

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR

**Nimitz Education and Research Center
Fredericksburg, Texas**

An Interview With

Barbara L. Burton

Richardson, Texas

March 4, 2016

Civilian Naval Employee

Mr. Misenhimer:

My name is Richard Misenhimer, today is March 4, 2016. I am interviewing Barbara L. Burton by telephone. Her phone number is 972-685-6072. Her address is 535 Buckingham Road, Apt. #1402, Richardson, Texas 75081. This interview is in support of the National Museum of the Pacific War, the Nimitz Education and Research Center, for the preservation of historical information related to World War II.

Her alternate contact is John Loera, his cell phone number is 972-998-7937. Her apartment number is 1402.

Barbara, I want to thank you for taking time to doing this interview today and I want to thank you about your service to our country over the years.

Now the first thing I need to do is read to you this agreement with the museum to make sure this is okay with you.

Mrs. Burton:

Alright, sure.

Mr. Misenhimer:

"Agreement Read"

Is that okay with you?

Mrs. Burton:

Of course Richard, of course.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What is your birthdate?

Mrs. Burton:

August 23rd.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What year?

Mrs. Burton:

1925. A long time ago.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And where were you born?

Mrs. Burton:

In Los Angeles, California.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And did you have brothers and sisters?

Mrs. Burton:

Not anyone that, I had a half-brother, my brother Jim. Whom I was as close to as a real brother. He lost his mom when he was born. And then my dad and my mother married when he was four years old, believe it or not. I was born, well we were five years apart.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What were your mother's and father's first names?

Mrs. Burton:

John and Helen.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now you grew up during the depression, how did the depression affect you and your family?

Mrs. Burton:

Oh quite seriously. My father was with the Los Angeles Police Department, in the detective division. And they were, along with others, cut back to part-time. We had some money to live on of course. But everything was cut so much that we bought groceries, we lost our home, we kept a car because that was important that he get to work in order to make what little they cut back on. And it was a very serious time for everyone. But being we were a small family we managed. We had to get a rental house that was horrible, I can even remember it. It wasn't very nice where we had to move to, but it was clean, and you know that was the main thing.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And what was your maiden name?

Mrs. Burton:

Imlay, I-m-l-a-y.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then where did you go to high school?

Mrs. Burton:

To John C. Freemont High School.

Mr. Misenhimer:

In what town?

Mrs. Burton:

In Los Angeles.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And what year did you finish high school?

Mrs. Burton:

In 1943.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now on December 7, 1941 Japan attacked at Pearl Harbor, do you recall hearing about that?

Mrs. Burton:

I remember Pearl Harbor very well. The morning of December 7th we were sitting in our living room and that's when President Roosevelt came on the air and said, "Ladies and gentlemen, I regret to inform you that the United States is in a state of war with the Empire of Japan." I remember that, we were all sitting there, I had a friend over and I was just turned sixteen.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And how did you think that would affect you?

Mrs. Burton:

Well I had no idea at that moment, but it didn't take long to know how it affected us. I mean it was just a complete change over for the whole world. In the United States of America we went on rationing, both in foods and gasoline. Monies were a little better during war time because

everybody went to work. If that was any consolation, knowing we were in such a terrible state of affairs and boys were..., well in my high school class, even in '43, boys that had turned eighteen they were taken into the service immediately. They didn't even get to graduate, but they got their diploma.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And when you finished high school what did you do?

Mrs. Burton:

I worked my way through college, tried to. It was a hit and miss for awhile. But I would work for awhile and then I would go to school. Save up my money and it wasn't as expensive then. Went to the University of California and it was close to home so I could you know ride the street car, seven cents to go on the street car. And that's how I got through school, I wanted to go into nursing, which I did. And I stayed with it till I graduated from my nursing. And then I eventually went into business. I did not stay with nursing cause my father developed a brain tumor and I had to go to work full time and make money. And nursing did not pay money in those days. But it was the love of my life and I wanted to do it, but I did for awhile until I could not do it anymore and had to make money.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So what kind of business did you go into?

