

**James K. Abaied**  
**Narrator**

**Lynn M. Abaied**  
**Interviewer**

**Interviewed on October 7, 2007**  
**at his home**

Q: OK. Would you please tell us your name, what branch of the service you were in and what years you were in and your rank.

JA: My name is James Abaied. I was in the Navy in World War II going in the armory of Utica, New York and from there we went to Sampson Naval Training Station. I think the training was like twelve weeks or so and we were training to be Torpedomen. After that we....

Q: In February of 1943, you were sworn in at the Navy in Utica, like you said, and entered boot camp in March of that year at Sampson Naval Training at the east side of Seneca Lake in Geneva, New York. You commenced your seven day boot leave and had a very enjoyable time at home. Do you remember what it was like when you first got out of boot camp?

JA: Oh yes, it's always nice to be home.

Q: In May, your leave expired and you returned to Sampson in the outgoing unit for two weeks waiting to be assigned. In May of that year, you left Sampson for Torpedo school in Newport, Rhode Island. You arrived at Rhode Island at night from a railroad trip from New York City. Do you remember what the lamp posts were like in New York City then?

JA: New York City was as blacked out as it could be. All the streetlights were changed to be shining straight down because there was some thoughts that the German submarines were just off shore. Nobody ever found out for sure if they were or weren't but they were careful to shield the light from the ocean side.

It was kind of a crazy night on the train. Everything was dark. We got there safely and that's all that matters I guess.

Q: And now its June when you started school which would last for sixteen weeks. In September, you finished school and you were rated Torpedoman 3rd Class. Is that true?

JA: That's correct.

Q: You prepared to leave. You were sent to advanced school in Keyport, Washington.

JA: How do you like that one? You go all the way across the country to another torpedo school.

Q: Only in the United States!

JA: And they didn't fly you. They put you on a train.

Q: That lasted for sixteen weeks. On October 10th, you had your 19th birthday. It was the first one away from home.

JA: Right.

Q: How did you feel?

JA: It kind of felt a little lonely because you weren't anywhere near home. You couldn't go home and talk to anybody you knew.

Q: That Thanksgiving was your first one away from home and you had a wonderful dinner.

JA: Right.

Q: On December 15th, you were allowed to choose what type of duty you would like after school and you chose Destroyer on the east coast if possible.

JA: That's strange because I also volunteered for submarines. They give you a test to see if you could stand being under the ocean for a period of time. I guess that I didn't pass that test for some reason. So, I never got that. So, they ask you what your next choice was and then I chose Destroyers.

Q: So now it's Christmas in the Navy and it's the first one away from home. You said it was pretty lonely for you. In December, you were informed that you had been assigned to the USS Laffey DD724 and would go to Boston, Massachusetts.

JA: That's where we went. That was really not where we were supposed to go but they ended up going there.

Q: It said here that you left Seattle for Boston on December 29th and had Pullman all the way. You spent New Year's aboard the train and felt a bit tipsy.

JA: The shore patrol, when you pulled into the station, would bang the bottom of your leg where you might hide bottles and some of them broke (laughs).

Q: Now it's January 2nd, 1944. You arrived in Boston to find a mistake in orders and remained Fargo Building two days before you left for Bath, Maine where the ship was nearing completion. You spent a month in Bath.

JA: The Fargo Building just to elaborate a little bit was like a hotel for Navy or Marines who were getting ready to go to another station. In my case, I was going up to Bath, Maine from there. So I stayed in the Fargo Building a couple of nights, I guess, then went up.

Q: Now its February 8th, your ship left Bath and Boston to be commissioned. Your ship went into commission and your mom and dad and sister Fannie were there. You spent 10 days in Boston Navy Yard and then left for Washington, DC.

You arrived in Washington which was quite a stir. Apparently, they hadn't seen a ship that size?

JA: Nothing that big went up the Potomac that far you know.

Q: Tell me what happened when you got into a fight with a Marine in a bar in Washington.

JA: I really didn't get to a fight but we had words. He decided that he better not go any further than he did.

Q: Good for him, right?

JA: Right.

Q: February 24th, you had one year in the Navy. You left Washington on a "shake down" cruise. Where were you then?

JA: Going down to Bermuda area.

Q: A "shake down". Tell us what a "shake down" is.

JA: A "shake down" is specifically geared towards having all of the systems on a ship used to see if they worked properly. That's what you do on a "shake down" cruise.

