

**Frederick Millard
Veteran**

**Interviewed by
Patty Ritchie's Office,
NY State Senator, Oswego, NY**

Q: When did you make the decision that you wanted to get into the navy?

FM: Oh, well [unclear] Pearl Harbor. I remember, I remember hearing that on the radio and uh, I was not old enough then and I finally talked my daddy into signing my papers for me but I didn't go until I was. See I must have been eighteen, eighteen when I went in. then I went again and went to diesel engine school and then I went to uh, Bermuda on a small ship which was a commission ship that was, and we was I was down there about nine months and they decided to decommission them because all over [unclear] before was uh, like water taxi all a lot of these lawyers came from the states down there. And for, aerial gunnery to teach them, to teach them how to shoot, well eventually a plane but they had to see if , they had a plane they would shoot at that and uh, the Navy decided they didn't need commissioned officers on nothing so they decommissioned the ship and I don't even know what I whatever happened to that. I came back to the station in February and then I went on leave for a little while and then I went to PT boat school. And, the proper name is motor torpedo boat and they were probably smallish, smallish the [unclear] boat and they had both this was boat because they put them on ships and took the where we wanted to go and across Pacific Ocean. They took them over there and put them in the water again and there we had, and I was already assigned to that squadron, but they then were assigned both crews both crews were put together and I ended up on a boat and I was out that for the rest of the time I was out there.

Q: And what was your duty when you were on

FM: I was an engineer at and generally I was a more machinist mate third class and then I got mate second class while I was on that thing. And then general quarters and I had machine guns that I would fire and everybody on there could do both [unclear] and we could run it even the guys on the next part they could run it oh it was only like one of these boats on the harbor here only, it was bigger.

Q: Did you feel that that was a good thing that everybody on the ship could do pretty much else

FM: yea, they set it up that way, so you could pretty well do most anything had to be done, it was we had I guess so I have been told and read an article things that we made the longest open ocean voyage of PT boats ever made.

Q: Now how long is that?

FM: oh well we went I don't have any miles but Phil from uh, Isla north of as a windy Moya es deville oendi [?] and I think it is a Dutch name. Dutch word from

there to the Philippines and in a convoy you know invasion convoy was what it was and we were there uh we were there it must have been in December because I got a ribbon for nomination [unclear] and that was from a further action invasion of Midora [?]. And December 15th to the 19th and that was the same time that typhoon was going out the Philippine Sea which further was probably a hundred miles east of where we were we didn't get any of it than uh than they did we would have spawned a little bit smallest of naval vessels that were armed or anything.

Q: How Small?

FM: Pardon?

Q: How small were the ships you were in?

FM: oh uh 20 feet wide and 80 feet long they were made of plywood mahogany they were wooden boats. Had three Packard ages 15 hundred horse a piece and we were the only Navy there when the invasion was done being done the read or fleet some of the fleet was there too, but they left they had that's something else wherever they were, and they left, and we were there two weeks before they got theirs set up. And they used kamikazes on us, kamikaze means the Divine Wind in a Japanese language I guess and that was they were pretty well at the end of their rope on this the Japanese used them on big ships they used them on everything. They mostly was very young people that would fly them they would teach them how to get to get into the air but never taught them how to land on anything because they didn't come back. They went to their own funeral and everything in Japan or wherever they came from...

Q: Did you have any close calls, with those kamikazes?

FM: Yea, oh yea it was about, for two weeks we had kamikazes quite frequently during the day as long as daytime.

Q: How close did they come to your ship? The one you were on?

FM: Well they never got, they did too, they got close, one day one of them came across and we shot him down before he got there, that was the closest one. We used to go at night, we traveled at night all the time and uh go on patrol at night. And one night I think we were up around Luzon somewhere, I was not the navigator so I was just there and we had a bunch of army men, bunch of army guys on that were, well there were walking wounded, I don't know what they were doing up there, I think just up there looking around seeing what was there I guess. And uh we might put the boy on the radar saw something coming from behind us he was at first he saw rainclouds you could pick up rainclouds on that thing...

