Donald L. Patrie (DLP)
Narrator

Interviewer: Michael Aikey (I)
Videographer: Wayne Clarke

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Latham, NY

I: This will be the show and tell period.
DLP: Oh, Ok. That was the ship I was on.

I: The Tate.
DLP: USS Tate was an AKA-70 which is an attack cargo ship and there's some of the places we were at.

I: Boy, you guys got around.
DLP: We did, yeah, for being in service only a year, or only a little over a year. We did. After I got off the ship, the war had ended and whatnot and they ended up taking, as I understand it, stuff out for the first atomic test out there in Bikini Atoll. They dragged a lot of the instruments and stuff out there.

I: Now, were you a plank holder?
DLP: Well, I guess I was. Yeah. We didn't even have such a ceremony at that time but, yeah, I put in commission, right, down in Charleston. There's a history of attack cargo ship. We carried troops and a lot of their equipment as opposed to an APA which is slightly larger and carried almost all troops and no equipment. But we carried half troops, half equipment. A couple of hundred troops and some of their, well most of their mortars and their ammunition and they had a tank or two. Even had a little spotter plane which is in there. I mean, their equipment. They took it ashore and [unclear]. 77. We worked to the 77th Division and while that was our main… We also carried other troops but that was in the invasion of Okinawa and Hiroshima when they were the guys we lugged around and put ashore and whatnot.

I: Now you offloaded equipment by crane?
DLP: Yeah. We had our own cranes, you know. Right on the deck there. They just loaded them into the landing craft. We carried 16 LCVTs and 8 LCMs so we had…

I: Good size ship.
DLP: Yeah, yeah, we were good size. Then, right after the war, just as the war ended, we put the first troops ashore in Korea, take over from the Japs. That was in 1945, September. We also put Marines ashore in China.

I: Oh, interesting.
DLP: And then, they had us lugging Chinese Nationalist troops up from Hong Kong, well Kowloon, which is the mainland of China right opposite Hong Kong. We carried the Chinese 13th army and the Chinese 8th army. We made two trips. We weren't the only

ones. We were in a convoy up into northern China to fight the Mao Tse-tung up there. Of course, these Chinese nationalist troops were so poorly equipped, they got wiped out. But we did our share. They wanted to go up there. We put them up there, put them ashore up in northern China.

I: Now, I noticed this camouflage pattern.
DLP: Yeah. That was our Atlantic colors when we first put it into the service in the Atlantic, but we only had those colors for, I don't know, six weeks, eight weeks, or something. We went to the Pacific and then they just painted it all battleship grey. They didn't keep the colors like camouflages.

I: Really?
DLP: Yeah, they…

I: Any reason for that?
DLP: I don't know. I guess they decided that the stuff wasn't very effective and why bother. It was easier to just paint everything grey. At the end of the war, I never did see a ship other than ours at the very end there. I mean, there just weren't any. They just painted them all grey.

I: Makes it simpler, doesn't it?
DLP: Yeah, it did.

I: Interesting. Interesting. So, Commander R.E. Lyon?
DLP: Yeah, Rupert Este Lyon. He was quite a guy, really. He has been a quartermaster, which was what I was, in WWI, this fella. So, we got along pretty well. He'd come up through. He was from San Francisco. He used to be a pilot out there, I guess between wars and whatnot, and came back into the service. Quite an interesting man. Big fella, 6'4". He weighed about 250 pounds. Tough as nails, but a great guy. Everybody swore by him. I've got a few little things. This, in the invasion of Iejima, which is an island right off of Okinawa, this is the… There was another half one down here [opens and points to a map], but all of the fighting was here. Here were the mountains. Ernie Pyle was killed right here. The famous war correspondent, Ernie Pyle? I think he had been on our ship. I'm not positive of that. Just before he was killed, we had some people there. We're all so busy and whatnot that didn't pay too much… This was, in fact, they have a museum down in New Orleans now and they're opening a new wing down there on invasions in the Pacific and what not. My daughter's going to college, down to Tulane University. I just took her down there and enrolled her down there. I'm thinking the next time I get down there I might give this to what's his name, the guy, Ambrose, Keith Ambrose, who runs it.

I: Also keep us in mind.
DLP: Oh, okay. I would.

I: The museum up in Saratoga.
DLP: That's true, yeah, yeah.

I: [Unclear]

DLP: [Laughs]

I: Today we're interviewing Mr. Donald L. Patrie. It's October 3, 2001. Interview at Latham headquarters. Michael Aikey, Interviewer. Wayne Clarke, Videographer. Mr. Patrie, where were you born, sir?
DLP: In Schenectady, NY.

I: So, you're a lifelong Schenectady…?
DLP: Well, most of my life. I did spend most of the '70's in Southern CA. I transferred out there with my company and then I came back here. I had family here and whatnot so I transferred back here in '78.

I: You went to school in Schenectady?
DLP: Yeah, I went to, I graduated from Scotia High, actually. We lived there for a couple of years and I went into the service from Scotia. But I went to Union College. In fact, the Navy sent me there when I first went in. I was 17 and they sent me into… One of the first ones in the V-12 program.