Q: You arrived in Bermuda on February 26th and spent the following 35 days there in training. You had liberty there twice and shore patrol a couple of times.

JA: I was with one of the officers on our ship we went ashore on shore patrol. We didn't do anything just made sure that the drunken guys didn't cause a problem.

Q: March 30th you left Bermuda for Boston Navy Yard and arrived in Boston on April 2nd and remained there for a period of 35 days.

JA: They made some changes there because of the "shake down" cruise. That's when you exercise your systems so they work properly. They put it in the Boston Navy Yard and they did the changes and then we went from there.

Q: You got a twelve hour pass, went home and smashed up your dad's car.

JA: Yeah, it went in a ditch.

Q: May 6th, you left Boston for Norfolk and received a telegram from home that you were needed. What happened?

JA: It was related to the accident. It wasn't with another car. I just went into a ditch.

Q: You arrived home on May 9th (unclear) sixteen and a half hours on a train. You got a four day extension and you went to New London, Connecticut and received another wire telling you to report to the 33rd Street Pier in South Brooklyn, New York. I guess you were kind of late but they said that was ok?

JA: Yes. Considering the circumstances, they knew they were going to be leaving pretty quick.

Q: That night you went to Red's home for dinner and later you guys went out.

JA: Was that Duarte (sp) and Red?. Yeah. got to transfer off the ship before it went anywhere else. I never saw Red again but I saw Duarte. He stopped in this house to see me once.

Q: So, they never experienced D-Day because they left before that.

JA: No.

Q: On Mother's Day, May 14th, you left New York City in a convoy for Scotland arriving there 13 days later.

JA: Yeah. Greenock.

Q: You refueled there and the convoyed thirteen troop transports to Portsmouth, England. You went to Portsmouth to wait to the coming invasion. You had liberty there but you didn't go. On the 4th, you left convoying 135 Landing Craft. The dawn of June 5th found the channel too rough for the invasion so you waited 24 hours and you were held up at Portsmouth, England that night.

JA: There was a storm in the Channel that night. It was a pretty bad storm actually. I know I was standing watch in the place above the bottom deck of the ship - the main deck. I was one story above that. A flying fish almost hit me in the face.

Q: Now its D-Day, June 6th, the invasion of France. A few days later you were given a chance to howl. You expended 1,035 rounds of five.....

JA: Five inch, yeah.

Q: Bombarding troop concentrations and replacements and such. The following days were spent patrolling a part of an outer defense ring and protecting the beach head and supplying the ships. You moved into the inner defense ring for awhile and then went back to Portsmouth. You had shore duty patrol there. After a few days, you were informed to make way and destination unknown. Tell us about your experience in D-Day. What do you remember?

JA: D-Day, the Channel was rough and the bombers that were going inland the whole sky was just full of airplanes - bombers. Even the ship vibrated from the sound of the engines. It was a

hard thing for the pilots too because they had to try and find where the Germans were so they could bomb them so they wouldn't come and reinforce the ones near the ocean.

I remember there was a church steeple just off the beach actually in a little town there. We had our gunnery officer went ashore with the army guys and told us where to shoot where we would do the most effective damage to the Germans at that time.

I remember later going to the beaches at Normandy long after the war and that church still has a dummy paratrooper hanging from that bell tower. That's where - I don't know if you remember the movie. Red Buttons was in it. "The Longest Day" was the name of the movie. That's the village that I visited there. It was very interesting and exciting actually.

Q: What did it feel like to go back there many, many years later?

JA: It was kind of crazy a little bit. Probably, I'm sure the guys who scaled the cliffs and everything. It was harder for them. What happened was the storm pushed the invasion craft down the beach further than they wanted to go and they had to climb the cliffs to get over the top. Beyond that there was beaches that had code names: Sword, Juno where the Canadians and the English landed.

Q: Which beach was your Destroyer on?

JA: We were at Utah Beach. Omaha took the biggest beating though. Omaha Beach. Then we got involved with going into the port of Cherbourg diverting the fire what I think were 155mm cannon. We were successful in diverting the fire and actually knocking them out of business too.

After that we went back. The Skipper said...we were on our way actually to Ireland, Belfast. The Skipper said, "We're going to make a trip on the other side of Cherbourg and do some more shelling" . Then he chuckled and said, "No, just kidding you".

Q: He's a funny guy!

JA: We went to Belfast. That's where he reported to the Admiral. We got our orders to go back to Boston.