Q: oh wow

FM: [Laughing] so we picked it up and he said to someone and it wasn't anything he'd been at it long enough she realized it was not that it were going too fast so we just, skipper just cut the engine and we drifted off and they that will do it I guess

that was the only time we really got shot at really. In the water in the salt water the turbulence from the propellers it leaves phosphorus in the water and at night just like a white line on the road you can see it form up in the air for miles you know oh well we got away from that one all right so umm I don't know any other well or every trooper well for Felicia was close they were telling when we lost one boat to the kamikazes and that was the all out of, must have been supposed to been twelve per squadron but put two of them together so it was my [unclear] 15 or 18 boats that were with us, yeah it was, well I don't know when you living that long enough he just well today's another day, that's it you know just like getting up and going to work in the morning.

Q: Did the days just kind of blur together after a while?

FM: Pardon?

Q: Did the days just kind of blur together after a while and you just kind of kept going through the motions and just

FM: Yea, oh yea, yea it was, well it was in the tropics. It was warm all the time one day one week one month and it didn't make much difference just kind of all a days a day and yeah and there are those people that were keeping records or someone who didn't keep even I don't even, I don't know if we kept any records on the engines and uh we just went where we had to go.

Q: Where were you when you heard that the war had ended?

FM: [Laughing] they sent us tomorrow on an invasion and that really doesn't I don't know what I think it must have been to Australia it because they put in there and there was never not much anything to it really at that time well at that time it was things were wrong Japanese had been beaten but they didn't want to admit it for a while. So uh then at that time we went down farther south memorial from where we have been and went up a river about 20 miles to the village up there and they had Japanese had a pow camp I never did see it I never was up there but up in the hills somewhere and they brought up, we took Australian guys with us and Austrian army fellows and they went up there and got the [unclear] out of there put the Japanese guards they put them in and took the prisoners out from down there we took them out it was, I don't know six or eight of us maybe more than that I guess probably more than that, must be ten to fifteen boats and so we just brought them and put them on a hospital ship.

Then they'd, I don't know what happened to them after that but some of them were they were pretty bad looking they were pretty tough looking and there was five guys I remember five men officer [unclear] Huston it had been something down in there Malaysia someplace at the start of the war and they've been in that field pow camp for the whole complete war until we got there and then the war was over when we went after them up there yea and they weren't too bad they were in pretty good shape generally. Probably better shape than most of the rest of them there was a English army and [unclear] service people and Australians

and uh civilians I don't know who all was up there we just carried them about took them out and they put them on that hospital ship and I didn't know what happened then they were gone.

Q: What was going through your mind when you were walking into these camps and rescuing these people to put them on that hospital ship I mean what was going through your mind?

FM: Well um most of them were well they were malnourished for one thing and they had no jungle you know diseases and stuff like that. I don't know pretty tough to see the people in the situation they were but they got taken care of I'm sure all right yeah I remember one fella that I remember the most he was over six feet tall and he said he weighed 200 pounds when he went in and he might of weighed 100 pounds or less. He was in really bad shape and I really don't know what happened to him after that date the hospital ship did probably they were to transfer him around back and forth and get them where they need to be and that must have been quite a process to get all those people out of there and get them where they wanted to go.

And we went back down to our base we had down there and then we went back to the Philippines and I guess we were there now I don't know not too long because I had people were getting out of the service on the point system and I had enough points to get out today in the war was over but really I didn't get out until the next February till we got home and got back to the States it was quite a little here and there and decommissioned of [unclear] and uh they took everything off the boat but wearing and pushed them up on the shore and bunched them up on the beach and burn them up but they were and well we used them however we had to use them you know. They were not in the greatest shape and they've been my squadron the squadron I was in had been to Alaska and Aleutian islands when they were a whole new squadron and then they came back and they put a lot more guns on the boats and then loaded them up I never did see the boat until I got well we were I forget where they did unload them took them off of whatever they put them on a deck or whatever was going that way and uh so they have all done got them ready operational and we got on a I rode on whatever from then until they decommissioned the squadron, we had some good times had some tough times but...