Mrs. Burton:

I went into working as, I had shorthand behind me, I had all my business math and correspondence behind me, cause I took a double course in high school, both academic and my other part that I could get a job with and that was my shorthand and my math and business correspondence. And I had to fall back on that as to make money. And I did, I helped my mother and my dad get better. And he did get better for awhile, then he left us. And then it was up to me and that was fine. It was fine, I managed fine. Anyway that was my life and my brother was of course away, he was in the Navy from the time he was eighteen. And my dad signed him in, he wasn't quite eighteen but daddy signed him in because he wanted to go, '39.

Alrighty.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Who were you working for when you quit nursing?

Mrs. Burton:

I went to work for Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company for a little while. In Los Angeles on Central Avenue as a secretary and that's what I did for about a year. And then I went to work for Robert B. Cunningham, who was a medical doctor in Pasadena, California. Worked for him for a long time.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So when did you graduate from college?

Mrs. Burton:

In 1947.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now during World War II did you do any kind of war work or volunteer war work or anything like that?

Mrs. Burton:

No.

Mr. Misenhimer:

I know a lot of us, I was young we collected old rubber, we collected old aluminum.

Mrs. Burton:

Oh yes. Oh I'm sorry, yes I collected all the tin foil that I could find. You know people could buy cigarettes comparatively cheap at that time and there were cigarette packages laying all around that were empty. So I used to go around as a child and collect all of that. Roll it up and my daddy would sell it for me. And we would turn the money in to help the war effort and all that you know. You remember some of it, I'm sure.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Oh yes.

Mrs. Burton:

Not as much as I do, but you do remember it. I had a friend that was born in 1929 and he remembered a lot that I remembered.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you do any work for the Red Cross or anything like that?

Mrs. Burton:

Not anything except when I went overseas, when I went to Adak, Alaska, they were there at the place where we landed. And even though it was, you know a field where it was very much secure, nobody was to go in there, Red Cross could go anyplace and they were there. And I didn't work with them but they used to come in to my office and I would do some typing for them and so on and so forth. Like that, that's all. That was all.

Mr. Misenhimer:

I mean during World War II you didn't roll any bandages or do anything like that for the Red Cross?

Mrs. Burton:

No, no not at all. I was busy doing

Mr. Misenhimer:

Anything you remember about your time during World War II?

Mrs. Burton:

Oh an awful lot, I can remember just about everything that went on, I mean that was civilian oriented, not, not you know in the service. Because nobody knew much about what was going on there during the war itself.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Doing the civilian part, what all did you do in the civilian part? What do you recall about the war from a civilian standpoint?

Mrs. Burton:

Okay I can remember walking in the door every night about five o'clock after riding the street

car home and hearing Gabriel Heatter saying, "Well it's a bad night today, that I must tell you that today was not good for the Americans," or whatever. You know that his voice rattles in my ears to this day. And that was every night, I can remember the bad things and I can certainly remember our little girl that used to – Tokyo Rose coming over the short wave. We had short wave at my house and because of my daddy's work at the time. And she was very much a detriment to everybody and it wasn't until I went through the museum in Fredericksburg that I learned exactly what happened to her. I mean she was given a prison sentence finally of eleven years, so the article there says, with her great big pictures. I hope she suffered as much as she caused suffering, I'm sorry to say that, but I do. She was a really bad person. That I remember very well and a lot of other things. My goodness the news every night was horrible, except once in a while, you know.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did y'all have a garden or anything like that during the war?

Mrs. Burton:

Sure, everybody had a Victory Garden, had to grow things. Otherwise you didn't have a lot to choose from, you know your vegetables, tomatoes, lettuce, etc. Being in California you could grow.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now April 12th of 1945 President Roosevelt died. Did you all hear about that?

Mrs. Burton:

I remember I was at my work, came over the radio. Everything was turned on. And it was horrible, it was the saddest day to think that a great man like that, well of course he was sick and he had done so many years of hard work for us. But I think everybody cried that day.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then May the 8th of 1945 Germany surrendered, did y'all have any kind of a celebration then?

Mrs. Burton:

Right, right I sure do. Was riding home, I'd been up in the mountains. Riding home in the car

and it was on the car radio. And we expected it, but it was awfully good to hear it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So did you have any kind of a celebration?

Mrs. Burton:

No, not really because I was in the car driving, got home, I had a sick dad and my mom wasn't too well. So didn't celebrate anything, but we were all happy.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then August the 6th they dropped the first atomic bomb, do you recall hearing about that?

