

**Robert Culver
Veteran**

**Interviewed by the
Herkimer Fulton County Historical Society**

RC: Good afternoon, I'm Robert Culver. I was born and brought up Gloversville, NY. I'm glad I'm having this opportunity to relate a little bit of what went on in WW II that maybe some people haven't heard about or saw. We'll get started here right away. This is a ship that I was on the USS Bataan. And incidentally this ship Bataan was named after the Bataan death march. Where the Japanese took our men capture and put them ropes and if they stumbled and fell they destroyed them, so it's very very important that we remember some of these facts about war that is not all silliness or something not to think about. We owe a lot to our men for this and we have a wonderful country to protect. I will put this right down here, if that's all right.

This is another picture of the ship, which is very important. I demonstrate this point just a little bit later on, Mr. Roosevelt before he died, the war wasn't going along awfully well and he took this ship we had been hit in the back here. There was a big explosion in the back. I have a few other pictures for you that will relate to that. And when this happened we had to go back for repairs. And at that time they put what was called night flying. They put lights all along the flight deck of the carrier, and then they had a man, this is important, they had a man dress in a phosphorus suit with a gigantic net on the side and he could actually direct these planes in here. With this flying suit on and land them safely. So when this was taken care of they would also send in some of the bigger carriers and this as I said this was a great change in WW II. We hit them at night; they never knew whatever hit them. And this was a big change. We owe it all to everybody. Everybody pitched in. I wound up with a few other things I brought home, which a lot of you guys my age, or others when they had advertising and so on and so forth this was like Old Ma Perkins when they had her on there and the service men that they used. And then here's a couple more. Which is very interesting. These things go on and on and I think there absolutely and here's one with an army uniform on. And we see here that they really forced this thing and pushed this thing into motion and all this stuff made our service men very very happy that for what we was doing we would be very very proud of ourselves. I'll hurry this up now. And this is our scoreboard and this is the carrier I was on. I was very proud of that. That was a very beautiful scoreboard. We did everything we could do and this included night flying also. I'll go on here and ah incidentally before we go too far there was Mr. Hope. And ah, we don't know what we would have done without him. He was with the troops all over including the aircraft carriers too. And this is what he looked like when he was younger. And this went way back. This was in the 70's. I'll give you one more picture on him and a I'll get on to the

book again. I'll flip these things right along here. There's a beautiful picture of him and the man certainly done a job to make the mural very very much to take our mind off the war itself. He is a very wonderful person. Now here are some explosions aboard ship. Right here. And we had those little lines here. They are called barriers. And so the planes tail doesn't catch on the carrier the barrier.

Some explosions aboard ship right here we had these little lines here those are called barriers in the plane's tail doesn't catch on the carrier it will automatically go into these carriers and these carriers would wrap themselves around these heavy metal cables and would get caught in the propeller and keep the plane from going over the bow and save the plane as well as the men well as a pilot as a pilot and I'll scoot right along here fast again time goes on here's some of those flags which many have seen the saved an awful lot of sailors and lives aboard ship you couldn't have too many Communications because Japanese would pick up our language so we went into the flag situation and there's another thing here too it's a beautiful shot of the carrier I was on this was a 500 pound bomb that exploded underneath a propeller and when that happened we only had what we call some people call screws some people call them propellers we only had one so we laid in what was called dead in the water so they gave us a destroyer to protect us and see that we got home and when we got home a lot of this stuff was released and it goes to show you they took care of us fellows pretty darn good let me see what we've got here a couple more or maybe we've got the end of it but here's a good shot of what the whole thing was about to be an American and to come home to the United States to see the Statue of Liberty.

Q: What would you say is your most memorable moments while you were in service?

RC: Well, we didn't have an awful lot of time to think a moment, and our parents and stuff like that. I think what it was with means well as the other fellows I know a lot of them here were actual fear. We didn't really what war was. And the size of carriers we had, the amount ammunition we carried, one of the men we have here lost a couple brothers and then he himself was awarded the Purple Heart. And the Ticonderoga, which the plane went down into the ammunition which was inside and just blow everything, and we lost hundreds and hundreds of men. We never dreamed any of these things were happening, we didn't know what war was. We just figured if you got shot you patch up and you come back home, but it's not like that. You see your comrades don't come back with you and uh also a very important thing not to stress it but to let other know how serious this is. The men that we have lost we don't always just burry them at the same time cause you are going to different island and you got commands and so forth form admiral and sometime we turn away from these thing. So we have them stowed in the bottom of the ship, the hold. That is the coldest place in the ship and were the ammunition is so the only thing that can really touch that is a direct blast towards the middle of ship or a torpedo coming in. so that's the only protection it has.

So this protected our men that didn't want to have to leave there but had been gone. They would lie in the amount that lost their lives. We put cotton in their ears, um wrap them around and um a chrome rod between their legs and this was all strapped around you. Then we would lie them up on tables the taps would play and the American flag on them then they were slid into the water. Um this is um vary strange for anybody in other places to imagine happening but to see them, is a memory that you can carry for many years.

Q: Where there any happy times while you were in survive?

RC: I don't think so, no. I think it was a constant, plane landing, planes taking off. I started with a 40MM guns loading them and then they needed a baker so I helped, I've been a baker all my life in Gloversville, NY. And incidentally I got a job in Gloversville, eleven years old, twelve hour, twelve dollars a week then they had Todo (?) bake shop, Wenterth (?) bake shop and so on and so forth, so by the time I was sixteen. I got pretty good and I came form a family of eight and anything I can bring home is good. When I did go into service, Henry Ford schools in Michigan up there they had several types' schools and one was a baking school so they gave me baking experience. I'd say in about six months I had about 12 years of baking experience it would have taken me here and one more thing to add, we worked in shifts twelve hour shifts I had three men with me, and we work twelve hour shifts and we rolled every single roll of bread by hand. We had a mixer, which was electric, but we cut the pieces out, weighed them on the scale then rolled them and put them back into the pans to do proofing. All of our pies and stuff was real fruit from brass cans mixed with a type of acid that affected the barriers and stuff like that. This is something we all laughed at thou when we made the pies, or when we made the pastries, or the cookies depending just how much the temperature was the ship would roll. They would all turn out to be different sizes and shapes. So after everybody would have their chow down, everybody was hoping for a good smooth sunny sea and nothing to bother us with. Everybody was like cookie, cookie, come on you know me, do you have a cookie do you have a cookie, so that was one of the nicest thing I've could ever be the food had to be as good as you could get it, some of it didn't look vary good in fact I'll tell give you a little straight time hopping it wasn't the wrong thing but anybody remember what they used to call Bullwinkle I thing there was at some time well the flour was but into special burlap bags and then they had a little nylon bag over top of it then they had wax over the top of that and then wax over the top of that. Well after about six months you've been out to sea, four, five, six months some little thing would happen. We would be having our breakfast with some toast there would be something in the toast so we would hold it up to the light, hay cookie what the hells is this is this our fresh food here, fresh meat what is this, this actually happened, not our fault they send it over to us it was all worms where did we get it. Well with the heat and everything there were actually worms inside. You stop and think we would get sick we ate it anyway it didn't make any difference to us. We had our good times we had our bad times and um we came though it all ok I'm vary happy of the part I put into it.

Q: Thank you

RC: well thank you