I: Now, explain that program.
DLP: That was an officer training program, mostly for young fellows who are first going in. We had about 490, I guess, people who went in the program and they were at Union and I'd say that of 490, probably 400, nah maybe not 400, 300 were freshman, just kids 17, 18 years old. You had a few years of college and supposedly then you got a commission. But unfortunately, you had no choice of subjects and Union at that time was strictly, mostly engineering or medical. You didn't have any choices, as I say, of subjects. They put me in engineering stuff which I am totally ignorant of and I didn't do too… And after two semesters that's when I was transferred to Sampson and as a lot of others were, probably half the people were transferred out. It was a good program, but…

I: What year did you get into the program?
DLP: In 1943. I graduated from high school June 23, '43 and, while I'd already taken the test to get into the program when I was in high school, I took the test and I was sworn in on May 25th but then I finished high school. Then July 1st went to Union and put the uniform on and started and spent eight months there and then I transferred to Sampson on March 4, I think it was, '44, went through boots there which was a snap compared to the training we'd had at Union.

I: Really?
DLP: Yeah, because we'd had the regular Annapolis training in the V-12 program just like Annapolis cadets marching and everything, pretty stiff, physical program. It was a good program.

I: Why did you pick the Navy?
DLP: Oh, my dad had been in the Navy in WWI.

I: Oh, okay.

DLP: Although the funny part of it was, he was, WWII, well right after WWI, he worked for the Army for many, many years, like 38 years. Transportation Officer even though he was a civilian at the old Schenectady Army depot. I don't know. I just thought I'd like to be Navy. I had one brother who was in the Army during the war and one who got in the Army, my kid brother, right after the war. But I was Navy and it was always my Dad and I against the two brothers. Although Dad, as I say, hooked up with Army as a civilian.

I: Do you remember where you were when you heard about Pearl Harbor?
DLP: Oh, very well. Yeah, we were at home, 352 Mohawk Avenue in Schenectady and my brother and I were listening to the Giants Brooklyn Dodgers football game. You say Brooklyn Dodgers – there was a Brooklyn Dodgers football team at that time. In the NFL. And a good team and they were battling for the rights for NY and whatnot and all of a sudden, they broke in and said Pearl Harbor had been attacked and the game sort of fell apart. The players finished up. They were talking to each other, I guess, apparently, and I don't think anybody remembers who won the game or nothing. But it was, yeah, Sunday afternoon, like 1:00, we heard the news.

I: Do you have any recollection of what went through your mind when you heard that?
DLP: Yeah, I figured it would change all our lives. I really did. Cause I'd been, oh probably from the time I was 12, 14 years old, very interested in history, and I still like history and follow it pretty closely. I watched Hitler take over these countries over there, listen to him, there was no TV, of course. I figured that eventually, this would do it. We'd be there would fighting and so… I had had quite a few friends who had gone into the service, you know, I had them back in the early '40's. They were older friends and going in. I figured, well, eventually, I'll end up somewhere along the line of going in there so, which did happen.

I: So, what was Sampson like?
DLP: Sampson was, as they say, the boot camp. We had a very short boot camp. I believe it was six weeks. Then they give you a week off, come home. Then, I had pretty high scores in the testing and they said, "Well you can go to any school you want to." So, I looked over the thing and I decided I wanted to be a quartermaster, which is navigation, visual signaling and what not. You're up on the bridge and that's what I wanted to be. So, they sent me to school after the week's vacation there and leave and went back and went for 16 weeks there which was a great program.

I: Was it good training?
DLP: Oh, excellent, excellent, yeah and then they transferred everyone out after the 16 weeks and I ended up… They sent several of us down to Newport, RI on a troop train. We went down there to be assigned to a ship but I stayed there and several others stayed there as well and eventually I got assigned to a ship they called the USS Tate which was being finished down in Charleston, SC. But while I was at Newport, you had to keep busy doing things, so I took a review class for quartermasters, which was just a short week or two and they said anymore… Oh, by that time, I'd been reassigned, assigned to the ship. They were forming a crew. The fellow that was going to be the navigator, a man named Ensign Leahy said, "Well, why don't you take a navigator's course?" So, then I went to review school for navigators. I was, I guess the only enlisted man in there. The review school for navigators,

I had a bunch of officers in there and commanders and captains who were navigators who had been at sea, most of them, and were waiting for reassignment, so that was fun. When that was over, we had, as I say, we were forming our crew. The Naval War College is right there in Newport. This is in Newport, RI. The War College is just on the little island, right off the walk across the bridge and you're on the island. And all kinds of admirals and everything else there. We went over there and we worked down in the basement. They had a million different charts. We corrected charts and brought them up to date for different ships and crews. Eventually we got two – we did our own and got ours all up to date. It was fun, fun duty.

I: Good group of guys you were with?
DLP: Oh, yeah, great group of guys who were going to be my shipmates and whatnot. We had a lot of fun. I had a real funny incident happen. We had this one old fellow. He was assigned to be quartermaster aboard our ship. He was old enough to be my Dad, I'm sure. We're walking across this causeway this one afternoon to go over there after lunch and a bunch of officers were coming towards us. One guy, I can see he's an Admiral. I was still a seaman and hadn't gotten my rank and I'm saluting the officer and this fellow, he goes like this to the officer [salutes off his nose] "Stinky," and I said, "Oh, my God, I'll be in the brig. I'm with this guy." And the officer says, "What? What'd you say?" He says, "Hi Stinky." [Salutes off his nose again.] Well, what had happened, these two had served on a ship in WWI together when this Admiral was a young ensign. Well, they threw their arms – they hadn't seen each other since WWI, and they put their arms around each other and I sort of walked on. [Laughs] But it was… For a minute, I thought, "Oh, I'm going to end up in the brig with this guy." It was fun. I had a lot of good things like that. We did our training and then in about the middle of November, the ship was ready down in SC so they packed us all aboard a troop train and down we went. It took us about a day and a half to get down there, I guess. Night and day, traveling. We get down there. By this time, it was fairly cool. It was cooler than I thought it would be down in SC. In fact, we even had a little snow down there, which was unusual. We spent Thanksgiving and then a couple of days after Thanksgiving. They had the formal commissioning ceremonies.