Mrs. Burton:

Yes, I do, I remember it. August was always the good month for things happening and it was my brother's birthday and my birthday.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And when you heard that, what did you think when you heard about the atomic bomb?

Mrs. Burton:

I was shocked, I mean I couldn't imagine this thing that we had seen what it could do. Really going off, sad to think that so many people had to die. But happy that it wasn't in our country.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then on August the 15th when Japan surrendered did you have a celebration then?

Mrs. Burton:

Yes I do. I was sitting at my desk at work when it came over the radio which they had blasting all through the whole area. And I remember it very well.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did y'all have any kind of party?

Mrs. Burton:

I left to go home, I had to go through downtown Los Angeles. And even though I didn't have a celebration, in downtown Los Angeles there was a very big celebration. You couldn't get through any place, on the sidewalks, on the streets, walking that is. I mean everybody was

throwing everybody up in the air (*laughter*) and they were all so happy. I mean it was quite a celebration in that area. I couldn't get home, I couldn't get the train to go out to where we lived in the Pasadena area way on beyond that. Remember that day and I left my work, took the street car to downtown Los Angeles, got off the street car, and that was as far as I could get. I get not get out to the valley where I was headed to go to my house. And I didn't get out there until about eight o'clock that night when I could finally get the train that would go out to that area.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you go back to work the next day?

Mrs. Burton:

Oh heaven's no. No, no, nobody worked. I mean there were more service men in downtown Los Angeles than you could ever count, Army, Navy, Marines, everybody. They were celebrating, throwing their hats up in the air, having a wonderful time. What they'd waited for so long. They have gone by now, all my friends have, all of them that I know of. I mean naturally there's many I don't know what's happened to.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now during World War II, did you or your family or anybody do anything with the local service men when they were on leave?

Mrs. Burton:

Oh heaven's we had a lot of service men that stayed at our house, friends of mine, friends of my brother's, friends of my dad's. Our house was hardly ever without having someone there over the weekends, especially when they were in on leave or furlough, whatever you know branch of service they were with. And we enjoyed that. My mom cooked a lot and they loved having home cooked meals, and sleeping in a bedroom. And you know it was really a lot of entertainment for us too.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yeah, there was a lot of interaction during those times.

Mrs. Burton:

Oh yes indeed, yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Anything else you recall from your time there during World War II?

Mrs. Burton:

Oh goodness I'm sure there's a lot of things that you know I can remember wishing maybe we could maybe take a Oh one time we did get enough gas saved up to go up to San Francisco and see a friend of my mother's that was passing. And you know, but we hardly ever went any place because of gasoline. You know rationing was ..., and my daddy had to use some to go to work, I took the street cars, and that was okay. Oh it was an era that was good and very sad, you know. Good things happened, bad things. One of my very dear friends that I was kind of serious about, he was killed during World War II. His ship sunk, it was the *USS Gudgeon*. And that was very traumatic because we grew up together more. And that was the only person other than my brother who was ..., my brother came home but Joe didn't. Joe was killed, his ship sunk and he was on a submarine, *USS Gudgeon*. That was the saddest part of the whole thing that I can remember, other than just being in a war and having so many of our boys and families separated due to death. That was traumatic, awful.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have any cousins or anybody like that in the service?

Mrs. Burton:

No.

Mr. Misenhimer:

No other members of your family?

Mrs. Burton:

No, no. We were just a very small family.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then when you finished college in 1947, then what did you do?

Mrs. Burton:

Oh I went to work immediately, I had a very good job with civil service and that's what prompted me to go you know to the Aleutians. They were asking for people who would be interested in going to the islands. I could have gone other places, Saipan, a lot of places were open. And I thought, oh how interesting. I loved to see snow and coming from California I never saw snow other than up in the mountains. So that's why I chose the Aleutians and I'm so glad I did because I loved it over there. I would liked to have stayed at least one more year, but with mom being so sick I couldn't do that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So who did you go to work for? Who was it you went to work for?

Mrs. Burton:

I worked for civil service, I took a civil service examination, passed it, and went to work for them.

Mr. Misenhimer:

In what branch?

Mrs. Burton:

That was at an Army base and then I transferred over to Navy and went to work for the Navy base up at Port Hueneme, California, with the missile base.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And when did you go to work for the civil service?

