

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR

The Nimitz Education and Research Center  
Fredericksburg, Texas

An interview with Martin Tschirhart  
San Antonio, Texas  
August 27, 2014

FLOYD COX: Today is August 27, 2014. My name is Floyd Cox. I'm a volunteer of the National Museum of the Pacific War in Fredericksburg, Texas. Today I'm interviewing Mr. Martin Tschirhart concerning his experiences during World War Two. This interview is taking place at his residence in San Antonio, Texas. This interview is in support of the Educational and Research Center for the National Museum of the Pacific War, Texas Historical Commission, for the preservation of historical information related to World War Two. To start out with, Martin, thanks a lot for giving me the time to sit down with you and talk about your experiences during World War Two. If you'd give me a little bit of background, where you were born, when you were born, tell us a little bit about your parents -

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Well I was born in Castroville, Texas on December the 8<sup>th</sup>, 1920. And I went to school at Saint Louis Catholic School and I dropped out of school in the ninth grade. And I had to take the rabies shots. That's, no, I had to take the rabies shots when I was seven years old. And we had to come down to Austin, to take us the rabies shots because there's no other place in the state of Texas where you could get the shots.

FLOYD COX: Now why did you have to take rabies shots?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Well if the dog was rabid that bit me, and I still, when it gets cold, I still get the marks. And that's been a long time ago.

FLOYD COX: Mm-hmm.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: And then, after I dropped out of school, I got the best advice that anybody could ever give. My dad said, "Well I'll send you through school. If you're going to drop out of high school, I'll tell you this. Tomorrow morning, it's gonna be so much a month, room and board, and you're going to have to get insurance because you're going to kill yourself before you're 21." [Laughter] And that was the best advice anybody ever give me.

FLOYD COX: Now what'd your mother and dad do for a living?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Really my mother, she was more or less like a housewife. She was a good cook. She worked like a dog. Everybody liked her. Anybody got sick in Castroville, they called Katie. And Katie would go. She had those aloe vera cactus and she'd [indiscernible] the leaves with that [indiscernible]. And she'd cut 'em off and give it to 'em and they'd come if they'd got a splinter or a boil or something. And draw it out.

FLOYD COX: Works, doesn't it?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: It works, yeah. We were raised on it. So, but my dad, he worked wherever he could. With mules and horses. Anything that was with a horse or a mule.

FLOYD COX: What was his name?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: August L. He had an uncle named August but he insisted on being called August L. Leo was his middle name. And grand-dad's name was Leo. His daddy. And he just, we never went hungry. My sisters and I, before they both passed away. We always talked about, he never let us go without. We had three full meals a day. Regardless of what he did.

FLOYD COX: And this was during the Depression era, wasn't it.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Depression days, yeah. The '30s, yeah.

FLOYD COX: So you got out of school, you quit school –

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: I went to work for my uncle. To harvest the corn. He done hired me before I quit school. And then in '37, January the 1<sup>st</sup>, '37, I went to work for my other uncle and aunt on the ranch.

FLOYD COX: How much did you get paid?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: \$9.00 a month, room and board. Believe that or not. People don't want to believe that but that's what I got paid.

FLOYD COX: I believe it.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: And room and board. I did what I wanted to and in '39 we dried out. And I left the farm. I said the heck with that noise.

FLOYD COX: Dried out. By that you mean you had –

MARTIN TSCHIRART: No rain.

FLOYD COX: Right.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: The corn got up about 33-34 inches, 35 inches. That's it. At 4:00 in the morning, we'd get up and cut it off of the ground. Pile it up. The next morning at 4:00, we'd take it, drag it, take strings and go tie it off at that. Well we hauled that out of the field. Then I left.

FLOYD COX: And where did you go and what did you do?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Well I worked for a guy. I cleaned out farms and stuff. I worked manual labor the whole time. And I took care, at the end of the year, a lot of trapping line. And I trapped at this guy's place. I took care of his cattle. And then in 1940, I went to work with his brother with the feedstock store in Hondo. In Hondo, Texas. And I stayed there till '41. Then I moved to town. Then I worked for a beer dealer. A hot shot all over town.

FLOYD COX: Delivering beer?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Delivering beer, yeah. And then in December the 7<sup>th</sup>, you know the war started.

FLOYD COX: 1941.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Yeah, and that was on Sunday. And on a Monday morning, I delivered beer to Fort Sam Houston. And I seen these dag gone Ensigns and Second Class, crying. Crying in their beer because they gotta go to war. I said, "Hell, I'm going home and sign up." I signed up that day. That was my 21<sup>st</sup> birthday. I signed up and they told me to go home and they'd call me in March. From December, from January, well. From December the 8<sup>th</sup> until March that they called me. And I never come home after.

FLOYD COX: Well why did you pick the Navy?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: I don't know.

FLOYD COX: *[Laughs]*

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: I just didn't feel like I wanted [to be] diggin' ditches and stuff like that. Most of the guys from home, they all was in the Army or the Air Force. I didn't want no part of it. And I'm glad I did join the Navy. I had it good in the Navy.

FLOYD COX: So you signed up and they called you up right here in San Antonio.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Right here.

FLOYD COX: Okay and now, take us from there. Did you take a troop train somewhere?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: We took a train down to Houston.

FLOYD COX: Okay.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: And we formed Admiral Nimitz's unit. Which was about 2,000 guys. And they hauled us to San Diego. And *[laughs]* that was a joke. As far as, what did they call it? Apprenticeship. Training.

FLOYD COX: Right, basic training.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: 21 days in order to get 21 shots. And that was it. On the 21<sup>st</sup> day at 4:00 they give us breakfast and hauled us out of there.

FLOYD COX: *[Laughs]*

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: I went to San Francisco on the *USS Shasta* then.

FLOYD COX: Okay, so you didn't have any military schooling before they assigned you to the *Shasta*.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: No, no, no, absolutely not.

FLOYD COX: Okay, so you boarded the *Shasta*, where at?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: San Francisco.

FLOYD COX: Okay.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: At night. 10:00 at night.

FLOYD COX: And what was your job going to be on the *Shasta*?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: I was a Seamen. And swabbin' decks. Painting chippin' paint. Stuff like that.

FLOYD COX: You were on the deck crew?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: I was on the deck crew, right.

FLOYD COX: Yeah, and now, what type of ship was the *Shasta*?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: It was, we called it an ammunition ship. It was an ammunition ship. That's all we ever hauled. Well we did haul a Sherman tank, the first load that I was with her. Of course, she come from out the ground, the canal, after they put her in commission in Virginia, I think it was. She come around. That's where they picked up the crew there. But she —

FLOYD COX: You didn't select this ship? The Navy said, "You're going to *Shasta*."

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Oh yeah.

FLOYD COX: Now when you went aboard and said, "Oh my gosh, this is an ammo ship!" What did you think?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: I'm on a ship. That's it.

FLOYD COX: [Laughs]

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: But I'll tell you what. The first morning, we boarded in about 10:00 at night. And the next morning, this boats mate was standing on the deck with his pot belly sticking out. "Hey Charlie! Swab that goddamn deck!" I said, "I'm doing as good as I think, and if you know so damn much why don't you come down and show me?" And he did! And from that day on, I showed them kids all how to handle a damn swab, you know? You rolled 'em and then spread 'em out. And then –

FLOYD COX: You're talking about a mop?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: A mop. Yeah.

FLOYD COX: Yeah, when you swab the deck, you swab with a mop.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: They had them big mops.

FLOYD COX: Yeah. So you got to be a professional in swabbing the deck.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: In about five minute's time! [*Laughs*] Because, you see, you gotta understand that I was 21. And I've been on my own since I'm 16. And I didn't take nothing from nobody. I done what I thought was supposed to be done and that was it.

FLOYD COX: Did you go out on shakedown cruise when you first got onboard?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: No, not on that one.

FLOYD COX: Okay.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: It was already shook down. It was already seagoing. But we went on, well, I think, I'm not sure. Don't quote me on that. But I think we left the same day that I got on, at night, and the next day we shipped out. That's when we, it was done loaded.

FLOYD COX: It was already loaded.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: It was already loaded.

FLOYD COX: Now how did they load an ammunition ship?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: With booms and, the ship had four, two or three, two, three of 'em. Deals and it was run by steam.

FLOYD COX: Booms.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Yeah. Black [*indiscernible*], you'd run a cable. Swing it over and drop it down.

FLOYD COX: Now once it got your ammo, say a box of ammo, got below deck, how did you move 'em around? All by manual labor?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Manual labor. We didn't even have wheelbarrows.

FLOYD COX: Right.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: We set it down as far as we could with the boom.

