?

Mr. Shoppe: I had six sisters and two brothers.

Ed Metzler: That's big! My goodness, nine kids.

Mr. Shoppe: Nine of us, yes.

Ed Metzler: Wow! Now were you the youngest, the oldest or...

Mr. Shoppe: Yeah, I was the youngest.

Ed Metzler: So, you're the baby in the bunch!

Mr. Shoppe: Right, they're all dead except me.

Ed Metzler: So, are you...were you spoiled by your mom because you were the baby?

Mr. Shoppe: No, not at all.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter)

Mr. Shoppe: I said I was the last one, I have a sister...she's ninety-eight years old; she's in a nursing home.

Ed Metzler: Well...ninety-eight?!

Mr. Shoppe: Right.

Ed Metzler: Well, you must have some long...long-lived genes in your body there somewhere.

Mr. Shoppe: I guess. I'm still...still (unintelligible) around.

Ed Metzler: Yeah. Now, what kind of things did your dad raise on the farm; was it cattle or crops or what?

Mr. Shoppe: Mostly cotton...cotton and corn.

Ed Metzler: Uhm, yeah. Cotton was the old staple back then, wasn't it?

Mr. Shoppe: Right, right.

Ed Metzler: Yeah. And so you went to school in that area, is that right?

Mr. Shoppe: Lone Oak...Lone Oak...just a little small community...one-room school.

Ed Metzler: Is that right?!

Mr. Shoppe: (Unintelligible) seventh grade and finally consolidated with Snook which was about six miles down the road.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Shoppe: And I was in...'38, I believe.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, we had the same thing happen here in this county. They had...they still have some of those little one-room school houses around, but they don't use them anymore.

Mr. Shoppe: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Now...so you went to high school?

Mr. Shoppe: In Snook.

Ed Metzler: In Snook; so how did you get into high school? Did you ride a horse or ride a bus or what?

Mr. Shoppe: Rode...rode a bus. We...Lone Oak consolidated with Snook when I was (unintelligible).

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Shoppe: I went to Snook until I was...in the tenth grade.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Shoppe: Then I went to Caldwell. Graduated from Caldwell High School in '43.

Ed Metzler: Okay, so you were in high school when the war started.

Mr. Shoppe: Right.

Ed Metzler: What do you remember about Pearl Harbor Day?

Mr. Shoppe: Well, I remember one thing. My mother...grandmother died; she'd been buried on Pearl Har...Pearl Harbor...Day.

Ed Metzler: So, she was...she had died earlier and she had...and that was her day for burial, huh?

Mr. Shoppe: Yes, uh hum.

Ed Metzler: So, how did things change after the war started; could you tell the difference? You were...what...a junior in high school or something like that.

Mr. Shoppe: Yeah, uh hum. Well, most...mostly the thing I remember...seemed like everybody...went in the service during that time was getting killed.

Ed Metzler: Uhm!

Mr. Shoppe: So, I had a lot to look forward to.

Ed Metzler: Yeah. Well now, did you have older broth...yeah, you had to have older brothers, didn't you? 'Cause you...

Mr. Shoppe: Two...two.

Ed Metzler: ...were the youngest.

Mr. Shoppe: Yeah, two.

Ed Metzler: And...did they go into the service right away or...?

Mr. Shoppe: One...one was...oldest brother was too old; my next brother...he went in...in the Navy.

Ed Metzler: Uhm!

Mr. Shoppe: But...oh, a year and a half before I did.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Shoppe: And that's why I wanted to get in the Navy.

Ed Metzler: Well I...that's one of the questions I was going to ask you is why did you pick the Navy, and now I know the answer.

Mr. Shoppe: Well...

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Shoppe: ...he was still alive, so I picked the Navy.

Ed Metzler: Yeah. I...I guess a lot of the guys that went into the Navy tell me, "I just didn't want to dig a foxhole."

Mr. Shoppe: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: And you didn't have to do that if you were in the Navy...theoretically, at least. So, did you volunteer to go in or did you wait till you were drafted?

Mr. Shoppe: I would have been...I would have been drafted but...I...I volunteered. I went out of high school...uh, graduated on Sun...Sunday night...I went to San Antone on Monday.

Ed Metzler: Oh my gosh! You...you didn't wait long, did you?!

Mr. Shoppe: Sure didn't.

Ed Metzler: Now how old were you at that point?

Mr. Shoppe: Eighteen.

Ed Metzler: Okay, so you were old enough; you didn't have to get your parents to sign for you...

Mr. Shoppe: No.

Ed Metzler: ...you could go in on your own.

Mr. Shoppe: Right.

Ed Metzler: So, what did your mother think about her baby going into the Navy?

Mr. Shoppe: Well, I don't think she liked it, but...

Ed Metzler: (Chuckles)

Mr. Shoppe: ...if that...Army or Marines...and I thought I'd...if I had a bed at all to sleep in, I (unintelligible) the Navy, I wouldn't have in the Marines or...or Army, so I went...(unintelligible)...Army officer and got a...I had a physical...I went and had a...went to an Army officer...I just skipped him and...went to...the Marine officer...and then I went to the Navy officer; he take my papers; he said he could...couldn't take me...'cause my eye...my eye sight was too bad.

Ed Metzler: Uh huh.

Mr. Shoppe: So, I asked him if I could go back and talk to the doctor; he told me to go ahead; give my papers back. I went to the doctor; hand him my papers and told him my problem; he wrote something on my papers and told me to get the hell out of there! I take my papers back to...Navy officer and I said, "Navy."

Ed Metzler: So, all of a sudden you were in the Navy!

Mr. Shoppe: Right.

Ed Metzler: Well, I guess...I...I guess your life would have been different if he hadn't...fudged the date a little bit, huh?

Mr. Shoppe: Yeah, but I...I certainly wanted to get in the service. Felt awful when everybody else in the service...I'm at home, you know?

Ed Metzler: Yeah, that doesn't feel good when everybody else is going.

Mr. Shoppe: Right.

Ed Metzler: So, you went in 1944?

Mr. Shoppe: '43.

Ed Metzler: '43; so, you graduated high school in '43 and you went immediately in.

Mr. Shoppe: Right.

Ed Metzler: And you...you had somebody lie about your eyes so you could get into the Navy?

Mr. Shoppe: Right.

Ed Metzler: Is that what you're telling me?

Mr. Shoppe: Right, right.

