

National Museum of the Pacific War

Nimitz Education and Research Center

Fredericksburg, Texas

Interview with

Mr. A K Sheffield

Date of Interview: May 20, 2016

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Interview in progress.

Ed Metzler: This is Ed Metzler, and today is the 20th of May, 2016. I am in Fredericksburg, Texas at the Admiral Nimitz Museum, and I am interviewing Mr. A K Sheffield. This interview is in support of the Nimitz Education and Research Center Archives, for the National Museum of the Pacific War, Texas Historical Commission, for the preservation of historical information related to this site. Thanks for coming today, A K for this interview, and I would like to get started by having you introduce yourself. If you'd give us your full name and where you were born and the date, and then we'll take it from there.

Mr. Sheffield: I'm A K Sheffield, born 9/9/ [19]25 at Coloration City, Texas. And ...

Ed Metzler: Now, were you born in a hospital, out in the country? What ...

Mr. Sheffield: Well, a so-called hospital at that time; it was an old residence and the doctor had ... that was his ... that was his hospital was an old residence, you know.

Ed Metzler: So, he literally had a hospital in his house then, huh?

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Sheffield: Well, it wasn't his house; it was just another house.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, yeah.

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah, yeah.

Ed Metzler: Now, what did your family do for a living? What did your father do?

Mr. Sheffield: Well, after he left home, he didn't ... he didn't like farming, so he went to work for the Texas Pacific Railroad. And in time, he ended up as what they called a pumper. He kept water for the old steam engines. And ...

Ed Metzler: Was he out on the road a lot or did ... was he working locally in the area there?

Mr. Sheffield: Well, he pumped water from Midland, Stanton, and places ... those two or three places like that.

Ed Metzler: Maybe Big Spring or something like that?

Mr. Sheffield: Well, I just don't remember. I was too young for that.

Ed Metzler: Uhm.

Mr. Sheffield: But anyway, he ... it was a fulltime job, but it didn't make any difference; he had a job. He was proud of it, too.

Ed Metzler: And that was important back then because those were tough times.

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah, that's right. Then he ... folks sent him to Hardin-Simmons University at Abilene trying to educate him.

Ed Metzler: (Chuckles).

Mr. Sheffield: And that's where he met his wife. And then I don't know exactly offhand what year they married, but they married and moved out to Stanton where he was working. And they were living at Stanton when I was fixin' to be born, but he wanted it to be born at Colorado City, and so that's the story there. And ...

Ed Metzler: Uhm. Now, were you first child in the family?

Mr. Sheffield: I was the first child and the last child.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter). So, you're one of these ...

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: ... single kids that got spoiled then, huh?

Mr. Sheffield: Right! Rotten.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, spoiled rotten (laughter).

Mr. Sheffield: (Laughter).

Ed Metzler: So, you grew up in Colorado City area?

Mr. Sheffield: Well, yes. Well, we lived at Stanton till 1937, and then his job opened up, this pumping job, opened up at Loraine and we moved there, and that's where he retired from.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Sheffield: We lived there three miles west of Loraine at this pump station as well as where ...

Ed Metzler: So, he gave up on the farming thing then, huh?

Mr. Sheffield: Oh yeah, he ... yeah, he never ... he never did farm.

Ed Metzler: Now, did the railroad provide him housing or did you ...

Mr. Sheffield: No.

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Sheffield: No, we ... he provided his own.

Ed Metzler: So, where did you go to school, elementary school and ...

Mr. Sheffield: Well, I started school at Stanton till we moved to Loraine, and then I went there a few years, and then the school district moved or something, and I was transferred to Colorado City. And then I ended up going to ... finishing up last two years of high school at San Marcos Baptist Academy.

Ed Metzler: So, you actually went away to school then?

Mr. Sheffield: Right, yeah. And then ...

Ed Metzler: Now ...

Mr. Sheffield: ... after I got out of high school, of course, World War II had started.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Sheffield: And I joined the Navy in ... in the late summer of '43.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum. So, let's see, if you were born in 1925, then you sixteen years old when Pearl Harbor was attacked, I guess.

Mr. Sheffield: More or less.

Ed Metzler: Just doing the math.

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Do you remember that day and what you were doing?

Mr. Sheffield: I sure do, I sure do.

Ed Metzler: Tell me about that.

Mr. Sheffield: Well, we was there in the dormitory at school, and when all this came over the radios and everything, and it was quite a shock. Of course, I didn't realize how bad it was. It, you know, I was too young. Of course, I knew it was bad when they go to doing what they did, but that's where I was and stayed there till I got out of high school.

Ed Metzler: And then what did you do when you got out of high school?

Mr. Sheffield: I went back home and stayed two or three months and then joined the Navy.

Ed Metzler: So, you'd rather join rather than get drafted, huh?

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah, I didn't want to walk; I'd done had all that walking I wanted.

Ed Metzler: (Chuckles).

Mr. Sheffield: So, I joined the Navy.

Ed Metzler: Well, I guess when I talk to veterans who joined the Navy, they said, "I joined because I didn't want to end up in the Army and have to live in a foxhole."

Mr. Sheffield: Well, I just didn't like that ... all that walking.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter). So, where did you go to actually enlist in the Navy?

Mr. Sheffield: Abilene.

Ed Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Sheffield: I believe ... I believe that's right.

Ed Metzler: So, that was late summer of '43?

Mr. Sheffield: Right.

Ed Metzler: So, you were just eighteen then?

Mr. Sheffield: Right, I was just ... right at eighteen or few days past or something like that.

Ed Metzler: So, what did your mother and father think about their only child going off to war?

Mr. Sheffield: I don't think they liked it, but that's the way it was.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, didn't have a choice, did you?

Mr. Sheffield: Well, if I'd of stayed at home, after a while, I'd have got drafted, I guess, and so it was coming sooner or later.

Ed Metzler: So, where did ... how long after you enlisted before they dragged you off to boot camp?

Mr. Sheffield: Well, I enlisted and they sent us to Abilene and did paperwork, and then got on a train and went to San Diego, California to boot camp.

Ed Metzler: Boy, what ... it happened quick then.

Mr. Sheffield: That's right.

Ed Metzler: They just shipped you right out.

Mr. Sheffield: That's right.

Ed Metzler: Had you ever been on a train before?

Mr. Sheffield: Oh yes. See, my daddy worked for a railroad and had a pass for the railroad.

Ed Metzler: That's right.

Mr. Sheffield: And we'd ride it wherever we wanted to go up and down the line.

Ed Metzler: You'd seen lots of train then.

Mr. Sheffield: I've seen a lot of train.

Ed Metzler: But you'd never seen the west coast?

Mr. Sheffield: No. No.