I: And the ship was the…?
DLP: The Tate, the USS Tate, you know, the AKA-70. Well, a couple of days later we left there and came up the coast, the Chesapeake Bay, and had a shakedown cruise for roughly a week, I guess.

I: How did that go?
DLP: It went pretty good. The ship operated fairly well. We had a few minor problems, but nothing serious and then we pulled into Portsmouth Naval Yard and it was, like, two days before Christmas '44 and they gave us all, like 72-hour pass or something. I made it home through a series of busses and trains and got home for Christmas. Yeah, got home Christmas Eve and the family was not expecting me. It was fun and then Christmas night, yeah, we left Christmas night and that was the last time I was home for over a year. Then we went up into Davisville, RI and we picked up some CB stuff, equipment and whatnot. Then we left there, I think it was on the 30th of December.

I: Who was the skipper?
DLP: At that time, we had a fellow named Jordan, Commander Jordan, and he had had some, apparently, some bad experience at sea and he cracked up and a lot of us enlisted men think he did it on purpose. Anyhow, they removed him. Took him out in a straitjacket. Then they replaced him with Rupert Este Lyon who was a great guy. The first skipper, well he never did go out to sea with us. So, anyhow, we left Davisville, RI and went down through the canal which was an experience, too.

I: Tell us about that.
DLP: Well, we had left to, as they say, like the 30th of December, and it was bitter cold up in New England there and went down and then two days later we're down going through the canal. We stopped in the eastern end or the Atlantic end, Cristóbal, just overnight and then we left in the morning and it was like 110 degrees going through the canal and hot. It took us a whole day. We left like, 8 or 9 in the morning. We didn't get through the Canal until, oh probably, 6 or 7:00 at night. The heat was more than anything else, but it was interesting going through there.

I: Now, what were your duties aboard ship?
DLP: I was quartermaster, which involved navigation and I was trained in visual signaling, which is flags, semaphores, and whatnots, but we had a pretty good full staff of signalmen, so I rarely got into any of that, into the signaling. But we were the expert helmsman quartermaster which implies that and we did train a lot of people to stand watches on the helm and going into any tight situation, in battle or whatnot, there was always a quartermaster on the wheel. But you stood regular watches. You didn't stand, only battles or tight situations like going through the Canal, would you stand wheel watches. Most of it was taking care of… You observed all the weather conditions and noted all that and you kept the quartermaster's notebook. Anything that went on up on the bridge or important around the ship, you kept a written account of it. In fact, the officer of the deck in a day or so, he usually would borrow your notebook because he had to write up a log, ship's log. But, if there had been a court martial say, the quartermaster's notebook was to be considered above the ship's log because it was much more detailed and written as you did things and where the other was a condensed version of what when on. But they would take the quartermaster's notebook as to what really transpired. You kept a very detailed notebook. And then, as I say, you kept a weather log of each hour. You recorded the temperature, wet and dry bulb, the barometer, the winds and the clouds and speeds and all kinds of stuff like that. You had to make hourly notations on that. You assisted the officer of the day. You were his right-hand man. And quite often you would take, especially if you were in a convoy, you would take… We had radar, but we also had stadimeters which we could take up to, say, a thousand yards, pretty accurate measurements as to how close you were to your other ships and what not. I had an interesting experience once with that. We were in the Pacific and this officer, Lieutenant Herskey, nice fellow. He was from New Orleans. In fact, his father had been Mayor of New Orleans at one time. He was a real congenial man, but he hadn't had much sea duty. The Captain asked him to take a reading on the ship ahead of us and he said, "Well, how do you do that?" He said, "Well, with the stadimeter." So, he said, "Quartermaster, give him a stadimeter." So, I handed him and he had no idea how to use it. [Laughs] Well, the Captain made a couple of choice remarks which I will not repeat and he said, "Show this

blah blah blah how to use this blah blah blah thing," and I felt embarrassed for the guy because he just hadn't of had no experience with it but I always felt sorry for him after that. But he was a good officer. Well, we had a good crew. We went down through the canal. Then we sailed up through the canal and up to Pearl Harbor. We were in Pearl Harbor for about ten days and that was interesting. And got ashore a couple of times.

I: What was Pearl like at that point?
DLP: Very, very busy. The ships going and coming in and out. The harbor, well there wasn't any… The Arizona was still below, it wasn't above water. I mean you could see bubbles and oil coming up and whatnot. They had pretty well cleaned up all the rest of the mess was cleaned up pretty well. But we'd go in liberty into Honolulu which was fun and one day I took a – they had a bus tour around the whole island. Stopped on the other side and went swimming and this and that and made the way back. Interesting island. Enjoyed it. But I see pictures of it now and – of Honolulu and what not – doesn't look like… At that time, I guess the highest point on the buildings was like three stories or something like that. Now they have skyscrapers and, you know, a totally different landscape, but it was fun. And from there we left after ten days, we went up the island of Kauai, which is 95 miles northwest of Oahu. And we picked up some Seabees and some more of their equipment and whatnot. Interesting story there is… We were only there like two days. And it was a totally different atmosphere from Oahu. I mean, no servicemen there, just a couple of these Seabees. Just a very small pier. We were on one side because there was another ship, small ship, on the other side of the pier and the closest town was about a mile. You walked in. We went ashore, a bunch of us. We walked up this dirt road, Coral Road, and there were trees on all sides and got in this little town, Hanapepe. It was about a block long. We get through and there's a bar right at the far end of town on the left. The road ends, and there's just plain jungle right ahead of you so I had a drink. We came back and halfway back through the city there was a theatre and we went to the movies there. It was fun. Then we went back to ship. Well, on the way back, someone got the brilliant idea, all these trees on the side of the road were banana trees, most of them. So, some of the fellas picked them, a couple stalks of bananas and we took them back to the ship. The next day the cooks had made banana cream pies for us. It was great! It was a nice treat. Freshly picked bananas. From there we went on, let's see, I think we… The next one we went on, made a lot of stops going out there.