Ed Metzler: (Chuckles), so, where did you go for basic training?  
Mr. Shoppe: San Diego...boot training.  
Ed Metzler: Uhm, how'd you get there?  
Mr. Shoppe: On a train.  
Ed Metzler: Uh hum. Now, you're a...a...a country, Texas farm boy; had you ever been to California before?  
Mr. Shoppe: I sure wasn't.  
Ed Metzler: (Chuckles)  
Mr. Shoppe: In fact, I...first time I ever rode a train.  
Ed Metzler: Is that right?  
Mr. Shoppe: Uh hum.  
Ed Metzler: So, you hadn't been really very far from home until this point in your life?  
Mr. Shoppe: Right, uh hum.  
Ed Metzler: So, what was it like on...being on a train for...several days?  
Mr. Shoppe: Well, something different (chuckles)...about all.  
Ed Metzler: Yeah, yeah. Were you in with a bunch of...other recruits or...?  
Mr. Shoppe: Yes, uh hum.  
Ed Metzler: So, did you already have some buddies at that point that...?  
Mr. Shoppe: Well, had...three or four people...that finished high school with me...was on the train.  
Ed Metzler: So, they went in at the same time?  
Mr. Shoppe: Right.  
Ed Metzler: Okay. So, what was California like?  
Mr. Shoppe: (Chuckle), I didn't like it.  
Ed Metzler: You didn't like it?!  
Mr. Shoppe: No.  
Ed Metzler: Why?  
Mr. Shoppe: I'm from Texas (chuckles).  
Ed Metzler: (Chuckles), that's enough said, huh?  
Mr. Shoppe: Right.  
Ed Metzler: (Laughter), well, it's different out there, isn't it?

Mr. Shoppe: Yes, it is.

Ed Metzler: Well, and it's also different when you're in basic training.

Mr. Shoppe: Right.

Ed Metzler: So, what did they do to you in basic training?

Mr. Shoppe: Well, I kind of liked basic training; I liked to exercise and plenty to eat. I went from... a hundred and thirty pounds to a hundred and seventy.

Ed Metzler: Really?!

Mr. Shoppe: Right.

Ed Metzler: So, you're... what are you doing? Putting on muscle?!

Mr. Shoppe: I guess.

Ed Metzler: Well, you're eating three square meals a day.

Mr. Shoppe: Right, and... lots of exercise.

Ed Metzler: And lots of exercise.

Mr. Shoppe: Right.

Ed Metzler: Did you find the exercise... hard to do or... were you able to do it fairly easily?

Mr. Shoppe: I was... I liked the war... war part of it, but... all the... through high school... I had [an] ankle problem.

Ed Metzler: Hum!

Mr. Shoppe: The running... I would run and we did... didn't go over too good, but I managed to do it.

Ed Metzler: Hum, so... you're kind of limping around a little bit, huh?

Mr. Shoppe: Right, uh hum.

Ed Metzler: Hum. Yeah, I've always heard stories about guys who were from the country that went to basic training and they said exercise was easy.

Mr. Shoppe: Right, it sure...

Ed Metzler: You talk to the city boys... that went to basic training and they said it dang near killed them...

Mr. Shoppe: Uhm.

Ed Metzler: ...because they weren't in shape like people who lived in the country.

Mr. Shoppe: Yeah.



Ed Metzler: So, what did...what did they do to you in basic? They made you march; they made you do exercise. Did they give you any tests...make...

Mr. Shoppe: Not...not really.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Shoppe: Just marching, you know, and all the...about all.

Ed Metzler: Did you have a mean drill sergeant?

Mr. Shoppe: Uh...just...just marching, you know, about...about all it was to it.

Ed Metzler: Really, really? What about the food? Did they feed you good?

Mr. Shoppe: Oh yes.

Ed Metzler: Really?!

Mr. Shoppe: More...more than you're used to.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, that's why you put on all that weight.

Mr. Shoppe: Yeah. Even aboard ship, people...complained about the food they ate, but ninety-nine percent of us...eating better than they ever ate in their life.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum, uh hum. Okay, so...this is latter part of '43 that you're in basic training, right?

Mr. Shoppe: Right, uh hum.

Ed Metzler: So, you managed to survive training; then what happened?

Mr. Shoppe: I went to Bremerton, Washington.

Ed Metzler: Bremerton, Washington, and what was there?

Mr. Shoppe: Got my...the [USS] California was in dry dock there; it wasn't quite ready to go.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, she was being repaired after being sunk in...Pearl Harbor.

Mr. Shoppe: Right, uh hum. I think about...sometime in the fall...before we went out to sea; it took that long to get it ready to go.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum. Well, they totally refitted her, so, you know, they modernized her and everything.

Mr. Shoppe: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: She was a totally different ship by the time she came out.

Mr. Shoppe: Oh yeah.

Ed Metzler: What'd you think about her the first time you saw her?

Mr. Shoppe: Just another ship.

Ed Metzler: Really?!

Mr. Shoppe: Never been on one in my life.

Ed Metzler: So, a ship is a ship...is a ship, huh?

Mr. Shoppe: Right, right.

Ed Metzler: And...so, you were there while they were finishing the repairs on her?

Mr. Shoppe: Right, uh hum.

Ed Metzler: What did they make you do?

Mr. Shoppe: Clean up the...the (unintelligible words)...chip a lot of tar and all that sort of thing. I finally got a job in the office; answered a lot of questions. I had had typing in high school...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Shoppe: ...so, that's why I got in the office for a while; wasn't very good at typing and so...I finally got back...with the rest of the gang.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum, uh hum.

Mr. Shoppe: I just stayed there about...a month or so.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum, and...and then after that she sailed? The...

Mr. Shoppe: Yes, pretty...

Ed Metzler: ...the ship?

Mr. Shoppe: ...pretty soon after that, yes.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum, uh hum. Now, did you...get a chance to talk to some of the older crew members who had been with the California when she was...attacked in Pearl Harbor?

Mr. Shoppe: No, not really.

Ed Metzler: So...

Mr. Shoppe: I don't know if...any of the old people on there.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum, uh hum.

Mr. Shoppe: About...probably ninety...eighty percent of them...was guys between eighteen and twenty-one...just like me.

Ed Metzler: So, they hadn't been around when she was sunk in Pearl Harbor then?

Mr. Shoppe: Right, right.

Ed Metzler: So, she had a lot of...new guys on the crew?

Mr. Shoppe: Oh yeah.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Shoppe: Just...just about all of them.

Ed Metzler: So, tell me about your...first voyage out on the California; what was that like?

Mr. Shoppe: Well, everybody talked about getting sea sick.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Shoppe: I talked to guys, several guys, that had some experience. (Unintelligible words) told me to...keep my belly full; I wouldn't get sea sick. That's what I did.

Ed Metzler: Did it work?

Mr. Shoppe: Oh yeah; I never got sea sick.

Ed Metzler: You never got sick?!

Mr. Shoppe: A lot of them did, but they didn't...follow instructions, I guess.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter), so was the...so, where did the California go when she sailed?

Mr. Shoppe: First place was...Pearl...Pearl Harbor.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Shoppe: And from there...I just had a look through the book...I...I can't remember (unintelligible words).

Ed Metzler: Yeah, but I mean, she...her first...leg of her trip was to Pearl Harbor?

Mr. Shoppe: Right.

Ed Metzler: You remember anything specific about that trip out to Pearl Harbor or was it pretty smooth?

Mr. Shoppe: Pretty smooth. After it got to Pearl Harbor, you could hit your (unintelligible) with your hat...for service people, so...

Ed Metzler: I've heard that; I've heard it was *really* crowded!

Mr. Shoppe: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: So, how long did she stay in Pearl? Was that just a short visit or...?

Mr. Shoppe: Just...kind of...short visit.