Ed Metzler: What was that like?

Mr. Sheffield: I didn't like that humidity out there; you never could take a bath and never get ... get dry.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter).

Mr. Sheffield: (Laughter).

Ed Metzler: Soon as you dried off, you got wet again.

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: So, you did basic training then in San Diego?

Mr. Sheffield: Right. Right.

Ed Metzler: Was basic training tough on you or easy or what?

Mr. Sheffield: Well, it wasn't tough, but it wasn't easy either. It ... it was ... just one of those things you had to do.

Ed Metzler: They make you walk a lot?

Mr. Sheffield: Well, we walked quite a bit.

Ed Metzler: Did they do a lot of tests up ... you have to take a lot of tests and stuff to ... to see what you were good at and all that?

Mr. Sheffield: Well, no, not at that time.

Ed Metzler: Uhm.

Mr. Sheffield: Later on aft ... after boot camp, we took tests to see ... you ... your qualifications. And, of course, I didn't have anything but a high school education, and they was needing gun crews on merchant ships. They called them Armed Guard.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Sheffield: And that's where I ended up.

Ed Metzler: You went immediately to sea then after you ...

Mr. Sheffield: Well, I went to Armed Guard School try ... learning guns and operating them and maintaining them.

Ed Metzler: Now, where was Armed Guard School held?

Mr. Sheffield: There at San Diego Naval Station.

Ed Metzler: Okay, so right there?

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: So, they're training you on things like operating deck guns and ...

Mr. Sheffield: Right.

Ed Metzler: ... side arms and ...

Mr. Sheffield: Mostly deck guns.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum. How long were you in that Armed Guard School? Was that just a few weeks or months or ...

Mr. Sheffield: Yes. I don't really remember how long it was, but it wasn't no great long deal.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum. And it wasn't particularly difficult either then, huh?

Mr. Sheffield: No. You either (pause) learned how to do it, or they kicked you out.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter).

Mr. Sheffield: (Chuckles).

Ed Metzler: So, at this point, did you have any buddies or acquaintances that you'd kind of gotten to know at ... at this point or ...

Mr. Sheffield: Well, yes, there was a boy from, see, Loraine and then Colorado City is west, and a little town called Westbrook was west of that, and there was a kid there at Westbrook got on ... was on the same train as I was going to boot camp. And we went through boot camp together, and then he went to some other kind of school and I went ... my schooling and I don't ... I never did see him no more after that.

Ed Metzler: You never saw him again, huh?

Mr. Sheffield: No. No.

Ed Metzler: So, after Navy Armed Guard School, then what happened?

Mr. Sheffield: I was assigned to a ship, a troop transport, at that time.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Sheffield: And it carried troops from the west coast down to the islands.

Ed Metzler: Out to Hawaiian Islands?

Mr. Sheffield: No, it was on down there, Luzon, Saipan, somewhere along in there.

Ed Metzler: Okay, so that's further west, that's getting over close to the Philippines

Mr. Sheffield: It was getting there, yes. Might have went to the Philippine ... we did at times, but I don't know which time.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Sheffield: But ...

Ed Metzler: So, tell me about your first trip out to the open ocean. Did you get sea sick?

Mr. Sheffield: Yes sir! Sure did.

Ed Metzler: (Chuckles).

Mr. Sheffield: And that's ... that's really one sickness (chuckle) you don't want to have.

Ed Metzler: That's something you don't want to experience.

Mr. Sheffield: But that's just part of it. Once you get sea sick and get over it, why, you're in pretty good shape. There's quite a few guys that never did overcome it; they was nauseated from the time they got on the thing till they got off.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, sometimes it almost got so bad that they took them off the ships and ...

Mr. Sheffield: Might have; I'm not familiar with that, but they was ... it was very uncomfortable for them to be nauseated all the time. But if you can't overcome it, you just ... can't overcome it.

Ed Metzler: Yeah. Yeah.

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: So, you were serving as a ... as a Navy Armed Guard on this first ... on this first ...

Mr. Sheffield: Yes.

Ed Metzler: ... voyage then?

Mr. Sheffield: Yes.

Ed Metzler: So, was it ... what, an armed liberty ship or ...

Mr. Sheffield: It was a converted liberty ship into a troop transport.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum, uh hum.

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Well, I here those liberty ships were really luxurious luxury liners.

Mr. Sheffield: Oh, ho, ho, pretty crowded.

Ed Metzler: I guess it was crowded and probably kind of rough, too, huh?

Mr. Sheffield: Oh yeah, those liberty ships ... they was rough and I don't know why it would be any rougher than anything else but they was.

Ed Metzler: (Chuckles).

Mr. Sheffield: They ... they stayed out of the water about as much as they was in it.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter). And they're *slow*!

Mr. Sheffield: Oh yeah, yeah.

Ed Metzler: I think top speed was like eleven knots or something like that.

Mr. Sheffield: Pretty slow.

Ed Metzler: And you could walk that fast!

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah, yeah.

Ed Metzler: So, your first voyage, you went ... what, out of San Diego or some ...

Mr. Sheffield: Yes. Out of San Diego ... down in the islands. I don't remember where carrying these troops.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum. So, were these Army or Marine or do you remember?

Mr. Sheffield: No, I don't remember; they just soldiers.

Ed Metzler: Did you talk to them at all?

Mr. Sheffield: Well, yes, some. Visited with some of them.

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: What was the food like on these ships (something falls in background)?

Mr. Sheffield: Well, us new guys had our own sleeping quarters and our own mess hall. We didn't eat with the troops that we were carrying.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Sheffield: But, of course, they didn't care too much for the food, naturally, but kept you from starving to death.

Ed Metzler: And what did you think about the food?

Mr. Sheffield: Well, my food was tolerable.

Ed Metzler: Really?

Mr. Sheffield: It was pretty good.

Ed Metzler: So, you had a separate place to eat then?

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah, a separate place to eat and sleep and everything.

Ed Metzler: But still separate from the officers? You were ...

Mr. Sheffield: Oh yeah, oh yeah. Officers had their quarters and everything, but the gun crew had their own separate quarters from everybody, too.

Ed Metzler: So, what do we got – anti-aircraft guns on there, twenty-millimeter, forty millimeter?

Mr. Sheffield: We had twenty millimeters, forty millimeters and five, five-inchers, a big ...

Ed Metzler: You had a five-incher, too?

Mr. Sheffield: One five-incher, yes.

Ed Metzler: And you knew how to operate all of them?

Mr. Sheffield: Yes.

Ed Metzler: Did you ever have to use them in anger?

Mr. Sheffield: No. I was lucky I never was in a war zone.