Q: So now its July 9th and you go back to Boston. You commenced on a ten day leave and enjoyed it. After leave expired, you settled down to some good liberty in Boston .

JA: Yep.

Q: When you left Boston, you went to Norfolk. The next day you went to North Beach, Maryland and had some liberty there.

JA: In peace time, that was a place where they had the rides that the kids go on. North Beach was a resort area in peace time.

Q: In August of that year, you underwent to the Panama Canal Zone and escorted the LDS down there and took five days to get there.

In September at 1500, you started down the locks and went through the Canal. You said it was a pretty interesting time.

JA: Yes. You are going through fresh water there. It's not sea water. You've got locks at the Pacific end as well as the Atlantic end. You have to go through yourself.

Q: On September 2nd, you had fight with a guy by the name of Rich who was a GM-3?

JA: Gunner's Mate 3rd Class. Yes.

Q: He was drunk and called you a few names. He insisted on asking you to do something about it. You agreed. You went back and convinced him that he had bitten off more than he could chew.

JA: We were in the chow line and he kept pushing the little guys out of the way and going to the head of the line. I told him to knock it off and that everybody was waiting and that we we're all hungry. He said, "Why you wanna do something about it?" and I said "Yeah, let go back to the fantail and do it."

We went back that I know all of the officers on the bridge were watching us fight down there. He had me bent over this cable that you hold on to when the sea if rough so you don't get washed over the side. He got be bent back and I gave him a punch in the mouth and he let go.

The next time I saw him he was telling this kid to squirt the water on the K-guns which were used to throw the depth charges out. I told the kid don't do that and that you were getting water all over the mechanism and it wouldn't work right. He said, "Rich said to do it." I said, "You tell Rich that we are not going to do it."

I see him taking to Rich and come back. He left Rich and he didn't do anything. He didn't put any more water on there.

Q: Even though the guy apologized the next day, you said that you really didn't trust him. You were underway to San Diego that night. You entered the port of San Diego on September 10th for some repairs I think.

JA: Yes. There were a few things that needed to be fixed.

Q: You got liberty that night and went out and got drunk. Then you went to a dance where Ted Lewis and his band was playing.

JA: Yes. Do you remember Ted Lewis?

Q: No.

JA: He was a famous band leader in the old days.

Q: Swing bands?

JA: Yes. So I went to where he was playing just so I could hear him.

Q: And he was good?

JA: Oh, very good. yeah.

Q: On September 18th, you arrived at Pearl Harbor. The next day, you looked up a Chic Joseph and found him.

JA: Yes. Chic was one of my best friends from Clark Mills (New York).

Q: You hadn't seen him in a year. You went looking for your brother (unclear) and found him. That's the first time that you had seen him in two years?

JA: Yeah. Chic worked at the Submarine Base in Pearl Harbor but he wasn't in Pearl Harbor when the Japanese attacked it. He wasn't in the service yet.

Q: When you left Pearl Harbor, where did you go after that? You left Pearl Harbor in October.

JA: Well, we were heading for a place that would take us below the International Date Line so we could go through this ceremony of crossing the Date Line. We got a change of orders on the way there and they sent us to the Philippines. The Leyte Gulf.

Q: Why did they send you there?

JA: Because there was going to be a big battle there shaping up. The Battle of Leyte Gulf was a big naval battle which we were a part of.

Q: You supported in December the landing of the 77th Army Division.

JA: Yes. That was in the Ormac Bay. It was all part of the Leyte Gulf in that area. The lower part of Luzon. The northern end of Luzon is another place where we got to see kamikazes for the first time but they were going after the battleships and the carriers where the captain might be.

They knew admirals would be on the big ships but on a ship like ours there would normally be a Lieutenant Commander or something like that .

We had a good time. I was on duty in the morning when Mr. MacArthur returned. He said, "I shall return" and he returned with twenty guys with Tommy Guns escorting him in the surf.

Q: Where was that?

JA: That was in Luzon - the upper part of the island. Right after that, in that area, a couple of Kamikazes hit the big ships. They didn't bother with the destroyers.

Q: You saw them?

JA: Oh yeah and we had a storm that night that came in from the South China Sea. It blew in and we lost a couple of Destroyers. They weren't in our division but we were told when you are in that kind of situation the empty tanks need to have seawater in them to stabilize them so they don't roll right over. A couple of them forgot to do that and they rolled over and all hands drowned. They were all gone.