FLOYD COX: Right.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: And we'd swing the booms close. But then we'd, we had 'em on crates. What they called shipping crates. I don't know what they call it now. But on the aft decks, like three or four hold, we had the powder for the battle wagons and the cruisers. And then we had all the other ammunition. That was a seagoing ship. It had to be.

FLOYD COX: So you got the *Shasta* loaded and you're ready to go. Take us from there.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Take it from there, right. Yeah.

FLOYD COX: Where did you go?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: We went straight to Auckland, New Zealand. We hauled, that ammunition that we hauled, we found out later that the Marines used it all to light Guadalcanal. The glycerin and everything. And why, after we left Caledonia, we was in Caledonia for three months.

FLOYD COX: Okay, you left New Zealand and went to Caledonia?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: No, we went back to the States.

FLOYD COX: Okay. What'd you do there?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Took a load up again. And then we went to Caledonia. And we acted as an ammunition dump there. The war ships would come on one side and we'd load them up and the supply ships would come in on the other side and we'd take that off of there, put it on ours. Worked like hell.

FLOYD COX: I bet you did.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: We went from Caledonia to the Aleutian Islands.

FLOYD COX: Adak.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Yeah, [*laughs*] Adak. And that's cold. Damn that was cold. And we left Caledonia. It's hot.

FLOYD COX: Yeah.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: No foul weather gear. We loaded up, took 'em about 70 hours to load us up. And we pulled out and never had time to get, our foul weather gear caught up with us when we was leaving Caledonia for Pearl Harbor. We went to Pearl Harbor, picked up one of those two-man submarines that they captured. And we thought that it was going to the Smithsonian Institute. I don't know if it did or not. But I still think it ended up in Fredericksburg.

FLOYD COX: It did, because that's the only one captured. Intact.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Yeah, we hauled that son of a gun. Yeah.

FLOYD COX: Well let me ask you this. When you're loaded with ammo, say you're leaving the States. Are you in a convoy?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Never had one.

FLOYD COX: Did you have any –

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Never escorted.

FLOYD COX: Nope.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: The only place we were escorted, and I still don't know why we went through Leyte Gulf. The only reason I can come up with is they had that battle, sea battle, right outside of Leyte Gulf and I think the might have known it was gonna happen. That's the only place we had an escort. We had two tin cans. Two destroyers, to take us out, back into the ocean. And why they sent us through Leyte Gulf, I don't know. But somebody smarter than me I guess, thought they were, anyhow.

FLOYD COX: Now where in this sequence, where in the sequence did you go to the Aleutians? You left New Zealand. You picked up ammo.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Went down to Caledonia. And from there we went up to the Aleutians.

FLOYD COX: Okay, now what'd you take up there?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: [*Laughs*] We took half a load of ammunition.



FLOYD COX: Half a load?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Half a load. And when we got up, they were waiting for us. Put us in a cove where nobody could see you, you know? 'Cause if you blew up you didn't blow up anything. You just blew up the small land, that's all.

FLOYD COX: [*Laughs*] Right.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: And we were four on and four off for four months. I say four months, but it was close to it. Four on and four off.

FLOYD COX: Four hours on and four hours off?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Right. Yeah. We never seen the darkness over there. It was always daylight. We went to sleep at daylight. We woke up at daylight. And I got off of the ship once, well twice. Once the old man gave us liberty. I said, "Where the hell we gonna go?" He said, "Well you can crawl up that mountain."

FLOYD COX: Mount Moffett.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: [*Laughs*] I don't know. And we crawled up there and this little kid from Minnesota. Wercinski was his name I think. And we looked out on the ship, it looked like this. [*Laughing*]

FLOYD COX: Looked like a model!

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Yeah! It looked like a little drawing. I said, "God damn, we that far away!" He said, "Yeah. It's no problem." He tied his life jacket on his butt. Jumped up and down he went.

FLOYD COX: He snowboarded!

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Yeah, I suppose he could do that too. Well I got about from here to the damn door, the jacket come off. [*Laughing*] I was on my butt all the way down. I said, "Oh man." But the old man had to go to the, I'll take you back. The old man had to go to the main island for a conference of some sort. Anyway, we hauled him over there. I had the navigator, not the navigator but the, well I guess you call it the navigator. He told me which way to go. To get there. And that was far.

FLOYD COX: How'd you take him? In what kind of boat? I mean how'd you get him there?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: We had a gig. A Captain's Gig. In Caledonia, Admiral Ramsey required it because we had it all. And I was in charge of the gig at that time. I made Coxswain.

FLOYD COX: Oh!

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: And this other kid was with me. We had the decks varnished and we made fancy work arounds the damn thing and everything. When we got, one weekend the Officers on that carrier requested the gig. Well they came back Monday morning and said, "Oh man, the nurses with their pop nail boots." They scratched the decks and it looked like hell. Well Ramsey got halfway down the ladder and he looked down at it. Shook his head and he said, "Tshirhart, what'd you do to my boat?" I said, "It's what your people did. They requested it last Friday and it just come back this morning looking just like this." He said, "Well you go back and tell your Captain to strip it all down and paint it Navy blue. And take all that pretty fancy work you got on there off of it. And I did. I told the Captain. He was already getting it on the intercom or whatever they called it then. The radio.

FLOYD COX: Shore to shore radio?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Yeah. And he had already talked to the old man about it. And the old man said, "Matley must have really made a mess of it." I said, "Let's go look at it." He said, "No, I don't want to see it." So Simon and I stripped it down. And we painted it blue. Navy blue. Ocean blue like all the ships was. And when I took it back to pick up Ramsey again. He looked down and he said, "You didn't strip it all the way!" I said, "Yes sir, I sure did." He said, "You still got them cushions in there." He said, "Take them out too." I said, "Okay." When I went back, I took them out and them nurses and them people over that carrier, they was sitting on hard. But that was the gig. It wasn't a boat, it was a gig.

FLOYD COX: Right.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: And I really had, I took canvas, taped it, sticked it on there. And then stripped it piece by piece. And that made fancy work. I could do things like that. Just like that lanyard on that boatswain whistle when you come in. I made that lanyard. But now I couldn't no more. Too many thumbs.

FLOYD COX: So that Captain's gig was your baby, right?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Oh yeah. I enjoyed that boat, yeah. That was it.

FLOYD COX: So you left the Aleutians and then, take us from there. Where did you go?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: We went to Pearl Harbor and picked up that submarine and went to San Francisco.

FLOYD COX: Okay. And you delivered it to San Francisco.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Yeah, and then I'm blanked. I don't know where in the heck we went after that. But I do know we stopped on the way back at Pearl Harbor and picked up a million

dollars and needed three Marines, four Marines, to guard it. It was exchange money, they brought, you bring back as it as the war went on. And a million dollars. Can you believe that? Now it'd be a hundred million.

FLOYD COX: Probably. Well, getting back to the HA-19, I think that's the number of it. The Japanese submarine. Did you happen to get inside of it while you had it on board?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: No, they wouldn't let us.

FLOYD COX: Oh, okay.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: No, they were strictly, keep your hands off.

FLOYD COX: Right, off limits.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: You leavin? Be nice to everybody.

HOLLY: I'll try!

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Hey, look. Holly, look at that lanyard on your left. Where the whistle is. Yeah. I made that!

HOLLY: See ya later.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Okay. No, they was guarding that thing and you couldn't touch it. We shored it up on the number two hull and guards were with it all the way. Marines, I imagine.

FLOYD COX: Yeah, I imagine so.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Seven days.

FLOYD COX: Now, when was this? Do you remember? 1942?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: It had to be in '43.

FLOYD COX: Okay.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: The early part of '43. When that was. I'm guessing that it was. I took an absence then. *[Laughs]*

FLOYD COX: Right.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: But, yeah, I got off of her and then in '43 we put that tug into commission.

FLOYD COX: Well let me back up before we get on the tug.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Yeah.

FLOYD COX: When you were on the *Shasta*, what was your battle station? Did you man a gun during battle?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: No, no, we didn't have, you know, last night I was trying to think. We only had one five-inch gun on there. And we had depth charges.

FLOYD COX: Yeah. So, did they ever call you to General Quarters at any time that you remember?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: We always practiced General Quarters.

FLOYD COX: Okay.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: We had Man Overboard drills.

FLOYD COX: Mm-hmm.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: And all that kinda stuff. No, we had a good Skipper. I was fortunate enough to have two good Skippers. They knew what they were doing.

FLOYD COX: How was the crew overall on the *Shasta*?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: There was too many people on it. There was over 200 on her. There was too many people. You couldn't get acquainted with everybody.