Ed Metzler: So, did you get...shore leave and able to go into Honolulu?

Mr. Shoppe: Oh yes, uh hum.

Ed Metzler: So, what was that like?

Mr. Shoppe: Different (chuckles).

Ed Metzler: Uhm.

Mr. Shoppe: I wasn't used to that...sort of life.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, yeah. So, back to the California, and then she sailed from there?

Mr. Shoppe: Uhm.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, I'm going to look at your book here a little bit. Do you remember where she went?

Mr. Shoppe: Uhm...

Ed Metzler: Where did she go after she left Pearl Harbor with you aboard?

Mr. Shoppe: First...action we had was...Saipan. The next one is Tinian.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum. Then you probably...I also have heard Wake Island, or is it Guam?

No, it was Guam that was mentioned, yeah.

Mr. Shoppe: Guam, yes, Guam.

Ed Metzler: Because those islands are all right in there together.

Mr. Shoppe: Yes, and...

Ed Metzler: So, what happened at Saipan? What did the California do?

Mr. Shoppe: Bombard...bombarded...the island...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Shoppe: With the four...fourteen-inch guns.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum, that's a big gun, isn't it?

Mr. Shoppe: Pretty...pretty good size.

Ed Metzler: I bet you can feel it when those things go off?

Mr. Shoppe: Well, you...you can, but...not very bad, you know? In...a turret, you didn't...you didn't get to know it, but it'd rock a ship, but...didn't much...get much noise.

Ed Metzler: Now what your duty station aboard?

Mr. Shoppe: Well, like I said, my battle station was on the fourteen-inch guns.

Ed Metzler: Okay, the front turret?

Mr. Shoppe: Yes, in the...battle.

Ed Metzler: In the battle, yeah. So, two fourteen-inch or...three, I can't remember on the California.

Mr. Shoppe: It was...two turrets; each...each turret got...had two guns.

Ed Metzler: Okay, so it...yeah, that's right. So, she was two guns, two turrets...in the front and one turret in the rear it looks like.

Mr. Shoppe: Yes.

Ed Metzler: So, what was...your duty in the turret? Were you a loader or a...what did you do?

Mr. Shoppe: I...run the (unintelligible)...oh, what do you call it?

Ed Metzler: The elevator?

Mr. Shoppe: Elevator, right.

Ed Metzler: So, you brought the...shells up from down below, huh?

Mr. Shoppe: Just the...the powder.

Ed Metzler: The powder.

Mr. Shoppe: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: The bags of powder.

Mr. Shoppe: Yeah. To me, I believe it was two bags...to fire one...one (unintelligible).

Ed Metzler: Uh hum, and so, you brought the bags up and then you did what? Gave it to a loader?

Mr. Shoppe: I sent it...sent it up to a loader.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, so, are you sending...stuff up or are you coming up with it?

Mr. Shoppe: Sending up...up...stuff.

Ed Metzler: So, you're down below then? You're at...kind of at the base of the turret?

Mr. Shoppe: Right.

Ed Metzler: On...down below deck?

Mr. Shoppe: Yeah, and sent the powder to them. Had a gang...handling the gun...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Shoppe: ...I mean the powder and projectile.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Shoppe: Projectile made, I believe...fourteen or...twelve or fourteen hundred.

Ed Metzler: That's a...that's a...*big* projectile, isn't it?

Mr. Shoppe: Yes, it is. And I can't remember...two bags of powder or four for each gun.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum, for each shot.

Mr. Shoppe: Right, uh hum.

Ed Metzler: Yeah. So, did you...get a...the opportunity to train with the other guys in the turret on...how to do this before you actually had combat or...?

Mr. Shoppe: Oh yes. We...got the officer in charge of the division...picked the people for...different things...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Shoppe: ...and...

Ed Metzler: Did you have a good officer?

Mr. Shoppe: Yes.

Ed Metzler: Good man?

Mr. Shoppe: Yeah, he...

Ed Metzler: Treat you right?

Mr. Shoppe: Oh yeah, couldn't...couldn't complain about that.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum. So, that was your combat station?

Mr. Shoppe: Right, uh hum.

Ed Metzler: Now, what was your...station when you weren't in combat?

Mr. Shoppe: Well, I stood watch on the fourteen, I mean, the...uhm (pause)...

Ed Metzler: So, you had watch duty on deck?

Mr. Shoppe: Right, uh hum.

Ed Metzler: And...maybe in different spots, huh?

Mr. Shoppe: Yes, uh hum.

Ed Metzler: Now, what did you do...work...on...on duty four hours, off four hours, or did you get eight hours on, eight hours off; how did that work?

Mr. Shoppe: Well, well...when one...went on watch...you had all the time off...you need. Of course, we worked...worked on that deck, you know?

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Shoppe: Did a lot of painting, and a whole lots of other stuff.

Ed Metzler: Okay, so you were doing maintenance as well then?

Mr. Shoppe: Right, uh hum.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, you know...chipping...the old chipping paint thing that...

Mr. Shoppe: Right.

Ed Metzler: ...every sailor, I guess, has done at one time in his career.

Mr. Shoppe: Uh hum, paint and then chip it off (chuckles).

Ed Metzler: And then paint it again, and then chip it off again?

Mr. Shoppe: Yes.

Ed Metzler: (Chuckles), now at this point...

Mr. Shoppe: Had to have something to do.

Ed Metzler: Well, that's right; keep you out of trouble, right?

Mr. Shoppe: Uh hum, right.

Ed Metzler: Speaking of trouble...did you...ever...get involved in any of the...card games and...and dice games and gambling onboard? I've heard great stories from Navy veterans about these games.

Mr. Shoppe: Yeah, all...all of that went on but I...I wasn't interested in card...cards.

Ed Metzler: I don't blame you.

Mr. Shoppe: All...all I ever played was Forty-two.

Ed Metzler: Hum! So, did...did anybody have any dominoes onboard?

Mr. Shoppe: Not really.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, well they must not have been from Texas.

Mr. Shoppe: No (chuckles).

Ed Metzler: (Laughter)

Mr. Shoppe: It's all cards.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, they must have been from California or something.

Mr. Shoppe: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Yeah. So, during Saipan campaign, the...the California was basically bombarding...shore bombardment?

Mr. Shoppe: Right, right.

Ed Metzler: (Unintelligible) and preparing things for the Marines and...

Mr. Shoppe: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: ...guys to go in?

Mr. Shoppe: Uh hum.

Ed Metzler: So, were...were you there when they actually...went into the island?

Mr. Shoppe: Oh yeah.

Ed Metzler: What happened?

Mr. Shoppe: Well, we...bombarded the island...to keep the enemy...away from wherever the...landing...landing was going to be.

Ed Metzler: Right, right.

Mr. Shoppe: I remember a plane came over, Jap plane...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Shoppe: ...one time before day...all this happened before daylight.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Shoppe: And with all his lights on...trying to get people to shot at him, so he could figure out where the...landing was going to be, you know?

Ed Metzler: He was the decoy, wasn't he?

Mr. Shoppe: Right, uh huh.