Mrs. Burton:

It was in 1947, in I think September. I'm not really sure but I think so, it's been so long.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So in other words as soon as you graduated you did.

Mrs. Burton:

Civil services and taxes fortunately. And went to work for them and enjoyed every minute of it, I really did. I had lots of nice things happen when I worked for civil service.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What were some of those things?

Mrs. Burton:

Oh, people mostly and being able to go out to different places. Like for instance at Port Hueneme, California there was a Captain there always told people if you can get a party together you have my boat here, which was a big boat, and go fishing, just go out to the islands, do whatever you want. We used to do that very often on weekends, not to stay overnight or anything, but just for the whole day. Sometimes people would fish, some just sit around and talk, that was fun. And that was one of the nice things up there. And then Santa Barbara was very close and it was always nice to drive up the coastline, have dinner up there. And you know be with the people that you enjoyed being with, that was mainly what everybody did on their days off, which was Saturday and Sunday most of the time, sometimes we worked, but not very often.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now when you first went to work for civil service, what kind of work did you do?

Mrs. Burton:

Well I worked for the dispersing officer. The whole time I was in that particular field of work I worked for dispersing who was under the Captain who was in charge of the supply department. Supply department, dispersing, and yards and docks they're all under him. And of course I was, I worked for him when I went overseas. But when I was in the States I worked for dispersing officer who was in charge of payroll, that's what we did. Not me, I was his secretary, but he and I would go different places that were remote to pay the people that were in that area. Like overseas, we flew out to Attu to pay a scouts and crew every three months, which was Navy regs, you have to do that. And there were only twelve men and a chief out there in Attu. It was inactivated practically. And in 1948 they came from New York, the salvage crews, people who buy up junk. And they went out to Attu and they bought all the stuff that had been left out there, bolts, screws, and nuts, and they completely inactivated the island. Not Adak, cause Adak had both Army and Navy, that's where I worked. Army on one side, Navy on the other, divided in

half. And it was only twenty miles wide, ten miles for Army, ten miles for Navy, five miles wide on the island. And most of the little islands were all inactivated. They moved Aleuts (natives) to the side of that one island out there, Sitka, I think it was during the war. Those people would have been extinct if they hadn't moved them out. Their only food was fish and their average life-span was twenty-two years old. And so when we came in there we tried to do the humane thing and got them into the States so they could get some help and food. I don't know how the race is now, I have no idea. But anyway that was then and this is now. Navy base five.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now when did you go to Alaska? What year?

Mrs. Burton:

Yeah, the end of 1947, right at Christmas time. It was December the 9th when I left of 1947.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now how long were you in Alaska?

Mrs. Burton:

Two years.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You came back in '50?

Mrs. Burton:

Yes, yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Anything else happen in Alaska you can remember?

Mrs. Burton:

Oh my, not a lot. I mean there was no entertainment other than they had turned a Quonset hut, a big one, into a theater. We saw movies, they brought in movies everyday, they flew them in. So we saw current movies. That was it. They had a bowling alley that was not very big because

Quonsets are only so large. And that's what they had there were Quonset huts, but the large size ones, not the tiny ones. And living quarters, even barracks were Quonsets. Now it's not like that in Adak, I have had people that have gone over there on service duty. And they have wonderful barracks and lots of things that we didn't know anything about.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you get to see that snow you were talking about?

Mrs. Burton:

Oh yes, *(laughter)* lots of snow. In Adak you never see daylight unless it's, oh maybe at the end of, well in July and maybe a tiny bit of August it will get gray outside, you know you never see sunshine, never. And in December, January, February, March, even into April and May it's all dark. I can tell you one funny thing, I reported in on a Sunday, went to my place where I was going to be living and went to bed that night, set my alarm because it was an electric alarm clock to report. So I get up in the morning and we'd had a storm that night and it took down all the electric poles and all that. And my alarm didn't go off and I didn't get up. Nobody got up I guess. That was what you could expect, it was fun. It's just you know, a lot of storms came in and they were bad. The winds up there were terrible, 175 miles an hour, which is harder than knots. And we didn't lose many huts or anything like that. But once in a while a roof would fly off, very hard winds.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now you were a civilian but you're working for the Navy, is that correct?

Mrs. Burton:

Right, that's correct. I was not in the Navy, wanted to be, but didn't quite make that. My mom was opposed to it, she was, as I say very ill.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What kind of work did you do there?