Ed Metzler: Uhm. So, the first time you went out, you went to some island, but you're not sure which one?

Mr. Sheffield: I don't remember which island, no.

Ed Metzler: And then you dropped the troops off.

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: And then what ... what did the ship do?

Mr. Sheffield: We went somewhere else and picked up a load of troops and headed back to the west coast.

Ed Metzler: Okay. So, you're bringing ... you're not only taking fresh troops out but you're bringing guys that have been out on the frontlines back?

Mr. Sheffield: Well, we're bringing them back, yes, yes, yes.

Ed Metzler: Did you ever bring back wounded ...

Mr. Sheffield: No, they was all ... they was all able-bodied soldiers.

Ed Metzler: I bet they were glad to be going back home.

Mr. Sheffield: Oh yeah, yeah. Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Now, you had an officer that you reported to, I guess, aboard ship?

Mr. Sheffield: Oh yes. The Navy had ... we had one officer above the gun crew.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Sheffield: 'Cause a gun crew wasn't very big, you know, big group.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Sheffield: And just one officer could handle it all.

Ed Metzler: So, he was what ... a Chief Petty Officer or something like that?

Mr. Sheffield: No, he was usually a Lieutenant or First ... I don't know what class.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Sheffield: But ...

Ed Metzler: Did you always have the same guy or did you ...

Mr. Sheffield: No, different ... different ... when you transferred from one ship to another, why, you had a different officer.

Ed Metzler: So, you transferred times to different ships?

Mr. Sheffield: Yes, I did.

Ed Metzler: Okay. So, after this first trip and you brought back the ... the guys who'd been out on ... in the war zone, uh, where did you go into? San Francisco or did you go ...

Mr. Sheffield: Yes, this troop ship was headed into San Francisco, but I don't know what happened. They got off course, I guess, and run aground.

Ed Metzler: Is this the famous story of the [SS] Henry Bergh?

Mr. Sheffield: That's exactly right.

Ed Metzler: Yeah?! I've heard about that ship. In fact, I found out ... I found some stories about it here on the internet.

Mr. Sheffield: Sure enough?!

Ed Metzler: That's right. I mean, its famous.

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Now, were you on that ship on your first trip back or was it ...

Mr. Sheffield: Right.

Ed Metzler: So, you went out once and came back and you were on the Henry Bergh?

Mr. Sheffield: Yes.

Ed Metzler: Now, that's ... that's a ... spelled B-e-r-g-h. The Henry Bergh. So, it was a modified uh, liberty ship.

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: And was bringing these guys back, and you were part of the armed guard aboard. Tell me what happened.

Mr. Sheffield: Well, it was before daylight, and we ... the ship ran aground, and lord, you talk about a shock! Sudden stop and everything, and then GQ bell ran off, and of course, that ... everybody got up and dressed and went to their gun stations. And then we saw what ... after a while, what was happening, you know? And they had cargo nets thrown over the side for you to go down to boats that picked you up, took us off of it, and took us into Treasure Island for ...

Ed Metzler: So, I'm trying to remember the name of the island here that was close ... it's ... says they were near the Farallon island, F-a-r-a-l-l-o-n.

Mr. Sheffield: Might have been, I don't know.

Ed Metzler: Was this after you went under the Golden Gate, and you were in San Francisco Bay?

Mr. Sheffield: No. This was ...

Ed Metzler: This is out in the Pacific Ocean?

Mr. Sheffield: It ... down, oh, before ... we never did, yeah, we was a long ways out from the Golden Gate.

Ed Metzler: Uhm!

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: So, what was your duty station at that time? Were you on a gun or what?

Mr. Sheffield: Well, I was in bed when this thing happened.

Ed Metzler: I guess so.

Mr. Sheffield: Got up and dressed and went to my gun station and stayed there till I had orders to go to the cargo net and get off. And all I got off with was the clothes on my back.

Ed Metzler: So, when you were at your gun station, could you see anything about what was going on or what had happened?

Mr. Sheffield: No, it was ... it was dark.

Ed Metzler: Just dark and foggy, huh?

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah, dark; I don't remember about the fog.

Ed Metzler: Don't know about the foggy?

Mr. Sheffield: No, yeah.

Ed Metzler: Well, when I looked into this story, I was told that there was a big loud party onboard at the time; have you ever heard that or did you know anything about that?

Mr. Sheffield: I didn't know anything about it. And I'm not going to ... I just don't know.

Ed Metzler: Yep.

Mr. Sheffield: Somebody screwed up that's all I ...

Ed Metzler: (Lauter), that's for sure!

Mr. Sheffield: ... they didn't follow the, oh, I don't know what you call it.

Ed Metzler: Well, there's a course you have to follow.

Mr. Sheffield: That's right.

Ed Metzler: And a channel probably.

Mr. Sheffield: And its ... its (unintelligible) with bait, uh, what you call them.

Ed Metzler: Those buoys that are ...

Mr. Sheffield: Buoys!

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Sheffield: And evidently, they missed the buoys and got off course and hit them ... hit that ... rocks.

Ed Metzler: So, when it hit the rocks, did it wake you up?

Mr. Sheffield: No, it damned near knocked you out of bed.

Ed Metzler: Is that right?

Mr. Sheffield: Oh boy! Yeah, it was horrible. I thought sure we'd hit another ship, you know?

Ed Metzler: Uhm!

Mr. Sheffield: Something. I never thought about that.

Ed Metzler: So ... so, you had bunks or something.

Mr. Sheffield: Oh yeah.

Ed Metzler: Were you ... were you up on the top level or did you ...

Mr. Sheffield: Well, I was ... our quarters were above deck, and I don't know whether I was on the top bunk or bottom bunk, I just don't remember that.

Ed Metzler: Well, you'd of known if you fell out of the top bunk (laughter).

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah, I didn't fall out, but I ... but ...

Ed Metzler: You sure didn't sleep through it, did you?

Mr. Sheffield: No, you didn't sleep through it. It didn't take you long to get dressed either.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter), I'll bet not! You were focused on one thing!

Mr. Sheffield: (Chuckles), that's right, yeah.

Ed Metzler: So, the ... they had the order to abandon ship (unintelligible)?

Mr. Sheffield: Yes, right.

Ed Metzler: And were you one of the last to go, I guess?

Mr. Sheffield: No. We was ... I wasn't the ... in the last; I don't know where I was at, but I was ordered off with the soldiers. My ... my group of men were all ordered off the ... it was getting daylight then.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Sheffield: Quite ... well, it was good daylight by the time we got off. And then we went to San Francisco and they gave us another sea bag full of clothes, and ...

Ed Metzler: Now, what kind of boats were there that you were getting into? Were these lifeboats off of the ... the ship or other boats?