Ed Metzler: So, if you shot at him, then they knew where you were...

Mr. Shoppe: Right.

Ed Metzler: ...and they could bomb.

Mr. Shoppe: And that didn't happen.

Ed Metzler: You didn't fall for it, huh?

Mr. Shoppe: No.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter). Did...the California ever come under fire from some of these Japanese aircraft?

Mr. Shoppe: Well we...came over...a lot of...suicide planes; that was our biggest worry. And that all happened, oh, about a day...most of it at least, around daylight. They come in...close to water, so you couldn't hardly see them, you know?

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Shoppe: 'Cause they...right...close to the ship.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Shoppe: I believe we...I know we hit...was hit by one and possibly two.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, but that didn't happen at Saipan, did it?

Mr. Shoppe: No.

Ed Metzler: That happened later on.

Mr. Shoppe: Right, uh hum.



Ed Metzler: Probably...Philippines or Okinawa...

Mr. Shoppe: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: ...is probably where that happened.

Mr. Shoppe: The further out we got, the worse it got, you know?

Ed Metzler: Yeah, the further along in the war.

Mr. Shoppe: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: So, Saipan, Tinian and...Guam...and after that was over, what happened next?

Mr. Shoppe: Seemed like another operation, but I can't think of it, you know?

Ed Metzler: Well, I know that...the California was active in...the Philippines campaign.

Mr. Shoppe: Right.

Ed Metzler: Leyte, the invas...they supporting the invasion of Leyte and, in fact, I think the California was involved in the Battle of Surigao Straits, wasn't it?

Mr. Shoppe: Absolutely! We sunk a bat...Jap battleship there.

Ed Metzler: Really?! Tell me about that!

Mr. Shoppe: Well, (cough), I was in the turret and I couldn't see what was going on, but...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Shoppe: ...people running the radar and all...they started firing on us first.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Shoppe: But...they...the (unintelligible)...falling short of the ship.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Shoppe: Luckily, we got in on the first punch, and we, you know, sunk them. And...the first destroyers and all...around...they picked up people that...in the water...Japs in the water, you know?

Ed Metzler: Picked up the Japanese?

Mr. Shoppe: Yes. And...I was told that some of them started firing pistol...pistols at them. Of course, the Marines take care that right quick.

Ed Metzler: I bet they did (laughter)!

Mr. Shoppe: Yeah. So, anyway, they supposedly picked up all...all (unintelligible words)...pick them up, you know?

Ed Metzler: Uh hum. Now, of course, all this time, you're way down below decks...hustling...powder, aren't you?

Mr. Shoppe: Well yeah.

Ed Metzler: It's hard for you to see any of this?

Mr. Shoppe: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: But I guess you hear about it, huh?

Mr. Shoppe: Yeah. We didn't...we...we wasn't firing at that time; our firing the fourteen-inch was over, you know?

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Shoppe: We done sunk all we needed to sink.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum, uh hum.

Mr. Shoppe: So...anyway, I understand we picked up a lot of...prisoners.

Ed Metzler: Did you ever see any of them...

Mr. Shoppe: No.

Ed Metzler: ...actually? You just heard about them?

Mr. Shoppe: See, a smaller ship picked them up, you know?

Ed Metzler: Uh hum, uh hum. Now, I understand that...the California had a collision with the USS Tennessee.

Mr. Shoppe: Yes sir, sure did.

Ed Metzler: How embarrassing was that! Whose fault was that?

Mr. Shoppe: Well, I don't...I was on watch.

Ed Metzler: Really?!

Mr. Shoppe: I just...just went on watch at twelve o'clock; it happened between twelve and four, and of course, I got off watch at...four...to realize what happened. But all the guys that we relieved was sleeping...a deck below us, and most of those, if not all of them got killed.

Ed Metzler: Really?!

Mr. Shoppe: So, I...I was really lucky to be on watch.

Ed Metzler: If you hadn't been on duty, you might not be here talking to me!

Mr. Shoppe: Absolutely!

Ed Metzler: Isn't that something?!

Mr. Shoppe: And...when I...got off watch and went down...to where my bunk used to be...its water coming in...splashing; my bunk was completely submerged.

Ed Metzler: What level was your bunk?

Mr. Shoppe: Uh...

Ed Metzler: They had them five and six high, didn't they? Were you in the middle, up top or what?

Mr. Shoppe: I was on...in...in the middle.

Ed Metzler: About in the middle.

Mr. Shoppe: It was three...three bunks...(unintelligible), but...

Ed Metzler: And...you had water where your bunk used to be.

Mr. Shoppe: It was just...slosh...sloshing in. I couldn't even see my bunk.

Ed Metzler: Did you lose all your personal belongings?

Mr. Shoppe: Well, yes.

Ed Metzler: Or maybe you didn't have any personal belongings at that point.

Mr. Shoppe: Yeah, didn't have...didn't have anything...about anything, you know?

Ed Metzler: Yeah, right.

Mr. Shoppe: And...I had a couple of blankets on my bunk and I got those back after that thing...thing was over, you know?

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Shoppe: But they...all full of holes.

Ed Metzler: Were you able to keep those blankets?

Mr. Shoppe: Yes, I still have them.

Ed Metzler: You still got them!

Mr. Shoppe: Uh hum.

Ed Metzler: Are they up in the attic or do you have them down on display or what?

Mr. Shoppe: Well, no...we just have them in the house...you know now...where...where we live.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Shoppe: It...it's (unintelligible) the house.

Ed Metzler: Hum! That's something; that's a real...piece of history, isn't it?

Mr. Shoppe: Yes, it is.

Ed Metzler: So, what happened after the collision? Did the California have to be repaired again?

Mr. Shoppe: Yeah, we went in dry dock...dry dock and...and somewhere in the Philippines.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Shoppe: And...got repaired there. And...had a brother on the [USS] Idaho in the same location; he came over...came over to visit...when it was in...dry...dry dock.

Ed Metzler: It's a small world, isn't it?

Mr. Shoppe: Yes, it is.

Ed Metzler: So, you got a chance to say hello to him?

Mr. Shoppe: Yes.

Ed Metzler: Chance to talk to him for a while or just real quick?

Mr. Shoppe: Oh yeah; he stayed over...all day. He went back...to his ship.

Ed Metzler: Was he doing okay?

Mr. Shoppe: Oh yeah, uh hum.

Ed Metzler: Now at this point, what is your rating? Are you a...Seaman...

Mr. Shoppe: I was Seaman...

Ed Metzler: ...Third or what?

Mr. Shoppe: ...I was Seaman and I didn't...didn't get a rating till...almost the time I was discharged because I was afraid if I got a rating, I'd be transferred.

Ed Metzler: And you didn't want to be transferred?

Mr. Shoppe: I didn't want to be transferred.

Ed Metzler: You liked the California?

Mr. Shoppe: Well, yeah, it was safer than anything else I would have went on, you know?

Ed Metzler: Beats the heck out of a destroyer, doesn't it?