I: Describe the ship. It's an AKA?
DLP: AKA. I think it was 463 feet long. I could be wrong on that. It was about 15-16,000 tons. Top speed was like 16 knots.

I: You were describing the ship.
DLP: Yes.

I: It's an attack car.
DLP: Attack car, what they call…

I: What does it mean by an attack car?
DLP: Well, we went into, we were an invasion ship, invasion, so we had a rather shallow draft so we could get in, you know, as close to the shore as possible. And we carried

landing craft. We carried a total of 24 landing craft. Sixteen of the LCVPs which probably carried 15 fully loaded or equipped soldiers or marines and then the bigger one, the LCMs, we had eight of those and they carried, like double the amount.

I: What kind of armour?
DLP: On our ship, we had a 5-inch 38-gun on the fantail and then we had, oh I don't know, probably a dozen twin 40 Bofors anti-aircraft guns and then we had maybe twenty 20-millimeter guns and we had a few, couple 50-caliber machine guns and of course … That was about it. We had an armory with a lot of sidearms and stuff like that, but as far as actually equipped for battle, that's what we carried.

I: So, the main armament was basically…
DLP: The 5-inch 38 and the twin 40 anti-aircraft, which is what we had our most trouble with was the kamikazes, which we did see a lot of. We went on out, made our way out to the Philippines, couple of stops on the way. We were there in Leyte, Leyte Gulf, between Leyte and Samar. We picked up the, eventually after a week or so there, we picked up part of the 77th Division. Several other ships came in and they picked up the rest of them and then we sailed down to the end of Leyte, Mindanao, which was still Japanese held and we had to practice invasion there, getting ready for Okinawa. We just put troops ashore and then we withdrew them. Then we went back up. Well, eventually we left, I think it was around the 20th of March '45 and we sailed north toward Okinawa. No one knew how big a battle that was going to be as it turned out. But we had interesting, on the way up there. The Japs apparently had spotted us or knew we were coming but they did not attack us. We knew they were dropping mines ahead of us, especially at night, so we did come across a few of them during the day and we exploded them.

I: Now you traveled in a convoy?
DLP: Yes.

I: What would be a typical convoy?
DLP: Oh, they would have, between our type of ship, the AKAs and the APAs, which were, as I say, were a little bit larger than ours, but carried all troops, but no equipment. But all troops. They'd probably carry anywhere 700 troops or so each, or maybe 1,000. I'm not exactly sure. Where we'd carry like 250, but with their equipment and we'd have… The convoy would probably be about 8 or 10 ships plus the escorts. We'd have destroyers, destroyer escorts and maybe a baby flattop escorting us. We cruised along around 16 knots, 15, 16 knots usually, depending on the weather and the conditions and whatnot. One interesting incident you might get a kick out of. On the strip we were up and it was sometime, probably after midnight, 1:00, 2:00 in the morning. I was on duty up in the bridge and the radar people gave us a buzz and said we'd picked up something on radar blah blah and the rest of the ship said, too, there was a Japanese plane way ahead of us, about 18 miles ahead of us. It was headed in our direction but it was not a flight, it was just one plane and it was moving so the Commodore of the convoy there said that nobody shoot until you get the word. So, we tracked this plane in and it kept coming right toward the convoy and eventually they track it down, like 18 miles, 16 miles you know right on down. They got 2 miles. I went out on the starboard wing of the bridge and you could see this plane came right down between our line of ships and the ships on our starboard side,

which were maybe 500 yards to the right of us and to starboard side of us and this plane was no more than 200 feet in the air. It was a dark night, but you could see the red sparks flying out of his engine. Not a jet engine. They were all, of course, [unclear] and to whatnot, and he never saw us. And we didn't open fire. We never got the chance but he went right down between the ships, right on, continued on south. We continued on north and nobody fired a shot. Everybody was just… No more than 200 feet up in the air above us, but he just kept going. But eventually, on March 26th, we got into a place called Kerama, which is a group of small islands, about 10-12 miles southwest of the main island of Okinawa. That was the beginning of the Okinawa invasion. We put the first troops ashore. In fact, the first soldier that went in there – he was written up in the big history book, a fellow named Myers, Sergeant Myers, was the first one to step ashore and he slept next to me aboard our ship. On our ship we had the troops and the crew slept all together and we mingled and whatnot.