Q: In February, it says that you were underway to bomb Tokyo and other big cities - the first bombing of Japan by carrier based planes (unclear) expect anything. It was the biggest collection of naval mite in the history of Naval warfare.

JA: Yes. When you talk about bombing....we were escorting the carriers. They were going up there to bomb it. They would be the first carrier based planes that ever did it. The ones that did it before that - Jimmy Doolittle - they were bombers that took off from carriers way out to sea. They never expected to land again on the carrier because they couldn't. They practiced taking off but they couldn't land on it because it wasn't big enough. That's why they continued into China and dumped their planes in China instead.

That was exciting for the Doolittle guys but the ones that went up after that were on a carrier and later with the A-Bomb was dropped, the B-29's took off from Saipan and Guam.

Q: You were going in on support on the 18th of February the Iwo Jima invasion that was to come on the 19th.

JA: That was kind of a strange place. There was a lot of sand dunes down on the beach that were different colors based on where they came from. Some were red and some were dark black but it was still sand and we supported the guys who landed by firing at....but you couldn't see those guys, they were in caves. The Japs were inside caves with their guns shooting down on our guys and our guys couldn't see up into the cave. Even the ships couldn't help much. We ended up doing the best we could to help out and support them.

Then we got sent over to Guam and got orders to give the Admiral the pictures that were taken up in Tokyo Bay when the guys had gone in there and bombed you know. Now they were going to take the B-29s and take off from there and drop the A-Bomb.

Q: So went you went to Guam you delivered the pictures that you just talked about, you went to the USS (unclear). Is that what it is? For transportation back to the United States where you had a 30 day leave.

JA: It was a hospital ship. The guys that were wounded that were going home to a hospital. We stopped in Hawaii and landed in San Francisco. Then you went to Oakland and then went for home on April 11th. At 0717 you hit Utica. Your mom, dad, sis (unclear) were waiting for you at the station and it was heaven to be home again with (unclear) after two and a half years. You spent 30 wonderful days at home and you got the news that your best friend was killed in action east of the Rhine. You said Tony was like a brother to me. It's awful hard to believe.

JA: Yeah. He was a little shit but he was a paratrooper. He got killed jumping the Rhine right about where Germany, Holland and Belgium come together. It was tough to lose a guy like that. I don't know how the hell he ever got in. I know they have minimum heights and maximum heights. I don't know. He couldn't make the minimum I wouldn't think. I don't think he was more than 5'2" or something like that.

Q: After that you had to leave Utica and go to San Diego. You had a twelve hour leave or layover in Chicago and had a swell time there. Tell us about that.

JA: Chicago.

Q: You must have had such a swell time you don't remember! You reported in San Diego for school. What kind of school are you in now?

JA: The war wasn't over yet and I thought that if they were going to send me off on another ship, I'll volunteer for PT Boats which I did and they sent me there for some more training. It was a Sunday I was laying in my sack and I heard the words USS Laffey and Okinawa. That's where they got hit with bombs and a whole bunch of kamikazes that got them that day. Not just them. A bunch of them got a lot of destroyers.

They were on what they call "picket duty" . You are way out from the island so you could give them warning if somebody is coming in.

Q: Your friend Daryl was still on the Laffey at that time?

JA: Yeah. Daryl was still on. He survived. There was another guy called Fry who I think was from somewhere near Chicago. We used to call them (unclear) and every time we pulled a trick on them, we would tell them "there's a plane coming in, a plane coming in!" . He was down in that back area where I was too and he would go shooting up that ladder and he banged his head. Oh god. We shouldn't have done that but..

Q: You got the news that Daryl, Fry, Johnson and another guy...

JA: Johnson was from Pennsylvania.

Q: They were ok and you were grateful that God spared your buddies. That night you saw a guy named Joe- a fellow from your home town who played ball for Hollywood.

JA: Oh, Joe (unclear). He played like the Rochester category of baseball and he was playing for Hollywood out there. He played in San Diego so I went out and watched him play. He knew I was there. He came over later. He got pulled and they put somebody else in. He sat with me and we watched the rest of the game.

Q: You went to the USN hospital and visited your cousin George Hesper (sp) a marine. He got wounded in Saipan?

JA: Yeah, he was a marine but I don't know where he got wounded maybe on Okinawa, who the hell knows. Yes, he was part of that Hesper (sp) family that lived in Clark Mills near Jean and Teddy up that road.

Q: You had your tonsils out in June.

JA: Yeah. I don't know why I did that. They did that because I volunteered for something that had to have a clean bill of health.

