

**Henry Broadwell
Veteran**

**Interviewed by
Senator Patty Ritchie's Office**

**Interviewed on November 11, 2013
Oswego County Legislative Office Building**

Q: Being in the Navy, what's required of you; where do you go?

HB: We were aboard the ship in Boston but we were on our way to Pearl Harbor because that's where they wanted us. We got as far as about New York City, maybe closer, and we got orders not to go in. There were about fifty or sixty more planes up there and he says that we've already lost all out gun power from the ships. On some of our ships we had no power, no machine guns. They told us to stay where we were at but to protect ourselves because they couldn't let us in. He says, "What's one ship going to do to fifty planes; there's no use sinking it." We were doing what they call 'dragging'. The ships that were coming in were cargo ships. We were guarding the cargo ships to go in.

Q: And you were on your oil tanker right?

HB: No, I was aboard the Baltimore. And we went into Okinawa first.

Q: And what did you do there?

HB: We bombarded the islands.

Q: Talk about that experience; talk about when you got to Okinawa.

HB: Well we loaded up with ammunition, oil, fuel and everything and headed for Iwo Jima. And we got to Iwo Jima and we hit that. We opened up all the guns we had. We had about one hundred guns aboard the ship.

Q: And this is Baltimore.

HB: Yes. And we opened fire and drove the enemy back onto the other side of the islands and we had troops on the other side of the islands waiting for them. But the Japanese didn't know that we had troops over there. When we started the land invasion they knew they couldn't get us then because we were too far out but we knew we could get them.

Q: So talk about your experiences again when you're on the ships and engaging in combat; what's that like?

HB: I was on a 5S-30 gun and there was eight of them on there I think. [points to picture] It was one of these that I was on. I was on one right there and you can

see it for yourself. [hands picture to interviewer] The guns on the side are the ones we use when we first go in and dropped the enemy back in somewhere.

Q: So you were part of the first wave then.

HB: Oh yeah.

Q: Was that nerve-racking at all; were you nervous being part of the first wave?

HB: No. You can't be nervous because you know we got those guns there that were probably shooting those five inch thirty-eights and the machine guns, fifty calibers, and something else, I can't remember them all. But they shoot far. The five inch thirty-eights, something would go far, the yellow ones, the big guns.

Q: So what'd be your reaction the first time you'd enter a battle?

HB: They'd say "Battle Station", they'd call us to our battle stations. They'd have a horn like over a speaker and they'd tell us we're on battle; or they wouldn't have to tell us because we could hear them coming and we could see them. And that's when we'd start opening fire on them. The first thing we'd look for is a torpedo plane, the 'suiciders' that would dive right at you. I got hit with a piece of metal from one of the 'suiciders' and I was standing on the shoreline. I got hit on the shore with a piece of metal. I had it for a long time but I don't know where it is now. You're in a room about this big [waves arms], and you got two guns here and two guns here. You don't do a lot of talking because you got your eyes focused on the target and you just keep opening fire. The shells were about that big [motions hand]. And we just kept firing until they told us to stop, that's all. And when we stop, we shut our guns down and head back out at sea. We had to make sure we were far enough away from the guns that they had; their guns would probably fire as far as the [unclear]. And the big guns would go about fifteen miles, that's on the horizon. You know the horizon is as far as you can see. When you get to the horizon you have to quit because you aren't hitting anything. There might be a 'suicider' coming in or a straggler, then we knock him down.

Q: So what happened once you attacked some of the islands there; what was your job after that?

HB: After we shot at them, we'd go back out to sea, reload everything, clean up everything if we got hit or something like that, we'd load up get all settled down and let the guys settle down. Guys were still on watch because we still had to keep an eye out for things. There'd be one crew down below loading shells.

Q: What was your role?

HB: I was first loader on the gun. I'd put the shells in the gun and I was a trainer, I would site see and find stuff. Otherwise, it was just like working in a factory; these guys would pull us along. Then after a while, they'd take that crew off and those guys would go down and have a cigarette and a sandwich or a cup of coffee. You'd take about two hours loading the guns with fifty pound shells. It hurt my arms, that's why I came out I could barely work today.

Q: Do you have any more experiences during your time on the Baltimore that you want to share?

HB: Yes. On our ship, the oil tanker caught fire. What happened was we had run into a bunch of wolf packs up in Nova Scotia, that's when Crisafulli got killed. What happened was that we had a bunch of submarines all around us and we had destroyers and the destroyers were protecting our ammunition ships, the ones that carried ammunition and oil. And if they could knock out our oil ship and set the tanker on fire, one hundred and eighty thousand barrels of gasoline, then they could knock the fleet out. What happened was they knocked us out, but they didn't sink us and they didn't stop us from firing because they were too far away. We were here [points finger], the big ship is in the center and all around us were the small ships; we called them the 'tin can' destroyers. There were probably about twenty-five to thirty destroyers. Once in a while you'll see it on TV; Task Force 15 or 17. To name the ship we just used a number because the Japanese would read the names. If I called in and told them I was on ship 1214 or something, they wouldn't what it was but if I said the ship was 'Schmung' or something, right of the bat they would know where I was because of the name. They were named after rivers, battleships were named after cities and towns like the *New Yorker* and the *North Carolina*, they were all named after towns and cities. So we never hollered out the name it was all number and they never knew what it was. The only one to tell the name and talk was the Indians. The Japanese broke our code. We were out at sea and everything has to be proportional to [unclear] because those are the smaller guns and once we opened the big ones we kept driving them back further into the woods and into the mountains. They'd get us by our number but they didn't know what it was; it could be a boat or a little canoe or something.