

**Norman Scott
Narrator**

**Interviewed by Philip Leonard
Hoosick Falls Historical Society**

**Interviewed at the
Louis Miller Museum, Hoosick Falls, New York**

Interviewer IN
Norman Scott NS

IN: Would you please state your name?

NS: Norman Scott

IN: Where do you live NS?

NS: I live on Thirty One Snow Street in Hoosick Falls

IN: Before you went into the service you lived in Hoosick Falls?

NS: Yes, I graduated from Hoosick Falls [High] School in 1941. I went to work for M.D. Kincaid and sons who at the time was in the plumbing industry. In the summer of 1942, I enlisted in the Marines, went to Paris Island, South Carolina for boot camp. That was a period of eight weeks. After that, I went to Norfolk Virginia to sea school. After sea school I was assigned to the U.S.S. Bella Wood. It [the U.S.S. Bella Wood] was an aircraft carrier, it was a converted frontal cruiser.

IN: You were a Marine assigned to the Navy?

NS: A Marine assigned to a Navy ship. [Shakes head yes]

IN: What was your job on the ship?

NS: I was a twenty millimeter anti-aircraft gunner.

IN: What happened next?

NS: At first we went for what they call a shakedown cruise to see if there are any new bugs, be it a brand new ship, and work them out.

IN: That was before we had a lot of time to build the big air craft carriers?

NS: Yes, at that time they needed a lot more air power out in the Pacific Theater.

IN: You did the shakedown cruise and what happened next?

NS: We came back, they worked what little bugs there were out of the ship being that it was a brand new ship of course. Then we didn't know exactly where we were going to go. We headed out, went through the Panama Canal, and when we hit the Pacific Ocean we knew where we were going. We landed in Pearl Harbor and from there we began our war cruises to the different islands in the Pacific.

IN: Could you tell us about those cruises because I read a book about it and the Bella Wood saw a lot of action? Would you tell us about where you went and what the ship went through?

NS: The ship had three types of planes on it, fighter plane, SSB which was a dive bomber, and a TBF which was a torpedo bomber. We hopped to several islands through the Pacific trying to soften up the Japanese enemy for future invasions by Marines.

IN: The planes would take off and bomb and do their job on the island just before the beach heads and the invasions started.

NS: Kind of soften them up a little bit, yes.

IN: Could you tell us a little about as you went to this island would the Japanese be sending out planes to go after you and all of that stuff?

NS: Oh, yes, yes. They would attack our ships and our planes as well.

IN: The planes went out and did a lot of bombing and dive bombing-

NS: -a lot of bomb and runs and a lot of scrape and runs

IN: Approximately how many islands did you have to soften up like that?

NS: If you name it out in the Pacific then we probably hit them. I came home with nine battle stars which represented nine major engagements. The last of them was in the Philippines and we had two major engagements with the enemy fleet.

IN: I read your book, can you tell us about the suicide planes attacking you from Japan?

NS: [shows picture] In the Philippines, one of their planes got through. We had hit it with our anti-aircraft fire but were not able to blow it up. He came down and crashed it into our flight deck. There was fire, shrapnel flying all over and we were just crippled at sea at that time.

IN: Where were you in relationship to that plane when it hit?

NS: I was on my twenty millimeter probably forty five or fifty feet away from the point of impact.

IN: We lost quite a few men from that?

NS: I can't remember the exact amount but there was well over one hundred killed. There were several missing who either got thrown overboard or dove overboard because a lot of them were on fire and innumerable wounded both from shrapnel and from burns.

IN: When the plan hit how did the men get the fire out. What happens when a boat gets hit by a suicide or dive bomber like that?

NS: Each Unit or individual is assigned a certain station to man hoses rescue gear and the light.

IN: Then you finally got it under control?

NS: Finally we got the main fire out but of course there was after fire burning throughout the ship.

IN: Then what happened?

NS: Then some destroyers escorted us to the island of Ulithi where they made some emergency repairs and then we came home to San Francisco. That was the end of it for me.

IN: I read the Bella Wood did go back out?

NS: Yes

IN: And it did get into several engagements after that?

NS: Yes

IN: What happened to you? That's what we are interested in.

NS: I came home on a much deserved and really appreciative thirty day leave. After that was I was assigned to the Maine headquarters at Washington D.C.

IN: What was your job in Washington?

NS: In Washington D.C. it was mostly guard duty, a period of rest and we also had honor guard duty at Arlington National Cemetery for military funerals.