I: How seaworthy was it?
DLP: The ship was very seaworthy, although… It was very seaworthy. We did hit typhoons later on and we lost a couple boats in one of them. It's all written up in here and it was… They were something. Those typhoons were almost as bad as the enemy. I mean you get in there and you're rolling up to maybe 45 degrees. They were scary. And we had had two of them. Both of the ones we hit, we were empty. And as I say, we were a top-heavy ship because we carried all these landing craft. So, what we did was, we flooded our holes. We let seawater in where normally there'd be cargo. We just flooded them which sank us and kept us from rolling over. Otherwise, we would have went down. In one of the typhoons, now I don't think it was the one – there were a lot of typhoons out there – but it was one just before us, they lost three destroyers went down. In fact, Admiral Halsey caught hell for that. They said he was to blame for taking a ship into that typhoon. He could have avoided it. And a lot of history books say he made a fatal error. They lost… The cruiser Pittsburgh, which was a very modern cruiser, she was one of the latest, a big ship and next to the battleship, the most powerful ship. We saw her just before she went into one of these typhoons. She was gorgeous ship, in fact tied up next to us and we bumped into her shortly after she had been in a typhoon and the front 60 feet of her bow had been torn completely off, just like somebody ripped it off. It didn't go down because it had watertight integrity and closed all the hatches and whatnot. But it was just like somebody had torn the first 60 feet of the ship right off, like paper. They were powerful storms, very powerful.

I: Now, when you were at Okinawa…
DLP: Okinawa, yeah.

I: What was it like?
DLP: Well, as I say, we took these islands on March 26th and we finished up, like, the 30th of March or 31st and then the L-Day or D-Day at the main island was April 1st. It was like from here to downtown Albany away from where we were so we went over there and they didn't need our troops right then. We just stood off the beach there. It was… The scary part of it was, the Japs had no ships. Well, they did throw some… Try to come down from Japan, but they were hundreds of miles away from us. But the kamikazes were the hardest thing.

I: Were there a lot of those?
DLP: Yes. We were under attack, probably at least a dozen times. And on the night of April 2nd, which was the following day, I had finished about 6:00. I had finished my dinner and had taken my dessert up on the main deck and was sitting there looking out and all of a sudden, out of a cloud bank, a kamikaze came out, plowed right into the ship next to us. It was a troop transport next to us. When I saw the towers get hit in NY a couple of weeks ago, instantly that flashed to me because it was a huge ball of flame and, well, it's an [unclear] thing, but they lost a lot of soldiers and sailors, of course. It wiped them out. I don't know how many hundreds of them. You never did get the figures on all of them. They were scary. I might just read you one little thing here.

I: Sure.
DLP: "After twenty-eight days in the Okinawa area, the USS Tate withdrew to quieter waters. During these four weeks, he had been subjected to attacks by enemy aircraft, submarines and suicide boats. Enemy suicide planes struck vessels ahead and beamed up her position information and an escort vessel was exploded and stuck." Now, that's a little bit. We were under attack quite a little. But, then, as I say, we didn't put our troops right on the main island. We circled south of the island and then, on the 16th, we went into this little island right off the coast, Iejima, which is where Ernie Pyle was killed and we were there for four or five days and they captured the island, which was small, really a small island, but paid a heavy price for it.

I: Did you get ashore at all?
DLP: No, no I didn't. The sailors, we didn't go ashore. I mean our landing craft went to the beaches, but they didn't really get on to it. We had an interesting, one of these nights, we had pulled away from the little island over to Okinawa because kamikazes were hitting the convoys and the ships pretty good so we said we'll get a couple of miles away. We went over to Okinawa and we were waiting maybe 200 yards off shore, less maybe, and it's probably 8 or 9:00 and it's dark. It's in April and we see these lights coming down the water toward us. A boat. So, the captain said, "Get on the bullhorns," and we notified this craft that was approaching us, "Don't come any closer or we'll blow you out of the water. Identify yourself." What it was, it was a couple of Marines in one of these ducks, what they call a duck, and they were lost. They were afraid to go ashore that they would be behind Japanese lines and they could have been, so… I was the Quartermaster. I had to go in and I said, "Where are you trying to get to?" and I told them what direction and how far to go and come this way and take a course of so and so degrees. Oh, they were, they were crying. Just about they didn't want to go. They were so happy to know where to go because they had no idea. They were just totally lost. But they were happy that we didn't blow them out of the water and that we gave them directions to get behind our own lines. How they got lost, I don't know. They didn't say.

I: What did you do for recreation on board?
DLP: Not an awful lot. You read. You usually stood… In quieter waters, we did have movies. In fact, after the Okinawa operation, they pulled us down into Saipan and I remember when we were almost there, we had movies for the first time, I don't know, in a couple of months and they had ice cream and everybody was like little kids. The tension,

you could feel the stress go off your body, you know. It was great. Then we went down, and, as I say, recreation, not great. Some fellows liked to play cards, shoot craps. I was never into it myself. You read and you worked a lot. You had four hours on, eight hours off, four hours on, eight hours off. In your eight hours, if I had, say the midwatch, which would be from midnight to four, and then from noon to four in the afternoon. But, between eight in the morning and four in the afternoon, I had other duties on the bridge.

I: We're going to change tapes.
DLP: It was a good experience. You felt, well happy. We're back out on the water again, you know. Even though you'd been out there for months before.

I: Now, did you cross the equator?
DLP: Oh yes, we did. Well after this trip to Saipan they sent us down to Guadalcanal to pick up some Marines. There were still Marines left from the battle down there. So, we went down. I think it was, I'm not sure. I think it was the first Marine division or could be wrong. We got down there. We did get ashore there. Well, we had gotten ashore in Saipan too. These islands were pretty secure. Oh, one little incident on Saipan. I wanted to get ashore. To get ashore, I volunteered for a working party to go get some food stores. We needed some… While I was there, there was a prison camp there. They had some Japs and they turned right when I was there. They turned a few Japanese prisoners loose and told them to go up in the hills and tell your buddies, come on down, you're being treated well. And, you know, they wanted them to go get… They didn't turn a lot of them, but they turned a few chosen prisoners. By the way, at Okinawa, we had two, probably the very first two, prisoners taken in that campaign aboard our ship. They were interesting. And it was the night I was telling you about, the ship that was next to us got hit.