Mr. Sheffield: No, they was other boats come in there from somewhere; I don't know.

Ed Metzler: So, were they just little ... kind of ...

Mr. Sheffield: Well ...

Ed Metzler: ... lifeboat type things or bigger boats or what?

Mr. Sheffield: I don't know, they was just big, big boats that would hold, you know, maybe fifteen or twenty men ...

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Sheffield: ... somewhere like that; I don't know.

Ed Metzler: So, did you get good and wet before you got in a boat?

Mr. Sheffield: No, no. When you got off the cargo net, you stepped into the boat, so you was dry. But ...

Ed Metzler: Do you remember whether the ship looked like it was going to sink or not or was it ...

Mr. Sheffield: No, it just going up and down with the waves, you know, *wham, wham* on them rocks. And it eventually broke in two, yeah.

Ed Metzler: But that happened after you got off ...

Mr. Sheffield: Oh yeah.

Ed Metzler: ... and everybody left?

Mr. Sheffield: Everybody left; they didn't lose no life or nothing, but ...

Ed Metzler: Well, that's good.

Mr. Sheffield: Everybody lost all their possessions; I felt sorry for those soldiers who had little nick-nacks they'd picked up for years ... years down there.

Ed Metzler: Yeah. The Japanese swords and the ...

Mr. Sheffield: Forty ...

Ed Metzler: ... flags and the guns and stuff.

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah. So, everybody ... I ... I didn't off with nothing but clothes on my back. Now, them soldiers might have kept a few nick-nacks, I don't know.

Ed Metzler: Uhm!

Mr. Sheffield: But we stayed there on Treasure Island for several days and got our ... got us a reissue of clothes, and then they gave us a thirty-day leave to go home and stay thirty days, Survivors ... Survivorship Leave. So, I went home, stayed thirty days.

Ed Metzler: Now this was in 1944, wasn't it? I think that's when they said this happened.

Mr. Sheffield: I believe ...

Ed Metzler: In May of '44.

Mr. Sheffield: I ... I imagine it could have been, yeah.

Ed Metzler: So, you went into the Navy in ...

Mr. Sheffield: '43.

Ed Metzler: ... '43, and then you went through your training and then you got onboard a ship and made one trip, and on the way back on the round trip, you're on the rocks!

Mr. Sheffield: That's right. That's right.

Ed Metzler: Are you beginning to wonder if maybe you should have been in the Army?

Mr. Sheffield: (Laughter).

Ed Metzler: (Laughter).

Mr. Sheffield: It was quite an ordeal.

Ed Metzler: So, what was ... what was leave like when you got to go home? I guess you were looking forward to that, huh?

Mr. Sheffield: Oh yeah. Evidently, it was broadcast over the air because Mother and Daddy had a neighbor lived about oh, I don't know, maybe a half a mile from them, and they heard it over the radio. And they knew about it, but Mother and Daddy didn't. And ...

Ed Metzler: So, they knew ... and did they ... did your mother and father know you were on that ship?

Mr. Sheffield: I don't know ... I don't know what ... I don't know what they did. I imagine they did, but they didn't know ... they didn't know about that deal there.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, yeah.

Mr. Sheffield: Well, the neighbor heard it, SOS call ... signals or whatever you want to call it.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum, uh hum.

Mr. Sheffield: The ship was hollering for help, you know.

Ed Metzler: Right. So, when you were out there in the Pacific, did you write letters home or did you ...

Mr. Sheffield: Oh yeah, yeah.

Ed Metzler: So, you were a good boy and wrote your letters?

Mr. Sheffield: I sure did.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter), and did you receive letters back?

Mr. Sheffield: I sure did. Might be a while getting them back, but it was good when you got them.

Ed Metzler: Yeah. Did you get anything else besides letters?

Mr. Sheffield: Oh, get a box of cookies. Mama sent me a box of cookies ...

Ed Metzler: (Laughter).

Mr. Sheffield: ... every now and then.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter). And did you share those cookies or did you (unintelligible).

Mr. Sheffield: You didn't have no chance, no choice (laughter).

Ed Metzler: (Laughter), yeah, I guess that's right.

Mr. Sheffield: Oh yeah, we all shared. If anybody got a box of cookies they would pass them around.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, and I guess you got other guys' cookies.

Mr. Sheffield: That's right.

Ed Metzler: So, they should get your cookies.

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah, yeah.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter). Well, did ... did they censor your letters that you sent home so that the enemy ...

Mr. Sheffield: Yes.

Ed Metzler: ... wouldn't know where you were and ...

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah. Yeah, my folks never knew where I was at.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Sheffield: They just got a letter every now and then.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum, uh hum. They were bound to have been worried because you were their only child.

Mr. Sheffield: That's right. And one time we was at sea for thirty-two days without seeing land, and no mail in or out, and it sure did get my folks upset.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, 'cause they didn't hear from you.

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah, couldn't.

Ed Metzler: That's right!

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Now, when you were out at sea for thirty-something days, was that a ... a later voyage that you took?

Mr. Sheffield: Oh, uh, yeah.

Ed Metzler: So, anyhow, you got thirty days liberty back at home, and then you had to go back, right?

Mr. Sheffield: Right.

Ed Metzler: So, back to what, San Diego again or San Francisco?

Mr. Sheffield: No, I went back to San Francisco and picked up another liberty ship, but it was just plain cargo they were to ship. It wasn't no troop trans ...

Ed Metzler: And where'd she go?

Mr. Sheffield: Lord, I can't ... I don't remember all that stuff.

Ed Metzler: Somewhere out there, huh?

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah, in the South Pacific.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Did you ever go into the Indian Ocean, or was this all in the Pacific Ocean?

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah, seemed like I went in the Indian Ocean.

Ed Metzler: 'Cause I think ...

Mr. Sheffield: Med ... Mediterranean.

Ed Metzler: I think somebody mentioned to me that you had gone to Colombo in Ceylon.

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah, sure did. I forgot ...

Ed Metzler: So, that's in the Indian Ocean.

Mr. Sheffield: Okay.

Ed Metzler: It's over there by India.

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah, that's right!

Ed Metzler: So, tell me about that trip. What was that like?

Mr. Sheffield: Well, it was carrying freight or whatever, and we pulled in there at Colombo for a few days and unloaded, I guess. And I went to town and bought me some little bookends for my mother.

Ed Metzler: Yeah? Made of what?

Mr. Sheffield: Well, I don't know what kind of wood, it was just black ...

Ed Metzler: Okay, it was wood?

Mr. Sheffield: It was wood and just as black as you could be, and I still got them.

Ed Metzler: Do you really?!

Mr. Sheffield: That's right.