Mrs. Burton:

I worked for the dispersing officer, I was just, well I did everything for him. I mean, we paid people, we flew out to wherever we had to go to pay. And of course there's all his office work, I did his secretarial work, taking his letters, being I took shorthand very well at that time and we used it heavily. And I did whatever was required, reports, mainly reports. And you know dispersing his money.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have to have any kind of clearance to do that work?

Mrs. Burton:

Yes, top security.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Top security?

Mrs. Burton:

Uh-um.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And why was that?

Mrs. Burton:

Well because it was that kind of work. We weren't high security as..., they had one place there that you never saw the people. I don't know what they did, to this day I have no idea. You know, and so the island was definitely all secure. You needed a security clearance before you ever got on that plane to go out there. I went back to the States and I worked for, well I had to have a security clearance, but my boss, this was in defense. And he used to go in the underground areas of where they have all this secret stuff going on and he had all those clearances, but I didn't, I didn't have to. I stayed in the office, well all mine required was, you know top secrets, is all documents that came into the office. We kept them only long enough to do our work on them, seal them up again, get them over to the Post Office and out. It had to be

before the office closed at night or you stayed until the next morning when you could get to the Post Office. Even locking them up in the safe wasn't good enough. You know, it's really strange because nothing ever happened. But, you know it could have, that's the thing.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then when you came back from Alaska what did you do then?

Mrs. Burton:

Well when I came back it was necessary that I just went on working. I went to work at Point Mugu, California, which was a missile base. And I lived in Oxnard, California. And I stayed there until my husband was transferred with his work to El Paso, Texas. He was with stock brokers. And he was sent there to open the office in El Paso, Texas. And they have nothing but Army there, there's no Navy. My husband being Navy, I said well I can go to work for the Army here, it's right here. "No you can't!" So that was the end of my career with civil service.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What year did you get married?

Mrs. Burton:

Well to my husband it was in, what, let's see 19..., oh my goodness it's so long ago, 1951, 1950's. Yeah 1951.

Mr. Misenhimer:

1951.

Mrs. Burton:

Of all things to do. Doggone it, why did I have to marry somebody that was so Navy oriented when my heart was right with him too, you know. But El Paso just doesn't have Navy there, not close. There is some Naval facility, some boys there, but

Mr. Misenhimer:

What years were you in El Paso?

Mrs. Burton:

Oh my for the rest of my, everything practically. I was in El Paso until 2000, well 1999 my husband died. I stayed in El Paso and sold my home in 2000 and moved to Kerrville.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What year did you get to El Paso?

Mrs. Burton:

When I started living there was 1951 I think, 1951, around there. At least I was in and out of there at that time. We bought the home in 1953, I think.

Mr. Misenhimer:

'51 to about '01 then?

Mrs. Burton:

Oh I left El Paso in 2000, in 2000 I left, he died in 1999. I left there in 2000 and went to Kerrville and was in Kerrville until I came here, which was just three years ago now. My husband is buried in Fort Bliss, military.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Oh, the military cemetery there.

Mrs. Burton:

Yes, uh-huh. Have you seen that lately? It's grass and beautiful and it was such a mess to take care of they put in the small rock, you know all through the cemetery. It looks now like desert.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now you were going to tell me about your brother's experiences during the war. What was his name?

Mrs. Burton:

James F. for Fred Imlay.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And what year was he born?

Mrs. Burton:

He was born in 1921.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And tell me about his experiences during World War II, what all did he do?

Mrs. Burton:

He was always in the Navy. He never ever came out of the Navy until..., he did thirty-two years in the Navy. Even though he was in prison camp, the four years that he was there is the only time he was ever out of the Navy. From the time he was..., daddy signed him in at 17 cause he wanted to go so bad and he didn't want to go to school, he didn't want to do any more, I mean higher education. He graduated from high school and after he graduated all he kept saying is "I want to go into the Navy." And daddy kept saying no, you know you need to think about this. "No." And so being he wasn't quite 18, took him down, signed him in, he stayed in the Navy until the day he almost died. Not quite, he went out in thirty-two years, he was out about seven, eight years before he died.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now what all did he do during World War II?

Mrs. Burton:

He was in prison camp.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Well, but he had to be doing something before he got captured, where was he when he got captured?