I: Right.
DLP: We had them in our brig. We had a brig with two cells and one of these fellows was an army lieutenant, a big tall Japanese man, and the other was a little, short private, very quiet. And the lieutenant wanted to commit harikari. He asked for, just, he said, just a pistol. And he could speak good English and he said, "I just want to die. I'll kill myself," you know. And, no, no, no. So, we had this army lieutenant aboard our ship with the troops and he could speak some Japanese and what not. So, he ended up talking with him. And we gave him food. And, the young private – he was so happy. We gave him some cigarettes and man, he was in heaven. He wanted to enlist in the Navy. The lieutenant gave some pretty valuable information to our army lieutenant. That was a bad night. We were under attack a lot. My battle station at the time was down underneath the brig, down, way down in after steering engine room. In case the bridge got knocked out, I could steer the ship from down in the steering engine and I could see… It was just like six steps up this ladder where the brig was and I'd stick up my nose and then watch and see these two guys, what was going on, you know. They relaxed. They didn't want to leave the ship. The next day or so, two days later, they transferred to a different ship, but they wanted to stay, be with us. But, well anyhow we went down to Guadalcanal and we picked up these Marines and they had them… They used to have interesting things. We went to a movie there one night right on the… And you had to walk through a patch of jungle, I guess you'd call it. And of course, everybody had to have their sleeves down because of malaria and whatnot even though you took Atabrine and stuff, you still had…

But they said it was not uncommon, and they did it when we were there, in the middle of a movie, all of a sudden, they'd turn on all the lights. It was out in the open, you know, in the open-air theatre. And quite often, they'd catch a Japanese sitting there, watching the movie. It was rather common. They didn't catch one when I was there. But they did, they flipped the lights on right in the middle of the movie. The Japanese watching the movie. [Laughs] One interesting thing, we picked these Marines up and we took them back to Guam. Well on the way back to Guam one night, around a little after midnight, I was up again on watch up on the bridge, out on the wing of the bridge and this Marine, one of the young marines came up and he was very upset. He said, "I want to speak to the officer of the deck." "Well, wait a minute." I went into the wheelhouse. I guess he was in or right on the bridge. I said, "There's a Marine out here wants to speak to you." He came out. I didn't pay attention to what was going on. Then the officer called me over and said, "Would you go down and get the Marine commandant, the Marine head man." I don't know what he was a major or something. "Wake him up and tell him we have a little problem. I said, "Okay." I went down and woke up this guy. "Okay, I'll be right up." I'm on the way back to the bridge, coming up and all of a sudden this young Marine came flying down the stack of the ladder, just tumbling down. He was out of his mind. I stepped back, otherwise he would have knocked me. He got down to the next level and he crawled on his hands and feet from here to you. Then he tumbled down the next deck and by this time, I'm chasing him and the officer of the deck was chasing him and he tried to…Where our gangplank was pulled up alongside and the side, he could have jumped right over. He wanted to commit suicide. Instead, he's on all fours and he tried to squeeze under the ladder there and we each grabbed a leg and we held him. He's screaming, "Let me go, let me go." He wanted to commit suicide. He would have succeeded if he had gotten across. Well, by this time, the Marine officer showed up and a couple of our people showed up and we got our ship's doctor up and he gave him a shot, put him in a straitjacket. Poor kid. You know, you felt sorry for him. Good man. He just flipped out and he didn't want to go back into battle and he knew that's where he was going to go back up. We got into Guam and I don't know what they did with him but they probably put him in a hospital and sent him back. We got back to the States after the others so it was a while and got a new complement of landing craft and whatnot. Went back out and then on, oh, hit a couple of places. We went to Enewetak which was part of the Marshall Islands out there. I had my closest buddy in high school was on one of the little islands there, Berry Island, little, about a block. He was a radioman, I guess, on there and I got to see him. It was a party island. They used to send the troops to get two cans of beer and a coke, you know, type of deal and he was living in a tent. He said, "You don't have to have that. Come on down to my tent," and we went down there and he had some good stuff and what not. [Laughs.] It was fun. They had, on the main island of Enewetak there they had a chapel and I went to church there and right next to the chapel was a bomber strip. B-24 bombers had taken off. You'd look out and you could almost reach out and touch the wing during the service, you know. Went to Mass there and pretty soon they had to stop for a minute, wait a minute, another plane's taking off. And this plane was, as I say, you could almost reach out the window and touch the plane taking off. But just a little interesting. And we left there and going up toward Guam is when we first heard about the first atomic bomb being set off. We got into Guam about three days later, I guess it was, and we no sooner were there, it was August 15th, I guess it was and word came that the Japanese had agreed to surrender. A bunch of guys were chipping paint on, we had been there an hour or so.

Everybody was throwing brooms in the bay and paint chippers. That was quite a party and that night, the skipper, we had some beer aboard we had picked up in the States and whatnot, so the skipper said, "Everybody, you can drink as much as you want, but don't come above deck because Admiral Nimitz's headquarters is right on top of that cliff over there and I don't want him to see drunken sailors on the deck. So, everyone, drink what you want." It was quite an interesting night.