Ed Metzler: So, that's ... that's a real World War II ...

Mr. Sheffield: That's right.

Ed Metzler: ... memorabilia.

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah. Of course, my mother's gone ...

Ed Metzler: Sure.

Mr. Sheffield: One of my sisters has got that stuff now.

Ed Metzler: Hum! Well, I bet it was hot and humid there, too.

Mr. Sheffield: Oh, I'm sure it was.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter).

Mr. Sheffield: (Laughter).

Ed Metzler: Now, were you with a different bunch of guys ...

Mr. Sheffield: Oh yeah.

Ed Metzler: ... on each of these ships?

Mr. Sheffield: Yes.

Ed Metzler: So, you didn't really have like some brothers in arms that you ...

Mr. Sheffield: No.

Ed Metzler: ... always were with through the whole war?

Mr. Sheffield: No, I ... I wasn't with nobody all the time that I knew.

Ed Metzler: But the duty was the same then? You ...

Mr. Sheffield: Duty was the same, right.

Ed Metzler: And fortunately, you never had to shoot any Japanese aircraft down or anything like that.

Mr. Sheffield: No, well no. Our main trouble was torpedoes (chuckles).

Ed Metzler: So, did you do the zigzag course to try and avoid the torpedoes?

Mr. Sheffield: If they did, I don't know what ... what ... but they could have.

Ed Metzler: Uhm.

Mr. Sheffield: Because we went through that Med training and that was torpedo junction at that time.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter), so, was that on the same voyage that you went to ... to Ceylon? When you went to the Mediterranean? Or was that a different ship and a different time?

Mr. Sheffield: Don't get me lying, I don't know.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter).

Mr. Sheffield: I kept a log. Of course, you're not supposed to do that, but I did anyway.

Ed Metzler: That's right.

Mr. Sheffield: But I lost it.

Ed Metzler: Before you got home?

Mr. Sheffield: Before I got home somewhere or another.

Ed Metzler: Oh, well you did so many transfers from one spot to another.

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah, yeah.

Ed Metzler: And I guess you lost all of ... whatever you had on that shipwreck, too.

Mr. Sheffield: Oh yeah! All I got off of that ship was what I had on my back.

Ed Metzler: It's good you got your clothes on.

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter).

Mr. Sheffield: Well, you want to do that 'cause if you blister out there, you got a problem.

Ed Metzler: That's right, that's right. So, when you were in the Mediterranean, do you remember any particular incidences while you were there?

Mr. Sheffield: No, no.

Ed Metzler: Or ports that you went to?

Mr. Sheffield: We sailed ... we started ... we got ... went in it and come out and never did stop, you know, just ...

Ed Metzler: You really just went *through* the Mediterranean.

Mr. Sheffield: We went through, right.

Ed Metzler: So, you must have gone through the Suez Canal.

Mr. Sheffield: We did. We did. That was quite an experience. Of course, those ... I didn't pay a whole lot of attention like I would have now, but I remember.

Ed Metzler: You were just a teenager (laughter).

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah. No sense and cared less.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter).

Mr. Sheffield: (Chuckles), but ...

Ed Metzler: Yeah, well that's the way it is when you're a teenager.

Mr. Sheffield: That Suez Canal that ... that's fascinating. You just ... a ditch dug out (chuckles) show ... I don't know they manage to drive a ship down that little thing but they do.

Ed Metzler: Now, when you were on these troop ships or freighters, French (?) merchant ships, did ... were you alone or were you with other ships in a ... in more like a fleet?

Mr. Sheffield: No, we was alone most of the time.

Ed Metzler: Most of the time you were alone?

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: And you never had any naval warships to protect you?

Mr. Sheffield: No. No.

Ed Metzler: So, if you went through the Mediterranean, then that means you went out at the Straits of Gibraltar.

Mr. Sheffield: Right.

Ed Metzler: Where'd she go then?

Mr. Sheffield: Well, I can't remember always.

Ed Metzler: Did it go back to the U.S. or did you ...

Mr. Sheffield: Well, we went back to the U.S. eventually. I don't know.

Ed Metzler: Uhm.

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Did you ever go any ... any of the ports like London or up in Europe anywhere?

Mr. Sheffield: No, no.

Ed Metzler: Well, that was a pretty active war zone in ... in '44 it seems.

Mr. Sheffield: You better believe it was.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, so that's not something that you're just going to come cruising in in a liberty ship ...

Mr. Sheffield: No.

Ed Metzler: ... all by yourself.

Mr. Sheffield: No.

Ed Metzler: So, you went back to the State, and then did you go out again?

Mr. Sheffield: Oh yeah. I was on several of those cargo ships. I guess, I don't know why.

Ed Metzler: Mostly out into the Pacific then?

Mr. Sheffield: Yes. I was in the Atlantic for a while.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Sheffield: Right near a puddle of water that was big enough to sail on.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter). Yeah, let's see you've got the Indian Ocean, the Pacific Ocean, the Mediterranean, and the Atlantic. You've hit them all!

Mr. Sheffield: Petty much. Yeah, that Atlantic was a cold sucker! It was horribly cold weather.

Ed Metzler: And so, you must have hit that one in the winter.

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: So, that was probably the winter of '44, '45 then if I would ...

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: ... if I had to guess. The war wasn't over yet, right, when you crossed the Atlantic or do you remember?

Mr. Sheffield: I don't remember. No, it wasn't over because, I don't know where it was, they took us off of this liberty ship and we was in Boston, Massachusetts and picked up a brand new LST. You know what that is?

Ed Metzler: I do!

Mr. Sheffield: The number was 1080, brand new one.

Ed Metzler: Brand new.

Mr. Sheffield: And I don't know where we loaded up, but we had tanks and trucks and stuff like that. And ...

Ed Metzler: Now, that was out of Boston?

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah. (Unintelligible) ... I remember ...

Ed Metzler: Now (unintelligible) those ... those LSTs, those are big ships and ...

Mr. Sheffield: Well, they was rough suckers though, lord a mighty.

Ed Metzler: Well, their old flat bottoms, yeah.

Mr. Sheffield: Flat bottomed things, yeah.

Ed Metzler: (Unintelligible).

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah. And we come on around and was in the Pacific heading for Japan when VE-Day was over.

Ed Metzler: Okay. VE-Day, Europe?

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Japan hadn't surrendered yet.

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah. Well, it was ...

Ed Metzler: But it was going to happen.

Mr. Sheffield: Well, V ... Japan happened that day.

Ed Metzler: VJ-Day then.

Mr. Sheffield: VJ-Day instead of, yeah, I got it mixed up.

Ed Metzler: Right. So, that's in August of ... of 1945 is when they surrendered.