Mrs. Burton:

He was aboard ship and the ship sunk in the ..., I know I'm saying it wrong, but I learned it as

the Makassar Straits and I know it isn't pronounced that way, but that's where his ship was sunk with the *Marblehead* and the *Pope*. He was on the *USS Pope*, a destroyer. And there were two ships sunk, two destroyers. One was the *Pope* and the other was the *Marblehead* and anyway there was three ships. One was towed in and the other two were sunk. My brother was in the water there for three days and this is all in his transcript, which I have. And then they marched them through Borneo into the Celebes Islands. And that's where they stayed for the entire war. They were liberated on the 15th of August. And his whole transcript when they came in to interrogate each person that was still living, they took that. And then they took him from there into a Naval hospital and that's where he stayed for three months before he came home. And there was no notification even that he was alive or that he was coming home. We thought he was, you know had died. We still receiving letters from Washington saying that he, you know they were sorry but he was still missing in action. And then he walked in one night, came to the door and my dad answered the door, saw his son and passed out. He was so shocked. And that was the beginning of a new era in our lives, because my brother was home. And he had three months leave, reporting in to the hospital, Naval hospital all the time, you know I mean he lived there but he could come home just about any time he wanted to. Long Beach is where the Naval hospital was in California. And then he decided civilian life wasn't for him. He wanted to stay in the Navy as he always had and he shipped over and he stayed until he was too old to stay in the Navy anymore. And he retired in 19..., let's see what was it, oh gosh I don't know, it was thirty-two years from the time he started until he retired.

Mr. Misenhimer:

About 1970, something like that.

Mrs. Burton:

Right, right. And he came out and still wanted to be doing things. He bought a little home in Florida instead of California, I was always mad at him about that. Anyway in Florida and lived

down there, raised vegetables and had a nice little home and married. Enjoyed life for awhile until he died. Spent a lot of time in the Naval hospital there because he would have recurring problems with terrible things that had happened to him.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where was his ship sunk, where was it when it was sunk, where?

John Loera:

I'm just going to intervene here, if I may. It is what the Naval records called the 2nd battle of the Java Sea. *USS Pope* was ordered to escort the damaged destroyer *Exeter* out of harm's way. And of course in doing so they were not allowed to go full speed ahead or anything. And enemy forces were present and they had no choice but to get out and fight it out. And I guess what I could do if you like, I can read you a letter from the actual Captain of the ship that went out to his crew. This one is addressed to Jimmy himself, that would, you know in the Captain's words explain the actions of the ship, the background of the ship, and what transpired. If you have time for that, I'll be happy to read it to you.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Sure, won't you go ahead and read that to me.

John Loera:

Okay, here you go. "This is to Imlay, James F." And of course he was Chief Steward on board *USS Pope*, U.S. Navy. And this is from Welford C. Blinn, Captain U.S. Navy, he was Captain of the ship. It says and I quote, "You are a member of the crew of the *USS Pope*, DD 225, which was engaged in every major action fought during the Netherlands Indies operation. Our mission was to inflict damage upon the enemy to the best of our abilities in each action against the numerically superior Japanese. And by so doing to contribute our share in delaying the rapidly expanding fear of invasion of Japanese forces in the Orient. Particularly in the direction of Australia. The fact that the odds were against us is common knowledge. That the Japanese

plan for the invasion of Australia was thwarted partly by our efforts is well known. That the *USS Pope* after two notorious night actions against superior enemy forces in the actions off Makassar Strait on 24th, January, 1942 and in Badung Strait on 19th, February, 1942, undertook the task of escorting the crippled British cruiser, *HMS Exeter* through an area in which the enemy had complete control of sea and air. And that in the carrying out of these most difficult assignments was finally sunk by enemy action after inflicting considerable damage on an overwhelming enemy is in part known. That the survivors of the sinking of the *Pope* courageously suffered the agony of almost three days in the water, under extremely depressing circumstances and later such humiliation, privation, and starvation for three and a half years of incarceration by the enemy cannot be fully appreciated except by one who has likewise so suffered. In writing this letter I feel that I do know how you were living, suffered, but I doubt that I fully comprehend the suffering undergone by twenty-eight members of our heroic crew who died later in prison camps as a direct result of malnutrition and inhumane treatment. The Navy Crosses that the Commanding Officer received in two actions during this period were a direct result of the teamwork initiative, efficiency, and courage displayed by every member of the crew of the *Pope*. These awards should rightfully be considered to have been given to the ship as a whole. The Commanding Officer commends you as a member of the crew from the *USS Pope* for the part you played in the success for the gallant ship and wishes you every success in the future. Signed Welford C. Blinn, Captain U.S. Navy.”