Mr. Shoppe: Yes, it does.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter)

Mr. Shoppe: Smaller things...we get sunk right quick.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, that's absolutely right. Now, did you have some good buddies aboard the...the California that you got to know pretty well?

Mr. Shoppe: Oh yeah, I knew al...almost all of them.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Shoppe: And a lot of people...I didn't know all of them, but...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Shoppe: ...most of them.

Ed Metzler: So, how...so, you told me earlier the food was good aboard ship, is that right?

Mr. Shoppe: Yeah, I thought so. A lot of people complained about it, but...I (unintelligible) complain about something anyway.

Ed Metzler: Now, do you remember any particular dishes that they always served you on a particular day of the week?

Mr. Shoppe: Hum! Well, I remember Thursday...if it's okay to say what everybody...

Ed Metzler: I want you to tell me like it is.

Mr. Shoppe: Yeah. Well, Thursday mornings we had shingle...shit on shingles.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter), this is the famous SOS, right?

Mr. Shoppe: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, I've heard about that.

Mr. Shoppe: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Now what was that like?

Mr. Shoppe: Well, just...piece of toast with...with...meat...

Ed Metzler: Barbeque kind of stuff, huh?

Mr. Shoppe: Well, meat and gravy, and...that's what we had for...Thursday mornings with some beans.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, I guess the nice word for that is...Same Ole Stuff.

Mr. Shoppe: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: SOS, but you and I know what they really called it.

Mr. Shoppe: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Yeah. Now I've heard...a lot of sailors on smaller ships complained that they didn't have ice cream, but that the big ships...like the battleships and the carriers had ice cream onboard; did you have ice cream?

Mr. Shoppe: Yes, uh hum.

Ed Metzler: Hum, that's nice!

Mr. Shoppe: Uh hum.

Ed Metzler: This is sounding like a pretty good deal you got going.

Mr. Shoppe: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Ice cream; all you can eat...

Mr. Shoppe: Right.

Ed Metzler: ...big, safe ship.

Mr. Shoppe: That...that's why I didn't want to be transferred.

Ed Metzler: Yeah. What part of being on the California did you not like?

Mr. Shoppe: Uhm, really...nothing except I didn't like...being there. I'd rather be back in Texas.

Ed Metzler: Hum, yeah, but you got to be where you got to be to...

Mr. Shoppe: Right, right.

Ed Metzler: ...to lick the Japanese, right?

Mr. Shoppe: Yeah, so...as far as being in service, that's where I'd rather be than any place else.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, it's like you said before you went in...you...it would never do for you to still be back at home and all the...everybody else is in the military, so...

Mr. Shoppe: Right, right.

Ed Metzler: ...so, you're doing your part.

Mr. Shoppe: Right.

Ed Metzler: Do you feel like the California did her part?

Mr. Shoppe: I think so; we were there...wherever they expected it to be.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum, she did her job. Now, in the Philippines campaign, after the Battle Surigao Strait and Leyte, I know the California was also involved in the invasion at Lingayen Gulf.

Mr. Shoppe: Uh hum.

Ed Metzler: And...I don't know whether anything in particular happened to you or the California...during that period of time. Does anything come to mind?

Mr. Shoppe: Uhm, not really. I...I don't remember where we were...when (unintelligible) suicide plane.

Ed Metzler: Well, I think we're probably coming to that, and I think...that the California...let's see, you guys...yeah, I think in Lingayen Gulf is where you...came under the...

Mr. Shoppe: Yeah, yeah.

Ed Metzler: ...kamikaze attack.

Mr. Shoppe: Yes.

Ed Metzler: Tell me about that; tell me what happened; where you were and how it felt.

Mr. Shoppe: Well, I was in the (unintelligible); my battle station was...fourteen-inch guns.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Shoppe: The guys on the...machine guns, the forty milli...millimeter and...twenty millimeter...was taking a wrap there.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Shoppe: And...a lot of...quite a few were killed, and...

Ed Metzler: Did you know any of the guys that got killed?

Mr. Shoppe: Oh yeah.

Ed Metzler: Uhm! That's not good.

Mr. Shoppe: Like I said...I...I knew...most all of them.

Ed Metzler: So, you didn't feel the...feel anything on the ship when...when she was hit?

Mr. Shoppe: No, not really.

Ed Metzler: Well, I guess a battleship's just big enough...that...they can take a hit...

Mr. Shoppe: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: ...and you might not feel it.

Mr. Shoppe: Yeah. I knew after it was all over with.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum, uhm! Now, what do they do...bury those...guys who were killed...they bury them at sea or...?

Mr. Shoppe: Oh yeah.

Ed Metzler: So, you had some sort of a ceremony?

Mr. Shoppe: It all happened just before daylight. You know you couldn't have a...light on the ship...visible...at night...when war's on...

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Shoppe: ...so they...they then...just before daylight, and...the put them in a bag...bur...burlap bag and...with a three-inch shell in bag...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Shoppe: ...which weighed about...I guess, forty...forty pounds...something like that.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum, uh hum.

Mr. Shoppe: So, when they went down...standing up.

Ed Metzler: Down to Davy Jones locker, huh?

Mr. Shoppe: I've...right.

Ed Metzler: Uhm!

Mr. Shoppe: And they just rolled them off...side of the ship...in the water.

Ed Metzler: Uhm. Now, I know there were a lot of storms and typhoons in the Pacific during the war and a lot of the ships got in those storms. Do you remember any storms or typhoons or hurricanes...like things that...when...the time you were on the California?

Mr. Shoppe: Yeah, it's...in the South China Sea...we were in the big typhoon, and...water came over the deck, you know, *way* over the deck. Of course, we...all the hatches were closed...and you didn't get anything in the ship, you know?

Ed Metzler: Did you have duty watch at...during any of that?

Mr. Shoppe: We couldn't...nobody could get up...on top...on guard...deck when that's happening.

Ed Metzler: Really?! So, everybody's...below deck then?

Mr. Shoppe: Right.

Ed Metzler: During a storm like that?

Mr. Shoppe: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: What about the Captain of the California; was he a good guy?

Mr. Shoppe: Yeah, I liked him. Of course, I didn't have no dealings with him.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, you...

Mr. Shoppe: Every once in a while, I...

Ed Metzler: ...you didn't eat dinner with him every night?

Mr. Shoppe: (Chuckles), no.

Ed Metzler: No, I didn't think so.

Mr. Shoppe: No. They had a...different quarters completely.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum. Now, did you get letters from home?

Mr. Shoppe: Yes, pretty...pretty often.

Ed Metzler: From...your mother or what?

Mr. Shoppe: Well, the...whole family.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.



Mr. Shoppe: And...we...picked...picked up...surprise at Eniwe... Eniwetok...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Shoppe: ...island...pretty close to the Philippines and got fuel there, too.

Ed Metzler: And did you...and were you good at writing letters back to home?

Mr. Shoppe: Uhm...

Ed Metzler: Hum!

Mr. Shoppe: (Chuckles), as much as I could, you know?

Ed Metzler: You wrote a few...or not?

Mr. Shoppe: Pardon?

Ed Metzler: Did you write...a few letters home?