Q: Do you have a favorite memory, something that sticks out of your mind?

FM: We used to take the boats out and uh ride the [unclear] it was good boats and any boat you know you see a boat going in the water fast and throw water behind it all we put one up there probably 60 feet high or ten along the side run up on top of them look don't let go in in front of us (laughs) what happened if one of them went in front of you stop and have two boats for the price of one and we didn't say nothing of it of doing things like that.

Q: Just trying to have a little fun

FM: We were yea, we were and none of us were probably hmm well I was only nineteen twenty years old.

Q: Now earlier you had mentioned that um when the attack on Pearl Harbor occurred your parents had to sign some papers to allow you to go into the navy now where they you know a little bit hesitant about going in?

FM: Oh yeah, oh yeah my dad was here he didn't think much of that deal I finally oh I kept talking to him you know and he finally signed it but actually when he signed it for me to go I didn't go then and for hmm it might have been two or three months before they called me up and they called me and I went down to boot camp and you know and got ready to go and.

Q: Where you nervous or were you excited too

FM: Well I want to go I you know cause you never knew cause you didn't know what it was going to be like for one thing and World War 2 involved who went to those places did in that rotation system, not like they do for the men up in Fort Drum you know they go for six months nine months year whatever their rotation is.

Q: When you went, you went.

FM: Yea, we stayed until it was done, I was only out in the Navy three years and might of been a year and a half without sight out of the states [unclear] and then I flew over to the Pacific side of it and but you know well if you don't know what's coming and I don't know if I got excited or not or we were there and that's what we were going to do and that was it I think some of the guys were probably I don't know I didn't see if I didn't think too much about the consequences of what might have happened or anything.

Q: You just wanted to serve your country.

FM: Yeah, memorial [unclear] want to see us was going to go fishing somebody found some work some month they had a box of hand grenades and I tell ya you fool with high explosives like junk all the time we didn't think nothing of it and so we went off of the dock, the dock was in kind of a funny shape anyway. But we went off of toward far away from the dock so it was really underwater you know we would throw them in the water and they explode, you know, and it got everybody I don't know that night when we did it recovery but I don't know why we did it then but he got everybody up and [unclear] and invasion and we were delighted, oh jeez, crazy things like that you know I suppose we he brought up the tank all the time and it was just what we did that was it, you know people nowadays was nervous and we all never got nervous about it I didn't know it didn't bother me.

Q: You just had a job to do

FM: I had to do one and that was it, you know I remember one time to follow the 20 millimeter dunkley you had on that we had she would renew head to 20

millimeter for deck and I had 37 millimeter as well and then there was two 150 where the controls were and then there was two or fifty backing him about in the middle of the boat on either side and the back had about 40 millimeter, no in the middle were 50 caliber machine guns browning and then on the back end they had a 40 millimeter and they put on. I think they put on after they when they came back to the states from [unclear] they put all the extra guns on there and I think we used them all if the 40 millimeter on the top of my head, right over like this where the first time I did I stepped right down I was upset a little bit.

Q: I imagine you were

FM: You weren't a fighter or a trainer that turned the gun and elevated it up and down the school guys I don't think I never saw them if they were if they were nervous or excited they didn't show it because they never bothered them a bit because we didn't have any control fire control where you could see. You know, and uh so they were doing they did that they were pipetted and I couldn't do and it was noisy I'll tell you it terrible extremely noisy and that's why I don't hear any better than I do now I didn't add to it all the time I was working my life toward the noisy places all the time we have we went to, used to go we went up to the Air Base Air Force had uh b-24 bombers just to play out of vendora to Japan and back and bomb Japan and we had to do patrol duty out there for a while because they had, they had a fellow that was I don't know what happened to him but even he was he would fix one of those 24 bombers so when the wheels came up it was brought up and blow it up in air in midair not from not from enemy from him from Lawson so he used to be up there and pick up everything I don't think we ever we never got to do that but we just missed it somehow but we got acquainted with a few guys up there I don't even know it I can't remember the name