FLOYD COX: Right. Yeah.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: We was divided into two divisions. And the first division, I was in the first division. Second division, that was the after part of the ship. And those boats and mates and all of them were regular people. We were V6s. You know, and if it wouldn't have been for the V6s, we'd still be at war.

FLOYD COX: Okay, tell us what a V6 is.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Well that's a volunteer that got out on point system.

FLOYD COX: Yeah.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: I had enough points to get out when the guy put up. Signed the papers. And I didn't get out then.

FLOYD COX: Well, you went back. You took the Japanese submarine to the States. Okay, take us from there, as you recall.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Well, like I say, we unloaded it and then we went back. Where, I don't rightfully know. But we went to some island. And I loaded some more ammunition. And then stopped in Pearl and picked up a million dollars. Not in Pearl, in Honolulu. And picked up that money. And brought it back to the States.

FLOYD COX: Now, where do they carry it? Of course, down in the hull I would guess.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Down in the number two hull.

FLOYD COX: Yeah.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: The Marines would stand guard on it.

FLOYD COX: 24 hours a day.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Had to have a special pass and everything else to get down there.

FLOYD COX: Yeah.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Yeah, a million dollars. That was a lot of money back then.

FLOYD COX: Oh it certainly was. And you took that money to where?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: To San Francisco.

FLOYD COX: Okay.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Unloaded it and that was it. The Armed Guard picked it up in carriers. On carriers. And took it off.

FLOYD COX: Alright, so now you're in the States. How long did you stay there? What happened after that?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: We went up to Mare Island and loaded up again. And from there, I think I stayed there then. In '43. I think I, I put in for a transfer because I was Second Class then. And, there were two member Second Classes in the Second Division. I said, "I want off of here." Well they didn't keep too many guys on there anyhow. We got careless.

FLOYD COX: Yeah, right.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Like I told you, the damn socks the Battleship amour, the pellets were that big around and there was a big bag of 'em. And you used two of them to shoot the shell.

FLOYD COX: Right. Powder bags.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Powder bags, yeah. And hell, them shells were that high.

FLOYD COX: Yeah.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: And heavy. You couldn't lift 'em.

FLOYD COX: So you decided to get off the *Shasta*.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: I decided to get off of the *Shasta* and they sent me to Goat Island, San Francisco. And I looked every morning. I was there about a week. And I looked there every morning. Finally my name was on the *USS Pakana*. And that same day, a Chief came by and told me, "You're in charge of getting all the storage put up and checked out. In the morning, you get your breakfast and ask them to fix you a lunch. And stay there all day. As the trucks come in, you stay there all day. Check it all out." And I did in the warehouse in Oakland. And I practically lived on that damn ship before she went in commission. Then we put her into a commission and then it's all history.

FLOYD COX: Did you take it on, once you got on board, did you take it on a shakedown?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: After we put her in commission we did.

FLOYD COX: Oh, okay.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: We never moved her until she was in commission. And then the old man took over the ship and the next day, which was Christmas day, they were going to shakedown this thing. We got tailed until the Oakland Bay Bridge or the Golden Gate Bridge, and we turned around and everybody was seasick! [*Laughter*]

FLOYD COX: Well how was the crew on this particular ship?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: On the *Pakana*?

FLOYD COX: *Pakana*, uh huh.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: They was, like I told you before, they was good. But they had to learn the hard way. But they was wash outs. Every one of 'em was a wash out, out of school.

FLOYD COX: Different schools.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Different schools. Yeah. They was all wash outs. And they turned out to be real, real good seaman. I wouldn't have paid a dime for the whole damn crew at one time. 'Cause they was worthless. And you couldn't tell them anything 'cause they'd tell you to go to hell.

FLOYD COX: Right [*laughs*]. Even if they worked for you, huh?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Yeah, no, until they found out what Simon did, I was going over the side. They were crewmen then. I mean they was one for all and all for one. They was really, really good seamen. Good seamen.

FLOYD COX: Now what time of ship was the *Pakana*? That's ATF-108.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: That's a tug. A seagoing tug.

FLOYD COX: Okay, and what's the primary purpose for a tug?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Well, her purpose, that's a good question. Her purpose was to pull LSTs off of the beach when there was an invasion somewhere. And she towed. We had a big towing cable. Two-inch towing cable. We towed everything under the sun. She was a working ship is what she was. She was just like that ammunition ship – a working ship.

FLOYD COX: Yeah.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Now, she had guns on her. She had a three-inch, two 50s, two 20-milimeters, and two 40-milimeters. The 40-milimeters was dual barrels.

FLOYD COX: What was the length of the *Pakana*?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: The *Pakana* was, I think it's 190 feet. I think. Yeah. And she was seagoing. She was a seagoing tug. She had a prop. The prop was that high and the blades was that wide. All brass. And it was pitched. She was powerful. She was so powerful.

FLOYD COX: How many did she have? Two or one?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: What, props?

FLOYD COX: Yeah.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: One.

FLOYD COX: Okay.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: One prop. That don't matter to that Skipper. He was good.

FLOYD COX: What was his name? Do you remember?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Willy White. That's all I remember. William White I guess his name was.

FLOYD COX: What rank did he have, Martin?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: He was, just before you get to be a Captain. Stripe. Whatever that is.

FLOYD COX: A Commander?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: A Commander I imagine, yeah.

FLOYD COX: Yeah.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Yeah, he wasn't a full-fledged Captain.

FLOYD COX: So you're on board ship. Take us from there. When did you leave and –

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Well we went on that cruise, on that shakedown cruise down to San Diego.

FLOYD COX: Right.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: And from there we came back and, after we picked up the barge that broke the cable.

FLOYD COX: Okay, so you picked up a barge after you went back, after shakedown.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Two of 'em. Two barges to San Diego.

FLOYD COX: You pulled two. Now when you pulled barges, are they in line or are they side by side.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: They were pretty much in line, yeah.

FLOYD COX: Okay.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: And we had one barge cable on each side of the ship. And we used to have on windless. And then the main windless was directly in the middle of the ship on the poop deck. And it was well arranged.



FLOYD COX: Now what was your duties on this particular ship?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Well I was, I made Boats Mate first, right after we got on there. And then they got, the one Chief, we had two Chiefs when we went to commission. One of 'em took off. He said, "To hell with this. I don't want this." So he took, the old man transferred him. And the other guy had come off a hospital ship and he was worthless. He didn't know anything about seamanship. So I practically ran the division. But that was it.

FLOYD COX: Mm-hmm.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: And everybody looked to me to do things.

FLOYD COX: Job assignments.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Yeah. Job assignments, whatever you have. And we worked, that old man worked us. Oh, we hated his guts.

FLOYD COX: [*Laughs*]

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: But you know, after the war was over and I got home, it finally dawned on me that that old man was doing what I was doing on the job. On the commercial, on the plumbing jobs. Leave your damn stuff at home, don't bring it to work. And, although he wouldn't befriend anybody. And make 'em, what he was doing was he was keeping us all mad at him and that way we wouldn't be mad at anybody else.

FLOYD COX: At each other, yeah.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Yeah. And I think that's what his theory was. I don't know.

FLOYD COX: It could have been. You all united against him.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: You're right, yeah, we did, yeah. But he just, oh he worked the hell out of us. We chipped and painted so damn much. [*Laughing*] He was, well, I think he liked me. Because I was in his office more than I was anywhere else. I remember we had, in Eniwetok I think it was, the tornado start coming in. And there was five destroyers at a repair ship, tied together. And we got orders to move 'em. And re-anchor 'em on account of the wind coming in. So we did. And this new officer, we just got him aboard. He was coming off a fishing boat in Caledonia. And they made him a Deck Lieutenant. And I finally told him, I said, "Lieutenant, get the hell outta here. Go down and read your Psych book or something. But get the hell away from us. We know what we gotta do. Don't be telling us what to do." And low and behold, the old man was standing right above me when I told him. After we got the job done, "Tschirhart, come to the Captain's office." [*Laughing*] I went back there again and he told me, said, "We can't do that." I said, "What can't we do?" "You can't tell an Officer to get the hell outta here and do something else." [*Laughing*] I said, "Well, where were you?" And he told me. And I

said, "Well you seen what he was doing. He's going to kill somebody. One of these Seamen. Them Seaman knew what to do." I said, "We done it so damn many times we know what to do." He said, "I know it and you know it, but that officer didn't." I said, "Will see." The next day he was gone.

FLOYD COX: Really?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Yeah.

FLOYD COX: Transferred him.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Got rid of him.