Mr. Sheffield: Okay.

Ed Metzler: And signed it in early September aboard the [USS] Missouri.

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: So ...

Mr. Sheffield: So ... but anyway, we went on and went to Japan with our load of whatever we had, and unloaded it and I think they decommissioned that ship over there. They didn't want them I reckon; I was told that. I don't know whether they did or not now. It was ...

Ed Metzler: I don't think they needed a thousand LSTs back in the States (chuckles) ...

Mr. Sheffield: No.

Ed Metzler: ... after the war was over.

Mr. Sheffield: And they assigned me to the Battleship Iowa ...

Ed Metzler: Ah!

Mr. Sheffield: ... to come home. I rode that Battleship Iowa from Japan to Hous ... no, west coast, I believe. All that stuff's getting away from me.

Ed Metzler: Well, it was a long time ago, wasn't it?

Mr. Sheffield: Yes, it was.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter). So, you sailed on the USS Iowa.

Mr. Sheffield: From Japan to the United States.

Ed Metzler: to return to U.S. post-war.

Mr. Sheffield: Is this alright to drink this?

Ed Metzler: Yes sir! That's yours to have.

Mr. Sheffield: My mouth's getting dry.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, and those caps are hard to get off, too, I've discovered that.

Mr. Sheffield: I got her.

Ed Metzler: Got it? So, tell me about what ... do you remember what port in Japan you went to? Was it Tokyo or Yokohama or who knows?

Mr. Sheffield: It was that port that they bombed so bad.

Ed Metzler: Tell me what you saw.

Mr. Sheffield: Well, we just docked there and it was right up ... you could see ... you could see the people living on the land, you know?

Ed Metzler: Living on the streets I guess, huh?

Mr. Sheffield: Well, okay, I guess. Anyway ...

Ed Metzler: So, you saw a lot of war damage?

Mr. Sheffield: Yes, Hiroshima, wasn't it?

Ed Metzler: Hiroshima was the one that they hit the atomic bomb with.

Mr. Sheffield: Well, okay. I'll be darned if I can remember which ... which one of them cities we was in.

Ed Metzler: So, did you go onshore?

Mr. Sheffield: Yes. I ... we didn't have liberty to go onshore, but after we was there for a while, we had the privilege of going to a Japanese war ... warehouse and getting a rifle for each man onboard ship, a Jap rifle.

Ed Metzler: Really?!

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah. So, they had two different kinds of rifles. There's six point five millimeter and there's seven point seven. Well, I was in the group to go get those rifles, and we got in there and you carried them in your arm like this. You just ... they laid so many rifles in your arms.

Ed Metzler: Right! You just took them out by the handfuls, huh?

Mr. Sheffield: But anyway, I got a hold of another, and some way or another, I got a hold of an extra one for myself. I wanted one of each size.

Ed Metzler: Sure!

Mr. Sheffield: And I got off of that sucker with that.

Ed Metzler: Did you get them home?

Mr. Sheffield: I got them home.

Ed Metzler: Do you have them at home?

Mr. Sheffield: I gave both of them to my grandsons just here a while back because at my age, you know, how long am I going to be here, and I wanted ... I want my stuff to go where I want it to go while I ...

Ed Metzler: Darn right!

Mr. Sheffield: ... while I can see that it went there.

Ed Metzler: You bet!

Mr. Sheffield: And they was highly elated to get them.

Ed Metzler: That's great!

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: And they'll take care of them.

Mr. Sheffield: I think so.

Ed Metzler: Because that's real history there.

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah! And I even got the bayonets to go with them.

Ed Metzler: Really?!

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah (chuckles).

Ed Metzler: Man! Did you bring any other memorabilia back other than the ... well, let's see, we've got bookends from Ceylon.

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: And we've got two Japanese rifles with bayonets.

Mr. Sheffield: And we was in Calcutta, India a good while and you talk about a hot sucker!

Ed Metzler: (Laughter).

Mr. Sheffield: And I brought home some little fans like you fan with.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Sheffield: That folded up.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Sheffield: And I ... my mother, of course, took all of that stuff. It ... that's who I brought them home to ... for. And we still have them. Of course, they're pretty well getting deteriorated now. But ...

Ed Metzler: Well, they're getting up in age.

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah. They've been here a while (laughter).

Ed Metzler: Yeah, that's right.

Mr. Sheffield: So ...

Ed Metzler: So, when you went to Calcutta, that must have been on the same voyage where you went to ... to Colombo, Ceylon.

Mr. Sheffield: I imagine it was.

Ed Metzler: Because they're close to each other.

Mr. Sheffield: They're close together, yeah.

Ed Metzler: So, tell me about what you saw in Calcutta. Is that just a big city or what?

Mr. Sheffield: Oh, my gosh, I don't know. Big city and population so thick they couldn't walk. And hot as a pistol. I don't think ... I don't know whether ... I went out on shore but once or not, I didn't like that. I'd rather stay on the ship. It wasn't air conditioned, but it's far ahead of being on the streets.

Ed Metzler: And cleaner, too, probably.

Mr. Sheffield: Oh yeah! And them poor Indians, it's pitiful the way some of them lives. They'd wash their clothes in that water, and it was so muddy you couldn't see through a glass of water.

Ed Metzler: Oh, my gosh!

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah. But they was washing their clothes that a way. And ... you just ... people can't realize how fortunate we are in America.

Ed Metzler: Well, I think that's one benefit that comes from traveling around the world is ...

Mr. Sheffield: Right.

Ed Metzler: ... to realize how fortunate we have it.

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah, but the younger generations, you know, they don't have no idea what they've got. Just like my children, you know?

Ed Metzler: I do.

Mr. Sheffield: You can't ... you can't blame it, it's just that a way. I try to teach them. My wife says, "Oh, you're too tight," conservative because they ain't got nothing to conserve. (Chuckles), as I see it.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Sheffield: But ... pitiful. But anyway ...

Ed Metzler: Well, times have changed.

Mr. Sheffield: Oh yeah. It's un ... it's unreal.

Ed Metzler: Do you ever, uhm, well, let's see, so, you came back after the war was over, the 1080 [LST] made her delivery to Japan.

Mr. Sheffield: Uh hum.

Ed Metzler: You got your rifles (chuckle).

Mr. Sheffield: Uh hum.

Ed Metzler: And then you came back to the States at that point on the Iowa?

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Or did you have ...

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: ... more ...

Mr. Sheffield: No, I came back on the Iowa.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Sheffield: And got ... sent me to Houston and discharged me.

Ed Metzler: Tell me about the Iowa.