I: It was a good party?
DLP: Yeah, oh yeah. I didn't really participate. I wanted to remember and I wasn't much of a drinker anyhow. But it was an interesting day. The next day they had a shore party. Go ashore and have a couple of beers. I went ashore and had a couple of beers on the beach. That's all. Later on, our ship, oh, we went up to Okinawa and what not, and as I say, the war ended, and we transported army troops into Korea to take over from the Japanese. We went on up in the Jinsen, Incheon I guess they call it know. That's where MacArthur later on, during the Korean War, had his big invasion there. Well, we were there five years earlier. And they had the second highest tide in the world, next to the Bay of Fundy which is in Newfoundland or somewhere up there. The second highest tide, so… You had to be careful with your ship going in there. You didn't want to get too close to the beach, because you'd end up on the beach. I don't know - 20 some feet tide or something distance. Tremendous. After, we went into, as I was telling you earlier, we went into, we put Marines ashore in Taku Bar and they went into Tientsin, China and we left some of our small boats there and different ships would drop supplies there. Our boats would run up the river. It was quite a trip up there. And take supplies up the river to the Marines. And, then we went down, oh we were down in the Philippines for a while, Manila, saw Corregidor and all those famous places. Manila was a shambles. That city was pretty well beat up. Lost a good friend of mine. Got reported ill. We were ashore this one afternoon, had a few drinks and were going back to the ship. There were three or four of us. He decided, "No, I'm not going back right now." A couple of other guys. I said, "You're going to be late." He said, "That's all right. We're going to go back and have another drink." So, anyhow the next day he turned in sick and we had a doctor aboard our ship, Dr. Harnon from Chicago, and anyhow, he didn't know what it was. He tried to diagnose it and then he finally diagnosed it. It was a rare form of spinal meningitis. It went up to his brain. Anyhow, we pulled out from there and we were going up… A hospital ship was supposed to meet us and we were going to transfer this fellow and the hospital ship never kept the rendezvous with us. Anyhow, the doctor kept him alive for a couple days, a few days, but the fever went up and destroyed his brain and 20 years old. And he died. I talked to the doctor just a few minutes after he pronounced him dead. He was up on the bridge and he came up and put it in the notebook and all this stuff. I said, "Gee, what was it?" He said, "It's highly contagious." I said, "Geez, I was with him that afternoon, his last… Do I have to be worried?" He said, "No, that was several days ago." He said, "You don't have to worry because I've kept him isolated for the last few days," and he said, "But I'm worried." He said, "I'm scared stiff." He said, "I'm just hoping and praying I survive another 48 hours and don't come down with it," and he didn't. He was all right. I said, "How did he get it?" He said, "It was probably either airborne or on the rim of the glass or something." He said, "I don't know, can't tell, but," he said "I'm scared." Luckily… We had a nice burial at sea for him and sent the flag home to his mother and whatnot with a little note. That was one of the few, actually the only man from our ship

who died, and that was not through battle inflicted. But then we carried these Chinese troops, Chiang Kai-shek's troops through Kowloon which is the mainland right off Hong Kong there. We carried the 13th Army and the Eighth Army up into northern China, two different trips. On one of the trips, one of the Chinese soldiers died. They were so poorly equipped. In such poor health. We put them in our holds as cargo. They were not allowed, of course, on any other part of the ship and one of our officers down going through the hole down there – this guy'd been dead maybe twenty-four hours or so, sleeping with his own troops. Nobody cared. They didn't care whether he was dead or alive – life was so cheap. So, we gave him a nice burial. Oh, first of all, we reported the death to – there was a general, a Chinese general was on one of the other ships who was in charge of this whole army and we said, "We're going to want to bury him." "Oh, no, no, no. No Chinese soldier has ever been buried at sea. He must be buried on land. Hold on till, we'll bury him when we get…" Our skipper, said, "The hell with you buddy." We pulled out. We buried him at sea. He said, "We're not holding this guy, that's contagious. He had cholera. He died of cholera." Our doctor, same doctor, diagnosed with cholera. We gave him a nice funeral. His own buddies never showed up the funeral. Our sailors were there at attention, you know, the Chinese flag, the whole bit. Somebody could care less. There was just no… Life was so cheap, you know. We got up to this one, I don't know if it's the same trip or the other trip, up to Qinhuangdao, which is the most northern port city in China and you can see the Great Wall from there way in the distance and the mountain comes down, you can see the Wall there. They were unloading their stuff. One of these soldiers was so sick he could hardly get off the ship. He couldn't march in to fight, certainly. He just sat there on the dock, very stoically sat there with his head down. We gave him a little food there and we had to leave and his own troops could care less. I'm sure the guy just died there. On the dock, nobody took care of him. There was a city there like nobody, nobody was interested in taking care of him. Life was so cheap. They had one of the local Chinese stevedores there could speak English and I was talking to him this one evening and I said, "Gee, how's this Communist problem up here with Mao Tse-tung, you know?" I said, "You have any problems with these people?" He said, "I'm one of them. But you guys are paying me to unload the ship." He said, "After you're gone, I'm going to fight with him." I mean, that was a very complicated situation. But here he was hired and paid by the American government to help unload the stuff and whatnot [Laugh] and here he was one of Mao Tse-tung's men.

I: You said you were Shellback?
DLP: Yes, on our trip to Guadalcanal, we went on, on May 7th, on a mission of war, as the certificate says. We're going, went across the equator. Had a great time. In fact, I have a lot of pictures in here of doing that.

I: What was that ceremony like?
DLP: Oh, here's… I'll let you see [hands book of photographs to interviewer}. It was great. Course, they shaved your head, you went in a bunch of oil, a tank of oil and water and get paddled [shows photographs], but we had a good time. It was a lot of fun.