FLOYD COX: Real quick, huh?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Yeah. Well, you know, them Seamen, they knew that I'd stand up for 'em.

FLOYD COX: Right.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: And, like I said, when I got off of that ship, the morning I left, everyone of 'em came and shook my hands and said thank you. So that made me feel pretty good.

FLOYD COX: Yeah, that's quite a tribute. Okay, we'll go back to when you picked up the two barges. Where were you headed with them?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: We were headed to Saipan I guess.

FLOYD COX: Okay.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Just something to tow to, you know, for shakedown.

FLOYD COX: Right.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: And we towed, it was empty. Now we took, we left San Francisco with two loaded barges. Believe it or not, one of 'em was an ice cream factory. And the other one was ammunition. And we was going to Marshall Islands, I don't know which ones. But we swapped ice cream for movies. We pulled 'em in and throw 'em a line. And then they'd haul their ice cream over to us and we'd send them movies. And the ammunition barge, we just let it lay out there, you know? But we went, sometimes we went, where was I?

FLOYD COX: You traded movies for ice cream.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah. Well we took them to one of the islands and hell, we stayed practically all [*indiscernible*]. Sometimes we wouldn't get mail for four or five months. Didn't get paid. Didn't know what paid was.

FLOYD COX: You didn't need any money, I'm sure.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: We didn't need any money. Let 'em keep it, yeah. [*Laughing*] And at one time, I didn't touch land for one year solid.

FLOYD COX: Oh my gosh.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Yes sir. And it's in there. In the book. One year. I didn't know what the dates was but I know it was one year. And the only reason I touched land was I took the mailman in Saipan, I took the mailman to the beach to get the mail. And then I got out and walked around like a god damned duck.

FLOYD COX: [*Laughs*] Now tell me about, you mentioned that you lost one of the things that you were towing. Tell me about that. Did you have a cable separation?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Lost what?

FLOYD COX: Did you lose one of your things that you were tugging? Pulling?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Yeah, we broke the cable.

FLOYD COX: Right. Tell me about that.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Well the water was rough. The swells was five, six, eight, ten foot. And that cable just [*clapping sound*] busted through. Interrupted through, just gutted and then we gotta pick it up.

FLOYD COX: Yeah, now tell me how you did that.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Well [*laughs*] first of all, we pulled the other barge in about 25 feet and left it lay there. And then we waited until the other barge got close to us and then when it passed us, I tried to get on it several times. Then the chief finally took me and threw me on it. And it rolled at the same time. And that's when I caught the bridle on the other side. I was down in the water. And when I come up and when it rolled over, I looked up and seen Simon sitting up there. And that was quite an episode. And they say that little son of a gun, he just jumped clean off. Didn't need nobody's help. [*Laughing*] That's when we made the crew out of them people. And that's when they, that's, and they were. They were really crewmen after that. One for all and all for one.

FLOYD COX: That's what you need aboard ships. Especially a smaller one like you were on. Well tell me about the first time that you towed something to the Pacific. One of the islands in the Pacific. What did you tow?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: The first thing was that ammunition. Ammunition barge and that ice cream.

FLOYD COX: Right. Okay.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Then we left them in, we invaded some island over there and I forget which one it was.

FLOYD COX: That's okay.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: And we left them barges there.

FLOYD COX: And then where did you go?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: That's a good question. We went so damn many different places but we went and joined a fleet then. And then we went, from there we went to Iwo Jima. Then we went to Guam. From Guam on I know where we went.

FLOYD COX: Well let me ask you this. I understand that you went to diving school. When did you go to diver school?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: In between trips in Pearl Harbor.

FLOYD COX: Okay.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: That's quite an episode.

FLOYD COX: Now tell us about diving school.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Well the diving school was really something. The day before your qualification, they put you in a tank. They had a tank about the size, half the size of this living room. And about that deep of water in it.

FLOYD COX: About twelve feet, roughly.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: About eight, ten feet, yeah.

FLOYD COX: Okay.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: And they have squares made out of half-inch pipe. You're supposed to disassemble them and put 'em back together. Well you took 'em apart no problem. Hell, it's just half-inch pipe, no problem. And while you put it back together, all of a sudden you don't have no more air. And you open up your valve and then you say, "Well sun of a gun, I don't have enough air." So you give the signal. You pull two hard yards of line out. All the way piled up next to you, you know. And by that time, the water was black. And you try to talk to 'em, nobody answers on the communication deal. *[Laughing]* I say, well them smart bastards. I know how to get out because I know where the ladder is. I went over to the corner where the ladder was. That was gone! Now what the hell am I going to do?

FLOYD COX: What are they trying to do? Drown you?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: No, they're checking your nerves. And all of a sudden when I'm standing there at that ladder, the air came in. And stretched you out. You couldn't bend that suit. It's full of air. You head with the chin button, you'd be letting air out but not enough. And you couldn't cut it off because you can't reach the cutoff. And there you are, and you flew out of the water. Put your arms stretched out and everybody laughing at you. And they pulled you in and took the helmet off of you. That's the first thing they take off, the helmet.

FLOYD COX: Right.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: I said, "You sorry bunch of bastards." *[Laughing]* Cussed 'em out. And they say, "Well that's what they do to every one of 'em." I say, "I don't care." Tell us something, you know?

FLOYD COX: So they trained you in deep sea. What did they call that diving helmet, a bell helmet?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: No, just called it a helmet.

FLOYD COX: It was brass, right?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: What they were doing was checking your nerve system. We had a guy that could walk on mud in Pearl. He could walk like there was nothing to it. But, he was a good diver, but he couldn't, we took him out of the water and he says, "Let me out of here, let me out of here." But he disqualified right then and there. Instead of coming out and cussing them out, he wanted to get out of there. But we had, on one of the qualification dives before that, I went down, supposed to go sixty feet. And I told 'em, I said, "Let me know when I get down to sixty." And the chief talking to me on the controls, he said, "Well you gotta come up 20 feet. You're in 20 foot of mud." I said, "Well hell." So I did and I could tell when I got on top of the mud and I could travel then. And on my qualification dive, it was 125 feet outside of Pearl Harbor. And it was clear as a crystal. And I was just sitting there, reading a magazine. 125 feet. And he said, "Tschir, what the hell are you doing down there?" I said, "Just sitting here, reading a magazine." "Well get the hell up here." I said, "Well, bring me up." He compressed me as he

come. He did. And the next day I went and got my certificate. The first job we was on was in Maui. All the foresight, the practice landing Marines on a supply ship. And she run aground and we had to go pull her off. And then you had a hole in her about like that. Where a rock went in it. And we had to weld a deal on it.

FLOYD COX: Patch it.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Yeah, patched. And you know, we gotta communicate from the dry dock saying that, thank the divers who welded that sheet on there because we didn't have to do that. They done a good job.

FLOYD COX: Now where did you learn to weld?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Right there at that school.

FLOYD COX: So they teach you welding, diving?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Well cut an iron. Well, cutting, you just lay it down flat. It's a tube of air and fire. And you just pull it straight. And you don't, when you go out and weld, you don't jig, you just pull it straight. It's a lot simpler.

FLOYD COX: How did you like that, as a young man going through that?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: I enjoyed it. That's the only reason why. 'Cause I was young, adventurous. Now I'll tell you what I enjoyed. The islands like Saipan and them, the coral reef was so nice. God, they was so pretty. And the fish would come up and look you right square in the eyes.

FLOYD COX: Yeah.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: And they'd be sideways, this big around and they'd look at you this way. You can't hardly see 'em. And it really was an experience.

FLOYD COX: Well, okay, you went to dive school. You're a qualified diver. And did you ever dive without a helmet? Did you ever do skin diving type things?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: No.

FLOYD COX: Every time you went in the water, you went with a helmet?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Helmet on, yeah.

FLOYD COX: So you're in the states. We'll go back to, you're in the states. You've had your training and you take a trip. Where did you go and what happened there?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: A trip?

FLOYD COX: Yeah, or you delivered something.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Well on the tug we just unloaded what we had. See, we had a dry dock in tow and we went through, Yap, was still occupied by the Japs. At the time. And we went through, what do you call 'em, typhoons.

FLOYD COX: Typhoon.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Typhoon, yeah. We went through them, broke two of the big cables. And we started in at sundown and the next morning the old man said we had until daybreak to have an eye put back in there. We pulled a new cable out. Put it on the windless and spliced an eye in there. The only thing that Chief knew was how to splice a cable.

FLOYD COX: *[Laughs]*

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: And we used sledgehammers and steel pins to go through them cables. The cable is as big as your finger. Stainless steel. And the next morning we lost a net tender. She come up missing. She's MIA.