Mr. Misenhimer:

Oh that's very good, yes.

John Loera:

DD 225.

Mr. Misenhimer

225?

John Loera:

Yes sir and there is....

(End of side 1 of tape.)

(Begin side 2 of tape.)

Mr. Misenhimer:

You say there's a plaque at the museum on the *Polk*?

John Loera:

Right, right. It just mentions the Battle of the Java Sea. And it states that *HMS Exeter* and two other destroyers were sunk. That's pretty much it, it doesn't you know, it doesn't go into much more detail. But yeah, that was basically what led to our, Jimmy's incarceration there with the Japanese and spending the duration of the war in their hands and of course you know he had his letter from Truman and his debriefing papers that were written in his, by his hand on treatment, etc. by the Japanese. But you know, I just wanted to share that with you on the actual battle itself and the heroism of that particular Naval ship because it had such a..., it really did have a very illustrious career even prior to the whole Pacific theatre. It had already proved itself in battle off in many, many other engagements. I'll put my mom back on the phone, I just wanted to share that with you. And hope that was some help.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And it was sunk in February of '42 then, right?

John Loera:

I think on the Naval records was March 1st.

Mr. Misenhimer:

March 1, '42.

John Loera:

Because the *Polk* actually managed to escape, the two other destroyers were sunk the day before

and *Polk* had escaped, but just overnight. And the following day encountered eight Japanese men-of-war, I believe it was actually four battleships and four cruisers. And even that it didn't take her down, it took dive bombers to actually put the ship down. But all hands had abandoned ship by that point. They had launched all torpedoes and pretty much fired every round of ammunition. They were on a totally defenseless ship and so Captain ordered the ship to be scuttled. And it was during the scuttling of the ship that one shipmate was actually killed during the scuttling process. A piece of shrapnel I guess killed that sailor. But other than that all hands were rescued and the only lives lost were lost to Japanese hands during imprisonment.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Alright, anything else you can tell me about it?

John Loera:

You know I've studied up on it and a few other, you know battles and I just wanted to share that with you because so many ships until you, you know really read the history of the ship and you know what all it did. And there was so many ships covered so much of the oceans and were so many places, it's just incredible you know what all took place out there. You know that one of course having a direct link to us, I did more than my best to study what I can because from what I understand another ship was launched at a later date under the same name. And there's some history that kind of confuses the two ships. It's so easy to find that the *USS Pope* was, you know later sold for scrap, etc., etc. Well that was the much newer ship. The original ship of course is lost forever at the bottom of the Pacific, so. Yep, that was my uncle Jimmy's ship and I'll put my mom back on the phone.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Great, John.

Mrs. Burton:

That is my son, Richard, he's helped me in so many ways. He does, I mean he really does.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Alright, well Barbara that's all the questions I have, unless you've thought of something else.

Mrs. Burton:

No sir, I sure haven't. You've covered the waterfronts pretty well I would say, of course I'll think of a million things after I have said this, not really. But it's an interesting era, it's an era that will be forgotten soon. Well not forgotten, but will not be recognized by our younger groups that are coming up, naturally.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That's why we're trying to preserve the history.

Mrs. Burton:

Oh my, it was such a terrible era for so many people. You know I can remember all kinds of things now that I've told you oh no that was all. But you know so many of my schoolmates, I know they didn't come home. I didn't know their parents personally, but you hear you know through the grapevines and things like that. But it's been nice talking with you and thank you for being interested in calling us. That's the great, well you know. It's a pleasure and a privilege, I might add that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Well I've enjoyed talking to you and I appreciate your time today.

Mrs. Burton:

Well thank you, thank you very much for your efforts and I think your work must be very interesting.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Oh it is.

Mrs. Burton:

God bless you and take care.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Okay, we'll keep in touch then. Bye now.

Mrs. Burton:

Alrighty, bye-bye.

(End of interview.)

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