Q: On July 2nd, the Doc OK'd you for PT Duty. Now you said I must sweat it out to find out if I get it or not. What happened?

JA: Nothing. I didn't get it.

Q: Why?

JA: I think the war ended then or close to it anyway.

Q: So where were you when you heard the news that the war ended?

JA: I was back in Boston again in the Fargo Building. I was in a theater actually. I went to a movie. I came out of the movie and the street was a mad house. Everybody's kissing everybody and the war was over but it wasn't over. It was over in Germany but it wasn't over in Japan yet. So, we still had that to wait out but it wasn't much longer and that was over. Yeah, that's it.

Q: What do you think is the most important thing that you felt after World War II?

JA: Let's not do it again.

Q: Thank you.

JA: You're welcome.

(A pause. Then shows a framed picture of his medals)

JA: A quick résumé of what we got here. This is the World War II medal. This one is from the French government for supporting the invasion of France. This one is from the State of New York. This is the medal that represents the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign.

Up on the right on top is the European, African and Mediterranean invasions. This is the American campaign which would be anywhere along the east coast of the United States. That's the medal for merit from the State of New York and I don't know what this one is.

Q: It doesn't matter. You've got a lot of them.

JA: This one is a Combat Action Ribbon. You don't get a medal for that. You just get a ribbon. That's that one right there.

Q: (refers to his picture in Navy uniform). So, that's what you looked like during World War II. What a handsome guy. And over here (refers to a picture on the wall) is the Laffey. That's what the ship looked like.

JA: It's an artist's rendition of the USS Laffey caught in harm's way off the coast of Okinawa on picket duty. Sixty one guys got killed that day. Most of the damage was done from here back (points amidships to stern) Right about where you see that big flash, is where your father was. So, he was happy to the hell out of there.

Q: I'll bet you were. OK, let's go in here and look at the Laffey tour here (moves into another room in the house)

JA: (refers to picture and map). That's the cruise of the Laffey if you can call it that.

Q: (reads from picture/map) "War Cruise of the USS Laffey DD-724"

JA: (unclear) with the map. The two pictures on the right are in Seattle when it came back from Okinawa to get repaired. From the looks of it (refers to other picture) that was out in the Pacific somewhere probably around the Leyte Gulf. It hard for me to even read it.

(Video then moves to another clip of Mr. Abaied which appears to have been made some time before the above interview. No date is given but the location is clearly different)

JA: Another world war I would be reborn so that I could be in it. I wouldn't want it to happen but you never know.

One example I can give you of what happened to me was in Leyte Gulf we had a Kamikaze that hit a ship and the hot engine went right below the decks and they lost all power. They had to be towed in so they sent us over there to get a line to them - a line being a cable not a piece of rope - to pull them into safety in the harbor.

We proceeded to do that. It was so dark out that night that I couldn't even see my hand in front of my face several inches away. Once we got them into safety, some of the survivors who got burned from the Kamikaze's fuel that erupted had to come in and be taken care of by the doctor and pharmacist's mates.

One of them wanted to urinate and his hands were burned so badly he couldn't hold on to his penis. So, I held his penis for him until he urinated then got him out of there and over to the doctor. That was one thing that stuck in my mind over the years.

Q: What year was that?

JA: That was, uh.....you would ask that (laughs).

Q: It's kind of a trick question here.

JA: That was probably '44. 1944 in the Leyte Gulf actually. (unclear) talked about the typhoon that came in. The smaller ships had orders not to ever let their fuel tanks get empty. If they did to pump sea water in there for ballast.

A couple of the destroyers during that typhoon didn't follow directions and the things just rolled right over and everybody on it drowned.

Q: Oh my god.

JA: So, that's about it. That's all I can tell you.

Q: That's the end?

Q: You just heard from my father James (unclear) Abaied. It's almost his 83rd birthday and I wanted him to document his experience in World War II.

One of the things that really stands out in my mind was the 60th anniversary of the invasion of Normandy or D-Day. That was June 6th, 2004. My father came over to my house and we looked at this picture (she is holding a picture of two men in uniform from WWII). This is a picture of his best friend Tony Mota (sp?) who died March 24th, 1944. He was in the Air Force and what shot down in a plane over the Rhine River. Sixty years later, my father looked at this picture and began to cry over the loss of his best friend. I guess that's one of the reasons I love him. Sixty years later, he was able to cry. Thank you.