FLOYD COX: Now that's a ship that tends the –

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: That was with us, yeah.

FLOYD COX: Right.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: And then the –

FLOYD COX: Was that lost in the typhoon?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Yeah. Got lost there. Well went over, we did water with the boats that night.

FLOYD COX: I imagine you were bouncing around like a cork in there.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: We did. We did.

FLOYD COX: In 100 foot boat.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: People want to know why I was always barefoot. Hell, our shoes was always wet! *[Laughing]* I was barefooted. Yeah. It was, she was a seagoing piece of machinery. And you know, we got seven planes to our credit.

FLOYD COX: That's one thing I wanted to ask you about. During any of these trips, did you encounter enemy fighter planes who were trying to strafe or bomb you?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Not before we went to Guam.

FLOYD COX: Okay.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: In Guam we did. And we saw, we had a furnished seamen to sit on the bulldozers because the Japs were shooting the Marines off of it quicker than they could put 'em on.

FLOYD COX: Wow.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: So we sent some seamen over there. Volunteers. And you didn't need to ask for volunteers. You just told 'em.

FLOYD COX: Right.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Because they volunteered for nothing. And then when we went into Okinawa, that was after the first five days it was nothing but then all hell broke loose.

FLOYD COX: But when you went over to Okinawa, did you travel in convoy at that time? Or did you just travel by yourselves?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Yeah, no, we went in the convoy. We went one time and stayed there. But when we went to Japan to pick up them survivors, 200 miles from Japan, we was by ourselves. I got the date and everything in this book here.

FLOYD COX: That diary. What Martin is referring to is that he maintained a diary and he was kind enough to furnish a copy to our museum. Okay, let's talk about Okinawa. Did you know when you were headed there where you were going?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Right where we was going, yeah. I did. Because I was a close friend of the Quartermaster. And he had to sketch where we was going to land and everything. I said, "Are we going to be close to the landing?" The whole seventh fleet was on the other side of us. [Laughs] And that first morning, well the first five days it was hardly nothing. But the first morning that plane went over us, you could see his helmet. He had his wheels down and he was pulling on the stick to get rid of the torpedo. And he flew over the whole fleet and never once did he get it off.

FLOYD COX: Good.



MARTIN TSCHIRHART: I don't know if it was later on when he got over the land, if the Marines shot him down or if he got it out and it was a torpedo that blew up or what. We don't know because it was over on the land.

FLOYD COX: Well were you there off of Okinawa when the Marines hit the beach.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Yeah, I have some pictures of it.

FLOYD COX: Yeah. Can you just, can you describe for me what you saw that day?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Well you saw a lot.

FLOYD COX: Tell us about it.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: It was about five days later and those LCSs opened the deals and the bolts when up and the Marines landed. And we didn't have to pull off one of 'em but we stayed there. And they pulled off and got some more Marines. And big guns were shooting over the landing people. And you could hear those big old things go [*whooshing sound*]. Give you cold chills. Hopefully you hope they don't fall on you.

FLOYD COX: How did you feel? You're on the ship and you see these young, brave men on the landing craft.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: You didn't. You were so well trained doing your job, you didn't give a damn. And hell, that tug, it got the hell shot out of us. And there's a kamikaze that when at us and he dropped a torpedo and I told the old man and he looked at me and said, "Well Tshirhart, this is it." But the damn torpedo, he was so close to us that it went below the ship about 100 yards on the other side and then it blew up. So how lucky can you be?

FLOYD COX: [*Whistles*]

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Well, I'll tell you what, what the biggest trouble about who and what's. We was sitting there, we was out for 72 hours. We just came back and we split 'em up. Some of 'em are working parties, some on duty and some on watch and some of 'em went to eat. And I was one of the ones that went to eat. And we was sitting in the dining room. Just sat down and the bullets start coming through the walls.

FLOYD COX: Woah.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: And this one guy, I told Nancy, this one guy by the name of Bailey. He was a Gunner's Mate. Helped a Striker. And he looked at me and said, "Tschirhart, I just got shot in the ass." I said, "Well go down to the sick bay." He said, "As soon as that bullet quits flying around, I'm going to go pick it up and take it with me." You know, we transferred him off, we don't know if it killed him or what. We never could find him to go to the reunions. So we're

really at a blank. And the little Mess Cook, Officer's Mess Cook, a little black boy, he was the same way. The day before, a shrapnel bomb blew up right above him. Killed him. Got three seamen and him. Shrapnel. I was lucky. All of the time. If that airplane would have been a little bit further over it would have been me instead of him. So that's how close it was. And old Stretch, he's going up the ladder. And he finally got it by two years. How long has he been dead? Two years?

MARTIN'S DAUGHTER: No, it's been closer to five.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Is it that long? Well about seven years ago he finally got his purple heart. That damn, the ladder was just this wide and every time he took a step, a bullet would hit him. And he had paint chips all over his legs.

FLOYD COX: What was this gentlemen's name?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Holding. I don't know his first name. We called him Stretch because he was a tall, lanky guy.

FLOYD COX: Now you were subject to a number of attacks for Japanese airplanes, weren't you?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Oh yeah, oh yeah. Over in Okinawa we was, shrapnel bombs. And why the Japs went to shrapnel bombs instead of bombs I don't know. But I'm glad they did. They just blew up about five feet from the water and then blew up.

FLOYD COX: With all these ships going down around you and Marines getting killed and so on, did you guys ever pick up survivors on your ship?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Yeah, we picked up crippled ships. And some of 'em had survivors and some of 'em were dead. Now one guy that I still see at night is, he died with a smile on his face, his dog tags was burned off of him. His clothes was burned off of him. He was well done as that chair. Just a skeleton. Laying there. And a hole in the back of the boat, the ship, had a hole in it where it blew up. And you could read his mind while he was laying there. His teeth was still showing. And Reynolds, the other kid that helped me wrap him up in a blanket, said, "God damnit he's still smiling." I said, "Yeah."

FLOYD COX: That's one of your crewmen, right?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Yeah. Yeah, we took the, you could read his mind, like, "Well I got out of that son of a bitch." You could just read his mind. But he got caught in the jagged steel with his left foot. And that's where he burned to death. And that's an MIA.

FLOYD COX: You still dream about that after all these years?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Him and that guy in Guam. That Marine. When the tide went out. I had a seaman call me to the side of the ship and he said, "Hey Tshirhart, what's this?" There's a Marine floating out with the tide. And I said, "That's an MIA. Go to the boat and we'll get the boat up and get the dog tags." But in the meantime, while he was gone to get the boat hook, it took him about two minutes. One of them big ray fish jumped up and fell on top of him and took him down and never seen him again.

FLOYD COX: Wow.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: And I saw that. Him and that guy and that skeleton, I see a lot of times.

FLOYD COX: I imagine.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: You don't get over that shit.

FLOYD COX: No. Sure.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: I'm telling you, and you know, MIAs, you know you feel sorry for the parents, the husbands, the wives and the children, because you don't ever know.

FLOYD COX: Right.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: I told an old man, old man Henry Shilling. He had twin boys and one of 'em got killed in Iwo Jima. And he asked his other twin when he got home, he asked me to come by and talk to him. I did. We sit in a rocking chair, and you know what he asked me when I was getting ready to leave?

FLOYD COX: No.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: He said, "Clyde will ever come back?" Well, hell, that killed me. You know? Here's an MIA. All they do is tell 'em they're missing in action. No details or where or anything else. I turned around, sat down and I told him, "No, Mister Henry, Clyde is not going to come back. He's laying somewhere on the Pacific floor. And he's not going to come back so you might as well just face it." And he did.

FLOYD COX: Well you're off of Okinawa and you've got planes attacking you periodically. Did you ever man a gun?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Yeah.

FLOYD COX: Tell us about it.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Well the guy that was manning the gun I was on, the first plane to come over, he hit the deck and he's run off. To hell with this noise. *[Laughing]* And the Captain

hollers at me and says, "Tschirhart, get on that gun and start shooting." I said, "Okay." And from that day on, I adopted that gun. In fact, the same gun I was manning, I give it to Wayne and he was manning. See, we're the only ones who knocked down a kamikaze. We were the first ones to prove that, you know, everybody thought it was just operated by man. And, no. He wasn't because we saw him coming in at us. He strafed the destroyer as he come across. And then he headed straight for us. And when I got up, when we heard him shoot, and when I got up to my gun, the tail end of the plan was about from here to that wall. On the ship. He waited until the guy till the guy got close enough. And that's the same plane that was shot through the walls for us. *[Laughs]* And he said he saw the guy fly forward when he first burst and then he waited and straightened up again. And then he let him have it. All of it.