IN: How long did you stay in Washington?

NS: I was there from the early part of 1945 until I got discharged in October of 1945. Probably six months.

IN: That pretty much sums up your service, a lot of action. You luckily came home in one piece, went to San Francisco-

NS: Yes one piece, no wounds, I was very fortunate.

IN: Good, now you're back home, and what happened to you while you were back home?

NS: I went back to work for my old employer for a while. Then I went on the police force for a period of time and I wound up with what was originally Dodge Industries which wound up to be Allied Signal and it's still in operation.

IN: Is that where you finished up your work and you retired?

NS: Yes, that's where I finished up.

IN: You got married and had children?

NS: Yes

IN: How many children did you have?

NS: I had three children with my first wife who died at thirty eight years of age. I got remarried and I had one child by my second marriage.

IN: Do they live in town?

NS: Yes they do. All of my children?

IN: Yes

NS: No, I'm sorry. My son Joe is a career counselor at Rutgers University in New Jersey. My daughter in law whom you know lives in Hoosick Falls and works at the Ravel Agency and my other two daughters, one is a nurse in Bennington Vermont and the other works in Cheshire Massachusetts so they are all over the place.

IN: That's good! They are not that far.

NS: Close enough to visit. [laughs]

IN: Would you like to say anything that people that haven't been in the engagements you have about the service or things that you remember, stories, people you met? Anything about the service that comes back to your mind as we sit here and talk.

NS: I know when I first went to boot camp on Paris Island the first day I remember saying to myself "What have you gotten yourself into." We were training as just raw recruits. We were told "You are not Marines, you have to earn the title of the Marines." And we found out why. [laughs]

IN: You're the fourth Marine to tell me that.

NS: Oh yes? [laughs]

IN: It was tough until you got used to it?

NS: It was tough but each day became easier and easier because you fell into a certain routine. After our eight weeks of boot camp, we were given dress uniforms, had to pass review, and then we could call ourselves Marines.

IN: Did anything interesting happen? Did you bump into anybody in Washington? Because there was no one from Hoosick Falls on the Bella Wood with you.

NS: No, and I don't remember running across anyone stateside.

IN: Yes, very few people actually did from what we have been doing. Because it was a big army. Is there anything else you'd like to say about Hoosick Falls or about anything else?

NS: I was thoroughly glad to get back to Hoosick Falls. [Laughs]

IN: It must be something to be on a boat. How long were you on that ship?

NS: Twenty months. Just shy of two years.

IN: You were on the sea for twenty months with a few port stops. Is that what happens?

NS: I think we went back to Hawaii twice.

IN: Twice in the twenty months?

NS: Yes

IN: The rest of the time you were out at sea?

NS: Yes, we were at sea. That was our home.

IN: I was reading that it gets pretty monotonous on a ship when you're not in battle and you're not getting ready for it.

NS: Yes, but we were kept busy doing house cleaning on the flight deck. We would go up there and march and have our drills and stuff like that and that was about it.

IN: As far as the fliers on the ship. They lost quite a few men in that business right?

NS: Yes, a lot of them

IN: That was one dangerous job being a pilot coming off of an aircraft carrier.

NS: Yes, when they returned from a raid or a battle they landed on the flight deck which to them from the air was about the size of a postage stamp and all across the flight deck there were cables and they had what you'd call a tail hook on their plane as they come in and hit the flight deck the tail hook caught in that cable. Sometimes the cable or the hook would bounce and we had what we could call a crash barrier with several cables and sometimes they would even crash through that. We had one Lieutenant Commander who missed the cables went right through the crash barrier over the side and that was the last we had ever seen of him.

IN: That was tricky flying.

NS: Oh yes.

IN: It was tricky to land on those flight decks?

NS: Yes, very difficult.

IN: Your ship was a lot smaller than the normal aircraft carriers because it was converted?

NS: Yes

IN: Great, is there anything else you'd like to say about being in the service that young people don't understand that you would like to have on tape?

NS: No, except that it's quite an experience and truthfully, I've got to say that it was a good experience all in all. Bad sometimes. Good sometimes. But something that you really appreciate after it's all over.

IN: How old were you when you went into the service?

NS: I was nineteen.

IN: Between nineteen and twenty two you saw all of this action. A young boy.

NS: Much younger than I am today. [laughs]

IN: I thank you very much for coming.