Mr. Shoppe: Yes, oh yeah; every chance I got...really.

Ed Metzler: Okay, okay. So, I guess the next place...the California went...I'm just looking...uh...

Mr. Shoppe: Every once in a while, we had...Jap planes...come around...in range of us; they wasn't attacking us...but, the...three-inch guns...take care of them.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Shoppe: You...plane right there...you could barely see...this (unintelligible) started to firing on them...planes...first thing you'd see...is a big bunch of smoke.

Ed Metzler: Isn't that amazing, that they hit them...

Mr. Shoppe: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: ...from that far away?!

Mr. Shoppe: Oh yeah. And they fired...two or three times...to get their bearing, you know? Of course, they're all by radar.

Ed Metzler: Sure!

Mr. Shoppe: But...you'd see...a big bunch of smoke.

Ed Metzler: Hum!

Mr. Shoppe: (Unintelligible)...means they got them.

Ed Metzler: Now, the California was involved in the Okinawa campaign also?

Mr. Shoppe: Uhm, yes.

Ed Metzler: Do you remember anything special about...the Okinawa...action that the California was in?

Mr. Shoppe: It's...just...bomb...bombarding islands.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Shoppe: That's about (unintelligible).

Ed Metzler: I guess the same thing you did at...Saipan then?

Mr. Shoppe: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: You're supporting the troops going ashore.

Mr. Shoppe: Right, uh hum.

Ed Metzler: Now the kamikazes were particularly bad...in the Battle of Okinawa.

Mr. Shoppe: Yes.

Ed Metzler: Now, you had already been hit once by a kamikaze, right?

Mr. Shoppe: Right.

Ed Metzler: Did you see any other ships hit by kamikaze?

Mr. Shoppe: Uhm, yes. I remember one in particular. Ad...Admiral Reed (sp?), I don't know...remember the name of the ship; I think it was a destroyer.

Ed Metzler: It was a destroyer?

Mr. Shoppe: Yes.

Ed Metzler: And?

Mr. Shoppe: Kami...kamikaze hit it, and it...the bow went straight up and...turned...other end went straight up.

Ed Metzler: So, it cut her in half, huh?

Mr. Shoppe: Right. I...something the size of (unintelligible words).

Ed Metzler: Yeah, and they...

Mr. Shoppe: I imagine it was...oh, probably, most all of the hands on ship.

Ed Metzler: I guess somebody must have picked up the survivors?

Mr. Shoppe: Oh yeah.

Ed Metzler: Usually it was smaller ships that picked up survivors.

Mr. Shoppe: Oh yeah, uh hum.

Ed Metzler: 'Cause a battleship is so big...

Mr. Shoppe: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: ...that it doesn't really maneuver very well.

Mr. Shoppe: Uh hum.

Ed Metzler: How did that make you feel when you see a destroyer cut in two like that?

Mr. Shoppe: Don't feel good.

Ed Metzler: How do you feel about the Japanese?

Mr. Shoppe: Hum.

Ed Metzler: They were the ones doing all this.

Mr. Shoppe: Yeah. I didn't think much of them.

Ed Metzler: How do you feel today?

Mr. Shoppe: Well, they're our...allies today.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Shoppe: It wasn't the kids...fault that...in the battle, you know? It was Hitler's fault; he talked them into getting involved.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, so you...so you...you don't feel like the Japanese people are necessarily at fault...

Mr. Shoppe: Right.

Ed Metzler: ...just the leaders, is that what you're saying?

Mr. Shoppe: Right; Hitler's the main one.

Ed Metzler: Well, Hitler and the Germans...

Mr. Shoppe: Right...

Ed Metzler: ...and I guess...

Mr. Shoppe: (Unintelligible).

Ed Metzler: ...Hirohito and Tojo...

Mr. Shoppe: Uh hum.

Ed Metzler: ...was heading up the...the Japanese.

Mr. Shoppe: Yeah, tried to help the Germans out...

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Shoppe: ...with...

Ed Metzler: Now...

Mr. Shoppe: ...fighting world war both...two sides of the world, and that...

Ed Metzler: Whole world was at war, wasn't it?

Mr. Shoppe: Right. I don't...I don't know how we did what we did, but we did.

Ed Metzler: You dang right we did! Did you ever hear Tokyo Rose on the radio?

Mr. Shoppe: Oh yeah.

Ed Metzler: Tell me about that.

Mr. Shoppe: Well, she's...tell...telling people that...they have wives at home (cough)...then you know what's going on and all that sort of thing...build...build...down your morale, you know?

Ed Metzler: Sure.

Mr. Shoppe: That's...what it's all about.

Ed Metzler: Did it work?

Mr. Shoppe: I don't know if it did.

Ed Metzler: Were you surprised at what she knew and how she found out about it?

Mr. Shoppe: No, it's all pro...propaganda.

Ed Metzler: Uhm, yeah, I think she was educated in the United States and so she had an American accent; it was really strange I'm told.

Mr. Shoppe: Yeah, uh hum. (Unintelligible)...

Ed Metzler: So, aft...I'm sorry, go ahead Clinton.

Mr. Shoppe: Hear...we heard quite a bit of her, but...I don't know of anybody that paid any attention to it.

Ed Metzler: Hum! Now, did you...ever have...any USO shows where people like Bob Hope, and you know, entertainers from Hollywood like that came and...put on a show for you guys?

Mr. Shoppe: Well, really I don't...don't remember any of that, uh...

Ed Metzler: Did you ever have any R&R while you were aboard ship? I mean, did she ever pull into port and you guys get liberty for a while?

Mr. Shoppe: Oh yeah.

Ed Metzler: Where?

Mr. Shoppe: Honolulu for one place.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Shoppe: Others places I really don't remember the name of them.

Ed Metzler: But that was in the Philippines?

Mr. Shoppe: Yes, most of the time, yeah.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Shoppe: But I didn't have too much desire to go...ashore, you know? It just...wasn't my life.

Ed Metzler: You liked that ship, didn't you?

Mr. Shoppe: Yeah (chuckles).

Ed Metzler: It was kind of your home, wasn't it?

Mr. Shoppe: Yeah. Lot of times...of course, every division...had to keep somebody aboard in their division, you know? A lot of time...people pay me...just to stay aboard for them; maybe ten dollars.

Ed Metzler: That's a lot of money back then!

Mr. Shoppe: It sure was.

Ed Metzler: What'd you do with all that money? Huh?

Mr. Shoppe: (Chuckles), I saved most of it...no place to spend it, you know?

Ed Metzler: That's right! So, you came...when you came home after the war, you had a little bit of pocket change.

Mr. Shoppe: A little bit. First thing I had to do was buy a car, and I remember buying a car; went to Houston and bought a car. I lacked fifteen dollars having enough to pay for it, so I borrowed fifteen dollars from my...one of my brother-in-laws...pay for the car.

Ed Metzler: What kind of car was it?

Mr. Shoppe: Chrysler.

Ed Metzler: A Chrysler?

Mr. Shoppe: '39 Chrysler.

Ed Metzler: '39 Chrysler (chuckles).