FLOYD COX: Now is this 40-millimeter or what?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: 20-millimeter.

FLOYD COX: 20.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: 20. And 60-rounds and every 10<sup>th</sup> one is a tracer.

FLOYD COX: Right.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: You can't miss. But we knocked a Betty down when we just got anchored. And the three-inch gun headed such a way that it just veered off and landed about, oh from here to the street.

FLOYD COX: Now a Betty is a two-inch Japanese bomber?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Right, yeah. And we knocked it down and I was shooting and the old man was standing right above me. And them guys started getting out of the plane as it was going down. And I said, "Them goddamn people would have killed me if they had had a chance." So I just pulled the trigger and started shooting. And the old man says, "That's good shooting Tschirhart." *[Laughs]* And then after that we didn't pick up no survivors. *[Laughing]* They went down and they tried to get out but they either drowned or I hit 'em.

FLOYD COX: Right. Well, as I recall there was some kind of kite-flying incident that you were involved in. Tell us about that.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: *[Laughs]* Oh man. That was something else.

FLOYD COX: And was this on Okinawa too?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: On Okinawa, yeah.

FLOYD COX: Mm-hmm.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Fourth, fifth, sixth day. I don't know, I've got to look it up.

FLOYD COX: Okay, that's okay.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: But this guy, Hunt was his name. He said, "I'm the best damn kite flyer there is." I said, "You're full of bull." I said, "I can make the best kites. Ever." He said, "Well I'll get the paper and the wood. You get the glue." I said, "Okay." So I went down to the kitchen, to the galley and got a cup of flour. And mixed it up. And then I got, he brought the paper and wood up. The kite was about this high.

FLOYD COX: About two foot high.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: About three foot.

FLOYD COX: About three foot.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Yeah, about the size of an orange crate. And that's what he stripped wood off. And then I put the bridle on it. And then glued it up and we took some string and went around and put it in. And he said, "What about a tail?" I said, "We don't, just guess at the tail." I said, "Take some of them onion sacks. Put them on there." And we took it all to the poop deck. The whole ship's company was watching us. And that damn thing was like a good wind blowing. And it went up and we just fed it string and string and string and string. I bet it was 200 yards out. And on the cruiser, the observation plane nearly ran into it. Well it sent us a complaint. So the old man come on the fighter deck and said, "Tschirhart, cut that god damn kite down!" Okay. I reached in my pocket, let it slip. I know that damn kite went to Japan.

FLOYD COX: *[Laughs]*

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: To China. 'Cause it was still going when we, it was still going up when we – *[laughs]*. But it flew, it flew.

FLOYD COX: Well you needed this kind of diversion every once in a while when you're –

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Well we'd do anything to pass time.

FLOYD COX: Right. Now, I understand you had a visitor from an Admiral at one time.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Yeah, we sure did.

FLOYD COX: Tell me about that.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Well, there was not much to it.

FLOYD COX: Right.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: He pulled up and had four stars on the flag. So he, Navy boat, and he come up the ladder. Stood there and saluted him. And he come up and, of course the guy at the deck had to stand deck watch. He run up and got the old man.

FLOYD COX: Yeah, I guess!

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: And this Admiral, or General, whoever he was, he went up one side of the ship, all the other way down around. By that time the old man was down there. "Can I help you sir?" he says. "No you can't." He said, "What is the purpose of your visit?" He said, "I just wanna see what kinda robots you got on this ship!" [*Laughing*] Then he got back on his boat and took off. Never said another word.

FLOYD COX: So you guys must have had a pretty good reputation, huh?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: We had, well, he said, "Every time I look at the log book" on his ship, "it says *USS Shasta* this, *USS Shasta* that. I just wanted to see what kinda robots you got on here." [*Laughing*] We worked like dogs the whole time.

FLOYD COX: Well that's quite a complement though, to have a four-star Admiral visit a little ship like yours, especially.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Oh yeah, it was. We were proud as hell. But we earned every bit of that.

FLOYD COX: Oh you bet. You bet. Well as we talked, you had training as a diver. Tell me about some of the different dives that you made. The purpose of 'em. And, did you get any extra pay for doing this? And how was that calculated?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: \$7.00 a month.

FLOYD COX: Oh, okay.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: That was it.

FLOYD COX: Just \$7.00 a month.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Yeah, you got so much, you got qualification dive, to stay qualified, you had to go down one hour every month. To get that \$7. Now, how much money I got for being qualified, I don't know. Other than the \$7. And it was nothing. Now, I dove on that guy that was, where the hell is it. See if you can find that deal where that, no, not there. A white piece of paper.

FLOYD COX: Well, while she's looking, let me ask you this. Did at any time during any of your dives, did you ever feel in danger?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: No, but what I'm looking for is, 72 hours, this guy was down there. He was pinned under a barge in Pearl.

FLOYD COX: Wow.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Yeah, and we was, we finally got the civilian divers to get him out. He was pinned under. The first guy went down, the barge was sunk. Why? I don't know. But he went down to get it undone and he got killed. He got. And then this other guy went down to go get him. Well the barge moved in the meantime and pinned him down. The second man. And then they did get that first man out though. Pinned him down for 73 hours. [*Whistling sound*]

FLOYD COX: Did you get him out alive?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: We got him out alive. Well, I say 'we' but the divers did. The people that went down, the civilian divers got him out. They got him out and he was pinned down in such a way that he couldn't get to his belt. Otherwise he would have killed himself. He asked them to cut his air off. But the chief said, "No, I'll buy you a 50 whiskey when you get up here. You can get a 50 whiskey." And you know what the first thing he asked when they brought him up? And took the helmet off of him.

FLOYD COX: I can guess!

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: "Where's my whiskey?" [*Laughter*] Yeah he wanted to know where his whiskey was. But they rushed him off to, he had to be decompressed.

FLOYD COX: Right.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Because the poor guy was in, I got it somewhere. It was 72 hours. I don't know where it is. I just had it the other day. I got it somewhere.

FLOYD COX: Well did you ever have any real, dives that you were on that were really a dangerous type of dive?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: No, not really. The only one that I nearly got killed in was looking for that generator. And I landed up underneath that cruiser.

FLOYD COX: Tell me about that.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Well I, the tides was so strong that you put the regular belt on with the weights you got on. And they would just throw you out of the water.

FLOYD COX: Wow.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: So I was the third guy to go down. And went up. Went down, I took two belts with me. Put two belts on that were loaded down with lead. So I would stay down. Well, when I got down there, which was 60 some odd feet, which is against the law to start out with, because we're supposed to not go over 35 feet.

FLOYD COX: Really?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: And when I was down there, I was looking around for this damn generator. And you could see it, the water, it was so clear, you could see. And all of a sudden I felt water coming up.

FLOYD COX: Uh-oh.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: And I give my signal with my, out with my line. The whole damn line came down. I thought, "Son of a bitch. Now what?" So I sat down, and by that time, the water was up to here. I could only breathe through my nose in short breaths.

FLOYD COX: Right underneath the water. It was up to, almost your nostrils.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Right, yeah, just about. It went on my mind to keep my mind shut. And so I took the two belts off and laid 'em on my legs and then took all the other weights off. And then I started going up. Well the weights were pulling me back out. So I went back down, put them two belts over my legs. Took the damn helmet off and started up on my own. And I got out there, but, I landed underneath that [*indiscernible*]. I looked out and there was this damn boat. And I thought, "Oh, damn. Now I done slid up." And I caught ahold of the whale boat. And as passed out, then the gang we watched, picked me up and put me in the boat. And that was the closest place to getting killed. That's the last time I went down too. That officer, see he was the damndest. You gotta understand, they made him a salvage officer and he was the damn damndest. Just a kid. He said, "I'm going to throw you back down again!" "Like hell, Mr. J. You ain't gonna throw me down." "I don't want to disqualify you!" "No you're not. I'm going to stay qualified till I get out of this goddamn thing."

FLOYD COX: Well, what happened? Why did all the line come down in the first place?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Well the compressor went out. We used two compressors. One compressor would run and this guy tenting me, and the ensign, they were shooting the bullet. Didn't pay no attention. In other words, they didn't, they could have killed me.

FLOYD COX: They almost killed you, yeah.



MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Yeah. They coulda killed me if I wouldn't have used my head and got out of there.

FLOYD COX: Right. If you'd left your helmet on, you'd –

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Yeah. And that weight was pulling you down.

FLOYD COX: Yeah.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: I got rid of everything. Come up.