Mr. Sheffield: Oh, my gosh! I would like to ride that sucker one more time. It is ... those battleships are just like the aircraft carriers, they're ... they're too big to comprehend. It's just a floating city! Everything that's in New York City is on that ship. Hospitalizations, you know?

Ed Metzler: Yeah, and barber shops and ...

Mr. Sheffield: Dentists.

Ed Metzler: ... dental clinics and ...

Mr. Sheffield: Everything in the world is there. But anyway, of course, we ... I don't know if we had liberty to go all over the ship or not. I didn't because, lord a mercy, a man get lost on that sucker and starve to death before they found you.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter).

Mr. Sheffield: But they ... I know ... feel it just a little bit rolling around, you know? And those regular crew men, they thought they was awful rough. I said, "You poor devils, you don't know what rough is!"

Ed Metzler: (Chuckles).

Mr. Sheffield: "If you'd of ride that LST, you'd thought you was riding around in an airplane on that Iowa."

Ed Metzler: And crash landing every thirty feet (laughter).

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah, oh my. It sure was smooth sailing.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, because you'd had liberty ships and LSTs; you'

Mr. Sheffield: Well, you take those liberty ships in rough seas, they'd buck so much t hat the screw ... the back end, the screw had come out of the ground and ...

Ed Metzler: Come out of the water, yeah.

Mr. Sheffield: ... come out of the water and that thing would just shake like a bowl of Jell-o.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter).

Mr. Sheffield: I don't know what kept them ... I don't know how they stayed together.

Ed Metzler: Well, you know, they made them real fast, and you always worry ...

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: ... if those welds were going to hold or not.

Mr. Sheffield: That's right. But ...

Ed Metzler: So, uhm, the Iowa must have been jam packed with soldiers and sailors coming back to the States after the war, right?

Mr. Sheffield: Well, all I know is the bunch off of that LST was on there with, you know, that I was in ... so far as anybody else, I don't know. But lord, there's several thousand men just standard equipment to run one of those.

Ed Metzler: Right! The crew itself.

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah, the crew is ...

Ed Metzler: It's several thousand.

Mr. Sheffield: That's right; hard to believe.

Ed Metzler: So, you came ... what, through the Panama Canal if you were discharged in Houston or did you go to the west coast and then ...

Mr. Sheffield: I believe we went to the west coast and trained down to Houston.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: And that's when you got your discharge?

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: And after that you then went back home and the rest is history, huh?

Mr. Sheffield: That's right.

Ed Metzler: (Chuckles). Do you ever think about the war years and what happened during the war after ... after all these years or is this the first time you've really given any thought to it in a while?

Mr. Sheffield: No, just don't think about it.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Sheffield: It's not very pleasant.

Ed Metzler: No. What do you ... how do you feel about the Japanese?

Mr. Sheffield: Let's don't get into that (laughter).

Ed Metzler: Well, let's ...

Mr. Sheffield: (Laughter).

Ed Metzler: ... let's get into it!

Mr. Sheffield: Well, it's hard for me to be as decent to them as the United States is. After they did what they did, I ... I ... you're supposed to forgive and forget but I ... it's hard for me to do ... the way they did us, that's just unreal.

Ed Metzler: Yeah. Yeah, I know a lot of the veterans *feel* that way because they've seen, you know, how the Japanese ...

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah ... well, you can go ...

Ed Metzler: ... could be so inhumane.

Mr. Sheffield: ... you can go to Pearl Harbor now, and see that battleship laying on the side and those poor men never had a chance to live.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Sheffield: And, of course, they done it on a Sunday morning know that everybody would be asleep, you know?

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Sheffield: And ... *sneaky* type!

Ed Metzler: You bet.

Mr. Sheffield: But I guess I ought not to feel that a way about them, but I ... I don't have too much love for them *yet*.

Ed Metzler: Well, it's only been seventy-five years.

Mr. Sheffield: (Laughter).

Ed Metzler: (Laughter).

Mr. Sheffield: Oh, lordy.

Ed Metzler: So, you ... you have ... did you have any continuing contact with any of the guys you knew during your time in the Navy after the war was over?

Mr. Sheffield: Yes, I corresponded with one man till he passed away here a few years back. His ... his daddy was a railroad man in New York just like my daddy was here

in Texas, you know, and we had a little ... little bit of common things to talk about.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum, something in common.

Mr. Sheffield: And he was a married man, and I admired him for the way he lived. He lived like he was supposed to, and he was real good. In fact, I don't know where it was now, I was to come home and he took those two Jap rifles of mine and put them in a ... made a wooden box and put them in it and mailed them suckers to me.

Ed Metzler: Really?!

Mr. Sheffield: He sure did.

Ed Metzler: Boy, that helped, didn't it?!

Mr. Sheffield: I don't ... yeah, I was just wondering what would ... I don't guess I would have got here with them had ... had he not done that. I owe ... I owe him for that till this good day.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, yeah.

Mr. Sheffield: And I went to Las Vegas, my wife and I did, and visited with him one year.

Ed Metzler: That's where he lived in retirement?

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah. Yeah, because he says, "I'm so tired of that cold weather up there." Oh, he told me how cold he got. I don't know how people stand it (chuckle).

Ed Metzler: If you're not used to it ...

Mr. Sheffield: Well ...

Ed Metzler: ... it'll eat you up.

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah, front wheel cars, and I never had heard of that, you know. But they was quite popular up there at that time.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum. 'Cause you get better traction in the snow.

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: (Chuckles), that doesn't sound like something I'd be interested in either.

Mr. Sheffield: No, I stayed in the house if it's that bad (laughter).

Ed Metzler: Did ... did your group ever have any reunions after the war?

Mr. Sheffield: No, we never did.

Ed Metzler: Because you were kind of a small group and ...

Mr. Sheffield: A small group and ...

Ed Metzler: ... scattered all over different ships.

Mr. Sheffield: ... transferred around so much.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Sheffield: There's a boy at home that was on a flat-top and they had reunions every now and then.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Sheffield: But I never did because we moved around too much.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Sheffield: It would have been nice to have had such as that.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, kind of relive old times a little bit.

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah, uh hum. Yeah.

Ed Metzler: So, what was the ... the funniest thing that happened to you during your war experience? Something that when you think about it, you just kind of chuckle.

Mr. Sheffield: (Chuckle).

Ed Metzler: Anything come to mind?

Mr. Sheffield: No, I don't guess. I'm sure there was (chuckles), but I can't think of it now. But ...

Ed Metzler: You ever get involved in any card games?

Mr. Sheffield: No. I never was a gambler.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Sheffield: We played card games alright, but it was just clean games.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum. No gambling though.

Mr. Sheffield: No, no. My gosh, that ... twenty-one dollars a month seemed like a national bank to me.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter).