Mr. Shoppe: Anyway, you had to have that to go to work, you know...

Ed Metzler: Sure! You had to have transportation.

Mr. Shoppe: ...to get around; yeah. And...

Ed Metzler: Now, let's go back to the war years. We dropped the bombs, the atomic bombs, and then the war was over. Now, do you remember any sort of a celebration aboard when the war was over? You heard about the war being over?

Mr. Shoppe: Oh yeah, everybody...glad to hear that. I know I went to Tokyo...after the war...and...it was just a mess, just a...well, you...war...war going on, you know? Everything just...tot...total mess; the smell and everything.

Ed Metzler: Yeah. Now, so...after the war was over and...the surrender was completed, then you went ashore in...Tokyo area?

Mr. Shoppe: Right, uh hum.

Ed Metzler: Okay, tell me what you saw.

Mr. Shoppe: Just a bunch of mess (laughter).

Ed Metzler: Everything's destroyed?

Mr. Shoppe: Yes, uh hum.

Ed Metzler: It doesn't smell good.

Mr. Shoppe: No...at all. So, I didn't enjoy going ashore there at all.

Ed Metzler: Well, it wasn't a tourist destination, was it?

Mr. Shoppe: Right, right.

Ed Metzler: How did the Japanese people treat you?

Mr. Shoppe: Well, I don't really remember...having contact with...very many of them.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Shoppe: You couldn't understand them, you know?

Ed Metzler: That's right.

Mr. Shoppe: So, I really didn't have contact with them.

Ed Metzler: So, they kind of left you alone and you left them alone?

Mr. Shoppe: Right, uh hum.

Ed Metzler: So, did you guys go to a restaurant or just look around or what?

Mr. Shoppe: Just...mostly to look around. I don't remember a restaurants...going to restaurant at all.

Ed Metzler: Uhm.

Mr. Shoppe: I don't think...be very appetizing.

Ed Metzler: (Chuckles), well, they didn't have anything to eat at that point anyhow.

Mr. Shoppe: Probably didn't.

Ed Metzler: Hum. So, after that, what did the California do?

Mr. Shoppe: Well,...came back to the States. I remember...just...don't remember just exactly when, but it...where does it say...it came by?

Other Person: Cape Town...South Africa.

Mr. Shoppe: Oh, came through Cape Town, South Africa.

Ed Metzler: So, you went back the long way?!

Mr. Shoppe: Right.

Ed Metzler: That's right because she was too big to go through the Panama Canal.

Mr. Shoppe: Yeah, I guess.

Ed Metzler: After she was...revamped in Washington, they put some side armor on her to...make her more resistant to torpedoes and that made her too wide to go through the Canal. I remember reading that.

Mr. Shoppe: I guess...I guess that's right.

Ed Metzler: So, you came back...through the Indian Ocean, around Cape Horn, is that right?

Mr. Shoppe: That's right.

Ed Metzler: And across the Atlantic...

Mr. Shoppe: To Philadelphia.

Ed Metzler: ...to Philadelphia.

Mr. Shoppe: Right.

Ed Metzler: Well, you've been around the world!

Mr. Shoppe: (Chuckles), several times, I think.

Ed Metzler: So, how did it feel to have survived the war? You must be feeling pretty good; you're on a ship; it's comfortable; the food's good; the war is over.

Mr. Shoppe: I'm anxious to get back to Texas; hear some country and western music (laughter)

Ed Metzler: Anxious to get back to Texas! Now, did you have a girlfriend back in Texas?

Mr. Shoppe: At that time, no.

Ed Metzler: Okay. You just had family.

Mr. Shoppe: Just all...all friends.

Ed Metzler: Hum! Kind of...be nice to get back to the good ole days, huh?

Mr. Shoppe: Uh hum.

Ed Metzler: Well now, you think about...you starting out in the war as a farm boy who'd never been on a train, and now the war is over a couple of years later, and here you're coming around the world on a battleship. How have you...how did that change you? You must have been a changed person.

Mr. Shoppe: Not really.

Ed Metzler: Really?!

Mr. Shoppe: Uh uh. The war didn't change me in any respect...I don't think. I just...experienced a lot of things...that I...didn't like the experience, but...just part of...all part of life.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum. So, what was the worst period for you during the whole war? What is the...the one time when you went, "Oh man!"

Mr. Shoppe: Probably when our own ship hit us.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum. When the Tennessee hit you?

Mr. Shoppe: I think it was the Tennessee.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, it was the Tennessee.

Mr. Shoppe: Yeah, yeah.

Ed Metzler: You know, we've got a crew member from the USS Tennessee that lives here in Fredericksburg.

Mr. Shoppe: Yeah?!

Ed Metzler: And I've interviewed him.

Mr. Shoppe: Have you?

Ed Metzler: But I don't remember him telling me about the collision...

Mr. Shoppe: (Chuckles)

Ed Metzler: ...with the California.

Mr. Shoppe: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: So, I figure it must have been their fault.

Mr. Shoppe: (Chuckle), it was. They ran into us; we didn't run into them.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter). So, you came back to Philadelphia...what happened then?

Mr. Shoppe: Come to...Camp Wallace to get discharged.

Ed Metzler: So, you're...you're out at this point?

Mr. Shoppe: Right, uh hum.



Ed Metzler: In fact, I think...I think she came back on...like December the 7<sup>th</sup> of...1945, yeah.

Mr. Shoppe: I was...I was...

Ed Metzler: Pearl Harbor Day, 1945 is when she got back to Philadelphia.

Mr. Shoppe: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: So, what do you do...ride a train to...to Texas?

Mr. Shoppe: To Camp Wallace, yes, to Camp Wallace. I believe I was discharged in...13<sup>th</sup> of December, I believe; 13<sup>th</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup>...of December, and went to Houston and...caught a ride to (unintelligible) of...me and three other guys...cost of fifteen a piece to get back to (unintelligible) where I lived.

Ed Metzler: You caught a ride, but it cost you money?! You didn't hitchhike?

Mr. Shoppe: No, (unintelligible) somebody would take us, you know?

Ed Metzler: Uhm, so you hired somebody to take you?

Mr. Shoppe: Yeah, uh hum.

Ed Metzler: So, how'd it feel to get back home?

Mr. Shoppe: Good! Real good!

Ed Metzler: Did you have any problems...settling into the old routine again?

Mr. Shoppe: No, not at all. I went to work...just as soon as I could get a job and that was pretty soon.

Ed Metzler: Uhm. Did...so, you went to work...where?

Mr. Shoppe: My first job was at...Cadillac...(unintelligible) in Houston. And they went on strike, so...I went...went home and went to work for Blue Bonnet, L...LCRA, at that time, in Giddings.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Shoppe: I worked there for...maybe a year and a half. Then a guy got me on at Houston Light and Power; I worked there...probably about the same amount of time.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Shoppe: Then I...decided I didn't want that because of the all kind of climbing, so I went to...(unintelligible) a bit...just several streets over...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Shoppe: ...and worked there...oh, maybe a year. And my niece called me one night; she worked at Shell, and told me Phillips bought the Houston shipyard. She heard they were hiring, so I went...I was there at seven o'clock the next morning...over...working...uh, evenings at Reed, so they hired me, and I worked till five. When I got off...taking off Reed (unintelligible) a bit, got in the eve...evening there, so I got in two days in one.