FLOYD COX: So you refused to go down. Were there any repercussions for that?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Well, I told him, I said, well, I know he was in trouble with the Officers. I said, "I'm not gonna, when I tell 'em the whole story about why I didn't get no air, what do you think they're going to do?" He didn't say anything. When we left Japan to start coming back, there was a typhoon that went through Okinawa. And they stopped all the diving from getting a discharge. For two or three weeks I think it was. Until that harbor was cleaned out.

FLOYD COX: Mm-hmm.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: And I told the quartermaster, I said, "Hold this. How long can you hold this?" He said two hours is all I can hold it. Then I got up and turned it into the old man. I said, "Well hold it for two hours." And I went straight on down to the General, I woke him up at 2:00 in the morning. He said, "What do you little son of a bitch want now?" I said, "I want my discharge for diving." Boy he scribbled it on an application real quick. And I signed it, give it back to him. The next morning after everybody started shaking hands with me for leaving, he come down and said, "Tschirhart, you got to me again you little son of a bitch." [Laughter] I said, "I sure as hell did. How does it feel?" He didn't say anything. 'Cause I had him over a barrel. I could have taken a summary and then he'd of been a Seaman.

FLOYD COX: Yeah, [laughs] yeah. Well I believe that your ship was involved in towing a bough.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: The *Pittsburgh*. Yeah. It's still there. It's still there. See, in the typhoon, the bough of the *Pittsburgh*, it flew up. Flew off. And we picked it up at sea and we took it into Guam.

FLOYD COX: Now, because of the airtight compartments, the thing was still floating. The bough  
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MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Yeah, but if we would have de-anchored it, on the mud. And it's still there. Was until about 10 years ago. Wayne says that the bough is still standing there. There's still skeletons in there.

FLOYD COX: Wow.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Oh yeah. They're still, unless they got 'em out without us knowing it.

FLOYD COX: Yeah. Well, how far did you guys tow that and how did that work?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Well, it worked real easy after we got it hooked up. But we gotta hook it up. And there again, the bough hook and I, Opal was his name, him and I went on, off of the boat onto that bough. And let the line through there and then we sent it back to the ship. They sent us a cable. A steel cable, and we anchored it, we bridled it on there. But it was, it was very tedious.

FLOYD COX: Remember that? I just showed –

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Yeah, that's two tugs, yeah.

FLOYD COX: Right.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Well you've never seen a splash like that though. We was barely going two knots. Just barely going two knots so we didn't kill anyone. Well we had two Seaman that would fire axes, standing at the gunnel. That [*indiscernible*] it all goes down, you cut these lines. And, I mean you didn't have to check to see if they went to sleep. They stayed awake.

FLOYD COX: [*Laughter*] I imagine so.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: That thing was 50, 60-foot long or so.

FLOYD COX: Yeah. How far did you guys tow that?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: I really can't tell you that. I know it was several days. That was a picture of the old ship.

FLOYD COX: That's the *Pittsburgh* with the bough gone.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Yeah. Well it's gone right there. I'll show it to you Nancy, just a minute. Yeah. Right there. They docked them hatches down with them sailors in there.

FLOYD COX: Right.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: They're still in there. Unless. But I don't know how they got into it. Unless they anchored it down.

FLOYD COX: This other picture that I'm showing you, one of those ships is yours.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Yeah.

FLOYD COX: According to the Internet.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: This one here.

FLOYD COX: Right.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: This is straightest back, yeah. Now this is making too much weight.

FLOYD COX: So you're traveling, what'd you say, six knots?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Two knots.

FLOYD COX: Two knots [*laughs*], that's very slow. You can walk faster than that!

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Oh yeah. Well, we was afraid it'd tilt it too much. Like I say, this is a fake here. That's a fake there because that's too much splash there. And this ship here's going too fast. This is a tug too. But we got orders to pick it up and we did.

FLOYD COX: And you towed it to, close to an island somewhere?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Guam.

FLOYD COX: Guam.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Right at the entrance to Guam. We made that harbor. We had two, three, four, five, six concrete ships that was made here in Orange, Texas. Barges. We hauled 'em out there and sunk 'em. And then the bough is right there.

FLOYD COX: Now when you hauled these docks, these pre-fab docks behind your tug –

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: It was tough. They was brought, yeah, that's what we had in tow.

FLOYD COX: What, how many knots did you travel then? The ship.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Oh, about 10, 12.

FLOYD COX: Oh, that fast.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Yeah, real fast. See we made Hawaii, Pearl Harbor, in seven days. You figure out how far that is and how much -

FLOYD COX: I didn't realize that that tug could go that fast.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Oh, heck yeah! In the ammunition ship it took us a week to get, to go from Pearl to San Francisco.

FLOYD COX: Well all the time that you were over there, out in the Pacific, thinking back, what was the very worst day of your service out there in the Pacific? What was the worst day? You think back and think, man that was the worst day I ever survived.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: That burned sailor. See, we took the blankets, wrapped him in it. Our clothes, we just threw them over the side 'cause you can't wash 'em off. That was the worst days. That and that marine going, floating by. Ray fish chomping on him. That one I can still see. That was the worst days.

FLOYD COX: Now thinking back, what was the funniest day? Funniest thing that happened while you were over there?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: [*Laughs*]

FLOYD COX: A lot of things you've already told me about but, anything else –

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: The funniest thing was real serious. That's when Whiskies got run over. By 18-wheeler. That's the little dog on that ship.

FLOYD COX: Oh!

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: We had a little female, the Chief did.

FLOYD COX: Mascot.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: And we called her 'Whiskies' 'cause she liked, loved Whiskies. And she didn't know what a damn 18-wheeler was.

FLOYD COX: Right.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: We was loading docks, loading up in Pearl, and an 18-wheeler was backing up to load us up with groceries and stuff. And she stood there and watched them 18-wheels go right over her. [*Laughs*]

FLOYD COX: Kill her?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Killed her instantly. Yeah, you think about 18 of those wheels go run over a dog about this high –

FLOYD COX: Yeah.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: 15, 18 pounds, they don't last long.

FLOYD COX: Did you guys ever get another mascot for your ship?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Yeah, we sure did. And I found out just a few weeks ago that the dog was, died a natural death. This kid was an electrician, Striker, and he called me. And he stayed in, but he brought the dog. He got discharged over the McCanna. He brought the dog back to California and gave it to his brother. And his brother told him that Snuffy died. But he died a natural death. So that made me feel pretty good because it really was my dog. I really loved that little animal.

FLOYD COX: Now you mentioned the word, 'Striker'.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: That's a helper that's, yeah –

FLOYD COX: It's learning on the job, isn't it?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Learning at the different jobs, yeah. They called 'em 'Strikers'.

FLOYD COX: Right. I understand they don't use that terminology now.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: [*Laughs*] Yeah, didn't stay with it.

FLOYD COX: Well you were on two ships. You were on an ammo ship and you were on a seagoing tug. If you had to do it over again, which one would you, if you had your choice, which one would you go on?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: I'd go on the tug.

FLOYD COX: And why?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Because she was seagoing, she was exciting, she was working. And that ammunition ship was dangerous the whole damn time.

FLOYD COX: You got that right.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: We had an ammunition ship blow up in Okinawa. When a kamikaze hit it. They only had about 5,000 tons on it. And I watched it blow up. And I said, "My God, that could happen to us." It never dawned on me before. See you're working the whole time and you're fighting the whole time. And you don't think about tomorrow or the day after. You think about right now. And –

FLOYD COX: You just do your job.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Doing your job, right. Yeah.

FLOYD COX: I've had many veterans tell me that. That in the heat of battle, you just do your job.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Do your job, that's it.

FLOYD COX: You don't have time to be scared. You get scared later.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Yeah. Time to talk later on.

FLOYD COX: Yeah. Exactly. Well when you left Okinawa, and you're headed back to the States.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Yeah [*laughs*] that was a joke.

FLOYD COX: Tell us about it.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Well, we come back on a transport ship.

FLOYD COX: You remember the name?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: No, I don't.

FLOYD COX: Okay.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: She was a big one. But, there's a guy, we got, it took us two weeks to get there from Okinawa to San Diego. Not San Diego, San Pedro. About a week out, there's a guy that wanted to commit suicide but he put on two life jackets! And then the crew on that ship, they was greenhorns. The nearly broke that damn boat in half lowering down to get him. And we was laying there for a day and a half just getting that poor guy out of the water. And then when we got to San Pedro, it was foggy and you couldn't move. So we just laid there and blew our foghorns for a week. [*Laughter*] Thought we'd never get home. Oh man that was something else.

FLOYD COX: And once you finally got on dry land, did you get a discharge or what happened?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: No, they hauled us to Camp Wallace in Houston, Texas. By train. They herded us like cattle and put us on a train.