Mr. Sheffield: 'Cause ...

Ed Metzler: That was ... that was *huge* back then!

Mr. Sheffield: It was then 'cause ...

Ed Metzler: Did you save most of that money and take it home?

Mr. Sheffield: I saved ... I saved a lot ... I ... I didn't save too much till after the war and then I was ... shut her off. I knew ... I ... I thought I wanted to farm when I got home; I needed money to buy a tractor.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Sheffield: And that's what I done.

Ed Metzler: Well, it came in handy, didn't it?

Mr. Sheffield: It did, yeah.

Ed Metzler: It was useful ...

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: ... way to use that money.

Mr. Sheffield: We had a tractor dealership there that favored veterans.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum.

Mr. Sheffield: And I got a little tractor pretty quick after I got home.

Ed Metzler: Yeah, 'cause they were probably short for a while.

Mr. Sheffield: Oh yeah, yeah. Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Well, what else can we talk about about the war years?

Mr. Sheffield: (Pause), I don't know, it's ... a lot of people made the service as a career, and that's alright. I don't have nothing against that. It's ... it's just a different kind of a life. You ... you never have decisions of your own much, somebody else is always telling you what to do.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter), that's the way it works.

Mr. Sheffield: And ... and how to do it, of course. You just stop and turn around and get a job out here, it's the same thing, but it ... yet, it's different.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter).

Mr. Sheffield: (Laughter), so ... but I thought about it quite a bit, but I didn't do it. I got hold of a ... on one of them armed guard trips on a ship somewhere or another I got ... we got hold of a ... command ... a little officer. He was *scared to death* at sea.

Ed Metzler: Scared?

Mr. Sheffield: Afraid we'd be hit with a torpedo or something, and he slept with his shoes and pants on. He just couldn't relax.

Ed Metzler: Couldn't relax.

Mr. Sheffield: No. Well, if you can't rest and relax, you're in bad shape or will get that a way, but ...

Ed Metzler: So, was he your commanding officer?

Mr. Sheffield: Yes sir, sure was.

Ed Metzler: How did that make you feel?

Mr. Sheffield: (Chuckle), wish you had a sharp knife (laughter).

Ed Metzler: Now, what do you mean about ... by that A K?

Mr. Sheffield: (Chuckle), I'll tell you what, people like that ... he had the authority, you know, and he used it whether you liked it or not.

Ed Metzler: So, he was a lot ... kind of tough on you guys?

Mr. Sheffield: Well, he ... just unreasonable. He had no reason about him.

Ed Metzler: No common sense.

Mr. Sheffield: No common sense at all.

Ed Metzler: Was he a young kid?

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah, he was young.

Ed Metzler: But not as young as you?

Mr. Sheffield: Oh, no! No, he'd gone to this Officers Training School and he thought he was ...

Ed Metzler: Hot stuff.

Mr. Sheffield: ... hot stuff, and ...

Ed Metzler: Was he what they called those "ninety-day wonders"?

Mr. Sheffield: Ninety-day wonders, you ... you've got it!

Ed Metzler: Yeah. I ... I've heard about those.

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah. Yeah, he was one of them.

Ed Metzler: So, he's a ... he's an example of a ninety-day wonder that wasn't a wonder.

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah. And those kind of people ... when you get in there, you just have to ride it out, you know? And I ... I didn't like that, so when I got a chance to go home, I took it.

Ed Metzler: Uh hum. So, when you had a ... a lot of different voyages on a lot of different ships, and you had a different commanding officer each time ...

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah, I ...

Ed Metzler: ... so, you must have had a lot of variety from good guys to not so good guys.

Mr. Sheffield: Right. I'd be ...

Ed Metzler: What about some of the good guys?

Mr. Sheffield: Oh, they just real nice; you really enjoyed being with them, yeah. They looked out for their crew and we come to port, maybe didn't ... in the PX or the galley, they'd order little special things, you know, that you ... fresh fruit was a ... was a rarity.

Ed Metzler: A huge hit, I bet!

Mr. Sheffield: You bet, and get a case of that and we'd all get a ... our share. And it was ... it was ...

Ed Metzler: So, looking out for you guys on the human side.

Mr. Sheffield: Right, yeah, yeah. It ... it sure is bad business to get a hold of a guy like that that was scared to death at sea especially, you know? That's when he was ...

Ed Metzler: Yeah.

Mr. Sheffield: Well ...

Ed Metzler: Yeah, if your leader isn't courageous, then it's hard for you to be courageous.

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah, right.

Ed Metzler: But like you said, you just rode it out, huh?

Mr. Sheffield: Well, you didn't have nothing else that you could do. The only way you could get out would be ... commit some kind of crime and go to the brig somewhere, and I didn't want none of that.

Ed Metzler: No, it wouldn't be worth it, would it?

Mr. Sheffield: No (chuckles).

Ed Metzler: (Laughter).

Mr. Sheffield: I can handle that other better than that.

Ed Metzler: Yeah. So, what was the ... probably the toughest time for you in ... in the ... your whole World War II experience? You've all got hi ... we've all got highs and lows, what's ... what's the time you just kind of shake your head and say, "Boy, I ... I wasn't sure I was going to get through that."

Mr. Sheffield: Oh, I don't really know.

Ed Metzler: Maybe when your ship hit the rocks?

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah, that was ... that'll open up your eyes!

Ed Metzler: (Laughter), I was going to say, "That's a wakeup call," isn't it?

Mr. Sheffield: That was a wakeup call, yeah, 'cause you'd been trained for abandon ships and stuff all the time, and when that GQ bell went off, you know what in the world was wrong, something is bad wrong.

Ed Metzler: So, that training paid off.

Mr. Sheffield: That training paid off because you ... you was trained when you went to bed to put your clothes in a certain place so they'd be there when you woke up.

Ed Metzler: When you needed them (laughter).

Mr. Sheffield: When you needed them, and mine was there, too.

Ed Metzler: Well, you could have just worn your shoes and pants like your officer did.

Mr. Sheffield: Well, that's up to you; I ain't going to.

Ed Metzler: (Laughter).

Mr. Sheffield: I want to go to bed right (chuckles).

Ed Metzler: Oh gosh.

Mr. Sheffield: Yeah.

Ed Metzler: Well, I'm going to close the interview now.

Mr. Sheffield: Okay.

Ed Metzler: I want to close it by first thanking you for spending the time with me today to share some of your experiences. But more importantly, I want to thank you for what you did for our country. I think your generation really did something special, and we still don't recognize you guys enough, so I want to thank you for ... your service.

Mr. Sheffield: You bet.

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CD – #OH04601– Mr. A K Sheffield

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