Ed Metzler: So, you're holding two jobs down?

Mr. Shoppe: Yes...per day.

Ed Metzler: Wow!

Mr. Shoppe: And I went to work for Phillips.

Ed Metzler: Hum.

Mr. Shoppe: I worked for them for thirty-one years; retired in '80.

Ed Metzler: Hum. Now...World War II is a long time ago. You ever think about the old war times...dream about it or think about whatever happened to the guys that you knew there?

Mr. Shoppe: Well, not really. I think about them a lot of times. My best friend aboard, in my division, married somebody from...Washington State. We got a paper from the ship for a good many years...and I noticed he was from Missouri and that's where he died, and then he got married in Washington State. But I also noted...his wife didn't have the same name.

Ed Metzler: That's interesting.

Mr. Shoppe: (Chuckle), (unintelligible) a good many of them...I got discharged with...married somebody in Washington State.

Ed Metzler: Hum!

Mr. Shoppe: And...several of them commented...married life is not what it...used to be.

Ed Metzler: Is that right?

Mr. Shoppe: (Unintelligible words)...same thing happened to them.

Ed Metzler: Yeah. So, did you ever go to any of the reunions that, you know, the old shipmates might have had on the California...from the California?

Mr. Shoppe: No, I never did...attend any of those.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Shoppe: They were all pretty much away from home and...

Ed Metzler: A long ways away.

Mr. Shoppe: Yeah, and I didn't have the time at that time to...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Shoppe: ...make a trip. Trip is...make a living.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, too busy earning a living, yeah.

Mr. Shoppe: Right.

Ed Metzler: And did you stay in contact over the years with any of your old crew mates?

Mr. Shoppe: Well, like I say, we get a paper from the ship...

Ed Metzler: Right.

Mr. Shoppe: ...and the guy that run the...did the paper was in my division.

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Shoppe: And we got the paper and...pretty well...kept up with everything. And I think they used our ship to bombard...I heard that...the atomic bomb...

Ed Metzler: Oh, she was a target on...some of the bomb tests?

Mr. Shoppe: Yes, uh hum, I think that's right. At least that's what I heard.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, that's probably right. You know, she was an old ship.

Mr. Shoppe: Oh yeah.

Ed Metzler: She was launched in...like 1914 or '16...something like that...

Mr. Shoppe: Uh hum, yeah.

Ed Metzler: ...so she went *way* back.

Mr. Shoppe: Uh hum.

Ed Metzler: Well, what else an we talk about...about the World War II years?

Mr. Shoppe: Uhm...

Ed Metzler: We've hit a lot of...a lot of subjects, but I...there may be some other things that I don't know to ask you about, so why don't you tell me some things.

Mr. Shoppe: Well, what we talked about is...just about all I remember...

Ed Metzler: Is that right?

Mr. Shoppe: ...about it, you know; been too long ago.

Ed Metzler: Well, it was a long time ago. I'm always impressed with...how good the memory is of you guys after all these years. I mean, you probably went a long

time without even thinking about...what happened on the California, and then yet, you still remember all this stuff.

Mr. Shoppe: Yeah, yeah.

Ed Metzler: So, think...looking back over the damage that the California sustained during all these battles, did you see some fair amount of damage to the deck area, I mean, when she got strafed and...hit?

Mr. Shoppe: Oh yes, it had a lot of damage.

Ed Metzler: Tell me about that.

Mr. Shoppe: Just a lot of clean up...which I didn't get involved in that. I guess I (unintelligible)...I don't know much...too much about it, you know? But...you can imagine when a plane hits you...what the damage does...kills a lot of people and all.

Ed Metzler: Sure!

Mr. Shoppe: I remember that, you know, and...

Ed Metzler: Uhm!

Mr. Shoppe: ...burying them. And when we came back home, we came across the same area...that they were buried. Our ship's Captain put over the loud...loudspeaker, "We're passing over the place that...we buried a lot of those people,"...you know?

Ed Metzler: Now that was a nice thing for him to do.

Mr. Shoppe: Yes.

Ed Metzler: Kind of like a memorial while you're passing by their graves.

Mr. Shoppe: Yeah. We were going home and they were going there to stay.

Ed Metzler: Uhm! Did...did you have...any entertainment onboard the California? I mean, movies or anything like that...to kind of take your mind off the war?

Mr. Shoppe: We had movies and...boxing and...all that sort of thing, you know?

Ed Metzler: Boxing?!

Mr. Shoppe: Uh hum.

Ed Metzler: Were you a boxer?

Mr. Shoppe: No, I wasn't; I wish I would have entered...entered. All the kids in...Golden Gloves kids, you know.

Ed Metzler: Yeah!

Mr. Shoppe: I...I never...had one fight in high school...boxing; I won that, but I probably wouldn't have won in war...

Ed Metzler: You think (laughter).

Mr. Shoppe: ...aboard ship.

Ed Metzler: Well, there's probably some...pretty good sized guys on that ship.

Mr. Shoppe: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: How big were you at the time? Were you...you mentioned you weighed a hundred and seventy after...basic training.

Mr. Shoppe: After I...I went aboard ship, I hung around...about a hundred and fifty-six, something like that.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum, uh hum.

Mr. Shoppe: I skimped on weight.

Ed Metzler: Well, you'd of been a middle weight then.

Mr. Shoppe: Right.

Ed Metzler: If you'd have boxed.

Mr. Shoppe: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: I'll be darned.

Mr. Shoppe: But those kids were pretty good. They boxed all their lives, I think, most of them, you know?

Ed Metzler: Yeah, but I think it kind of messes up their brains after a while when they get punched.

Mr. Shoppe: Yeah, well...

Ed Metzler: They used to call that getting punch drunk.

Mr. Shoppe: Yeah, it has affected them, I imagine.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, yeah. Okay, I don't have anything more to talk about if you don't.

Mr. Shoppe: No, I don't really.

Ed Metzler: Now, I don't want you going home and thinking about a whole bunch of things that you didn't tell me now.

Mr. Shoppe: Yeah. I told you about everything I...I remember.

Ed Metzler: Okay. Well, I'd like to end the interview...by thanking you and your generation for what you did for our country during World War II.

Mr. Shoppe: Uh hum.

Ed Metzler: We still don't thank you guys enough, in my opinion. So, I want to thank you sir.

Mr. Shoppe: Uhm, appreciate it.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Shoppe: And...I don't know if we'd do...could do it again; do you think so?

Ed Metzler: I don't know; depends on how much...trouble the country gets in, I think.

Mr. Shoppe: Right, uh hum.

Ed Metzler: I think we'd have to be backed into a corner, but...I think...we could do it again. I'm not sure. I hope we don't have to.

Mr. Shoppe: Yeah, I do, too.

Ed Metzler: Yeah. Okay, well I'm going to end it.

**FINAL** copy  
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