FLOYD COX: On a troop train?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Yeah. And took us down to Camp Wallace. Got there Thanksgiving morning. And that guy wasn't happy a bit that they discharged us. He said, "I wanna go home just like you do. You buncha guys do, so stay with me. Well hell, at 2:00 in the afternoon I had

my discharge, but I didn't have nothing else! He did give me the Ruptured Duck. The Ruptured Duck, that's all we ever got. All the medals, I paid for. They told me what to get, but that's all.

FLOYD COX: Right. Now the Ruptured Duck is an emblem you can sew on your uniform that indicates that you served during World War Two, is that correct?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: That's what it is, yeah.

FLOYD COX: Now while you were over in the Pacific, I got two questions. Number one, you heard about the dropping of the atomic bomb?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Yeah.

FLOYD COX: Do you remember any thoughts? Did you think, well at least I won't have to go to Japan or –

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: No, but I'm glad it happened. I got thoughts about that. And we went where the second bomb fell, Nagasaki. About two weeks later we went over there. You know [*indiscernible*] he took the occupational over there. They hauled us over there on that bomb site. Believe it or not. We didn't know what radiation was.

FLOYD COX: Right, yeah.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: And we went over there and walked around on it. And I still got that little jigger that I picked up. Why it didn't melt, I don't know. But, Linda's got it now. Yeah.

FLOYD COX: Linda. That being your daughter.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: My other daughter, yeah. It's egg shaped. It's not uniform anymore. But that atomic bomb, that Nagasaki there, that was something else. So everybody should see that.

FLOYD COX: I agree.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: But they hauled us over there. Not, we didn't have no masks on. Just dressed like I am now.

FLOYD COX: It was like a sightseeing tour or?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Just like a sightseeing tour, yeah. You know what the first thing, Japanese furnished us working parties. You know what the first thing the Japanese asked us when we got, when we come in?

FLOYD COX: No.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: He was a big, tall guy. He says, "Hey, Babe Ruth still living?" [Laughter] That's the first thing he wanted to know. If Babe Ruth was still living. They were baseball fans then and they just keep being baseball fans.

FLOYD COX: Oh yeah. They've had some little league champions from there quite often.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Yeah.

FLOYD COX: Did you ever see any USO shows while you were in the Pacific?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: One.

FLOYD COX: Do you remember who was in it?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: No. A little girl and her dancing partner. I got it written down on something but I don't know.

FLOYD COX: When you were finally discharged, you were in Texas. Tell me, can you remember how was it when you went back home?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: You couldn't buy clothes. You had to wear your uniform.

FLOYD COX: Do you remember your mom and dad being there?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Yeah, they were there.

FLOYD COX: Oh yeah. Is that the day you got home?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Uh-huh.

FLOYD COX: What we're looking at is a picture of Martin and his family. And he's still in his navy uniform.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Yeah.

FLOYD COX: I imagine they were quite proud of you, weren't they?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Well, they didn't bend over backwards, you know like a lot of people get emotional?

FLOYD COX: Yeah.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: They didn't show it.



FLOYD COX: Yeah.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Well, I was glad, too, because I didn't want that.

FLOYD COX: Yeah.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: And as far as the clothes is concerned, you know what a guy told me? "Go to Joskey's." In the children's you can buy all the clothes you want. That's where I bought my clothes. Not in the kids department. He said, you're built like a damn Mexican! [*Laughing*] I said, "Thanks a lot!" And I went down there and sure enough, I found all the clothes I wanted. But we couldn't buy clothes.

FLOYD COX: Right.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: I'm glad that, you know, when we picked up this bough of the *Pittsburg* cover, we had an escort? A DE, an escort ship. This is another tug. We might have had it in tow, I don't know.

FLOYD COX: According to the internet, they had it in tow and you guys joined them.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Yeah. But anyway, he was from Castroville, this one guy on that ship, this escort. We were sitting there drinking beer. And he said, "I want to tell you something about crazy people." And I'm sitting there, drinking my beer. "When they picked up the bough of the *Pittsburgh*, two guys went on that damn *Pittsburgh*, they went underwater sometimes. The next thing you knew, they'd come up again." I said, "I want you to quit cussing me out."

FLOYD COX: [*Laughs*] That was you!

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: [*Laughter*] That was me! He says, "God damned people were crazy!" [*Laughter*] And we just lowered the boat and went over there to it. And, but, it was dangerous.

FLOYD COX: Oh, definitely.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: The water wasn't, you couldn't tell, not rough. You don't see no white caps on it. It was just the biggest swell.

FLOYD COX: Big swell.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Just a 10, 15 feet swell. That was it. But you could tell she was heavy because that really sunk when it went down.

FLOYD COX: Yeah.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: It really sunk in. But I'll be damned.

FLOYD COX: Well is there anything else that you'd like to tell me about before we conclude this interview, Martin?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: No, you covered me pretty good.

MARTIN'S DAUGHTER: Did he tell you about the people he saved in the net? From the ship?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Oh, the people we picked up?

FLOYD COX: Martin's daughter just mentioned that he has a story about saving some people in a net. Tell us about that.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Well this one ship, a kamikaze sunk. And we got the word about 10, 11, or 12:00 to go pick up the survivors. So we got there. It was about 2:30, 3:00. And it was 200 miles from Japan. And we seen the little lights. The little one-cell battery flashlights?

FLOYD COX: Right.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Well we saw them and the old man said he needs some volunteers to take the boat and go get 'em. And he don't need no volunteers. So I got my crew and they were all ready to go. So they lowered us down, and we went on over there. And we got, then Powell, he had sense enough to grab a battle lamp. That's a D-battery headlight. And he put it on. I said, "You just keep that on." 'Cause he turned it off once and they all hollered. All 36, there was 36 of 'em on there. Two of 'em died on the way to the ship. And I said, "Get me a bough line." And I took the bough line and put a splice in it. I hit it real quick. And I told them guys, I said, "I guess we was pretty close to 'em." From here to the patio I guess. And I told 'em, I said, "Now, y'all stay right there. I'm going to throw you a line." And it fell short about six, eight, 10 feet. This one kid, he was a lot. He said, "I'll get it, I'll get it. Don't worry about it." I said, "Okay." I said, "Now take that eye and put it through here. And then come back, wrap it." And he did. I said, "Now, hang on." But we took 'em back to the ship and two of 'em, they slipped. Two of 'em, out of there. That died. And we saved 34 out of those 36. And going back, we was giving artificial respiration to some of them. And putting clothes and food in 'em and stuff like that. The cooks all made hot coffee for 'em. And the guys giving, we give 'em dry clothes to put on. When we're going back, after we had 'em up, had the boat loaded again, we started out back to Okinawa. And then all of a sudden, everything, the lights went out, the motor stopped. Screws stopped and everything.

FLOYD COX: You're adrift!

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: We're just drifting. But what happened, we found out after it was all over with, there's a crew of kamikazes flying over us. And the old man put out, even put the trunk lights out. He didn't want no lights on, no wake. Or nothing to see that they could see us. And when they were far enough gone, then he started up again. Took a deep breath. *[Laughter]*

FLOYD COX: I guess so!

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Yeah.

FLOYD COX: Well these survivors you picked up, were they in life rafts or life vests?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: One life vest, each one had a life vest on but there was one raft. One of the floating rafts. And when we had our first reunion in Covington, Kentucky. That's between Kentucky and, what's that town?

MARTIN's DAUGHTER: St. Louis?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Across from that town. Anyway, we –

FLOYD COX: St. Louis?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: Took the dinner boat, and we had a dance and dinner. And this one guy followed Stretch and I the whole time. And finally they went down to the dance floor and made Elvis entertaining everybody. And I asked this guy, I said, "Are you following us for a reason?" He said, "Is this the *USS Pakana* that picked up survivors from Japan?" And Stretch said, "Yeah, that's us." He said, "Well I'm one of the survivors." And Joe Wolf, an engineer, he had a boy call him up and asked him if he wanted his uniform back. His dad died but he always talked about the people who picked him up. *[Laughs]* So that makes you feel pretty good!

FLOYD COX: Certainly! Now were they on a ship or –

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: They was on a DE. Destroyer.

FLOYD COX: Escort. Or Destroyer. You don't happen to know what the name of it was?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: 200 miles from Japan. Sunk.

FLOYD COX: Well, once again, is there anything else?

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: No, I think I covered practically everything. There's no end to it, I'll tell you for sure.

FLOYD COX: I want to shake your hand and tell you thank you for your service to our country.

MARTIN TSCHIRHART: No problem, no problem.