I: Did you get your certificate?
DLP: Oh, yes, I have it. I was looking for it to come today. I didn't think to bring it until the last minute and I just couldn't locate it at the moment. Yes, I do have the certificate.

Yes, we crossed over that, went down and back up and of course, we went across the international date line half a dozen times. I guess, that was commonplace, going in and out of there.

I: What was your final cruise?
DLP: Final cruise was coming back from, we brought troops back from Okinawa, a lot of Army troops, a mixture of Army, Seabees, Air Force, all kinds plus our own and we came back up into Seattle, WA and this was, we ended up in Seattle a couple of days before Christmas, 1945. I spent Christmas on board ship. Half of our crew were going to be discharged. I was young, didn't have a family and obviously you didn't get as many points. I had to wait a couple of months before I got discharged. But I didn't mind. I was glad to be back in the US. On Christmas Day, the half weren't sent home or discharged, another half were given a couple weeks leave, so we had less than a quarter of the crew. Well, our skipper, as I said, he was from San Francisco. He had his wife and daughter, who was a very pretty girl, my age, come up from San Francisco up to Seattle and they worked in the galley cooking turkey along with a couple of the ship's cooks and whatnot and we had a nice Christmas dinner and a very nice time aboard ship. That was Christmas and then somewhere's around about the 10th of January, I got a couple of weeks leave and I came home to Schenectady. Schenectady – my folks has moved back to Schenectady from Scotia. I came home for a month and it was cold and I was shivering for all the time I was here, I guess, but then I went back. But eventually, I got off the ship in San Francisco and I was on Treasure Island for a few days. That was interesting there, too. They had a German prisoner of war camp on Treasure Island and now, these guys were tough looking. They were Afrika Korps, Rommel's men. And man, they were hard-nosed, hard-nosed. You could see them when you walked by the fence. They'd stare at you with hatred in their eyes. Really. Even though they were in prison and they were never going to get out and go home, they were, you could see, so bitter. Unbelievable. They were like, almost like, mechanical men. I went to church, Mass, and they had one of these German soldiers as an altar boy and, you know, he was going to serve Mass and he was… Everything was just like in a square like he was marching, you know, instead of being relaxed on the altar, you know. And he was just like he was an automation, automat. I mean those guys were so… They're fierce looking and they hated…I mean, just looking at you. So, I actually got to see German prisoners, Japanese prisoners and when I was at Sampson, I went into Rochester one weekend and they had an Italian prisoner of war camp up near Rochester. And those guys they used to turn loose and they had regular leave, liberty, and I bumped into a couple of them at a bar there one Saturday night. They had to be back by midnight or something and they had big POW on their back or something, but they were happy-go-lucky guys, "Have a drink," you know. They had a little money. They were no threat to the US whatsoever. [Laughs.] They were happy and as I say, they were given liberty like we were. But I did get to see all three prisoners of Japan, Germany, and Italy.

I: When was the last time you saw the ship?
DLP: The ship? It was in 1946, yeah, as soon as I got off there, that was the last I saw. Shortly after that, from corresponding with a couple of the fellows, it carried stuff out to the Bikini Atoll for the first atom bomb test out there. It carried a lot of the instruments and stuff out there and if I'd stayed on, I would have been on that trip. Then it went down to Panama, and it was in the Panama Canal for a while. Stayed there, I don't know what

it was doing. I had a relative, I had an aunt, my mother's sister and her family lived down there. My uncle was one of the chief engineers on the locks during the war, one of the top men in the Panama Canal.

I: So, do you know whatever happened to the ship?
DLP: Yeah, I sent away to one of these things in one of the magazines and they tell you what happened and apparently this ship, the Luckenbach Steamship Line had it for a while and it was getting old and I don't know what year, but it was sold for scrap. It ended up being scrap, I guess, like so many other ships. Talking about being scrapped here, this past March I was down in Charleston, SC with a singing group, the Capital District Youth Chorale. I was chaperoning and one of our things we did with the kids, they had the Yorktown carrier down there and made a museum and it was great and we went aboard that and I didn't realize it, but there's a destroyer tied up with it and a Coast Guard cutter. I looked at the destroyer. It was one of the ones that was hit, the kamikaze that was one of our escorts. The Laffey, USS Laffey 724 and she's tied up down there right next to the… I didn't have time to get aboard because I had to go – but I want to go… But tears came to my eyes when I saw this. I hadn't seen one of our ships since the war and here it was, this past March. She's down in Charleston.

I: What did you do when you got home?
DLP: Took it easy for the summer. They went back to Union in the fall. Kicked around for a while and then I got into transportation. My Dad was in transportation for the government. Somehow or other I know a lot of trucking people who used to call on him for government orders and one of them asked me to go to work – Interstate Motor Freight – and ended up in sales for the trucking business and then there were several others and I ended up spending thirty years in the trucking business with different outfits, P.I.E, Associated Transport, several others. Kicked around. Got married. That's another story I don't particularly care to go into too much but I do have a daughter now. Well, I have a son who's married and lives in CT. He's got several children. In fact, one of his daughters got married last Friday night. I was part of the wedding here in Schenectady and I have a daughter by my second marriage. Her mother died exactly two years ago today. She's in Tulane University. I took her down to Tulane here last month. We drove down. Now, I'm by myself, the cat and I. She calls me every other day, just about, so yeah, she's doing well down there.

I: Well, thank you very much.
DLP: Well, thank you sir and thank you. Thank you both.