

## Robert Clark

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**Question:** So I get it on tape it is Robert Clark?

**Answer:** That is correct.

**Question:** And do you go by Robert or Bob?

**Answer:** Bob.

**Question:** Did you have a nickname when you were in the service or anything?

**Answer:** No just Clark. I did in high school, I was Zeek.

**Question:** Zeek?

**Answer:** Zeek Jake-leg.

**Question:** Where did you grow up?

**Answer:** Colby, Kansas. That is in the northwest corner of Kansas.

**Question:** You know the wizard said to Dorothy, "why would anybody want to go back to Kansas?" I've been to a variety of places in Kansas and enjoyed it.

**Answer:** I think most of my family is gone except for second and third cousins.

**Question:** How did you end up in the navy, did you enlist or drafted or?

**Answer:** There wasn't much work in Colby when I was 18 or 19 years old so I had a neighbor when I was a small child. He and his wife were going back to California. They had bought property out there and ran a motel like place and they wanted someone to go with them to help drive and pay the gas. So me and a long time friend and a farm boy we took them up. We went out to California. My friend and I stayed with his brother in Hollywood for.. there were just men living in this house until they said you guys get out and get a job or else, and we couldn't find a job so I got in the Navy. And my friend had skin coming off his feet, they wouldn't take him, they had to cure that and they took him 30 days later and I never saw him again.

**Question:** What year was it that you went in?

**Answer:** 1940.

**Question:** 1940.

**Answer:** August 1940.

**Question:** Its funny most people remember the day, the date and the time, that they raised that right hand and

**Answer:** August 20, 1940.

**Question:** Did you have any idea at that time that war was coming or did you think it was a job?

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**Answer:** In a way, yes, we pretty well knew it was. Something happened in Europe and pretty soon we'd be there. My uncle was a.. a World War I fighting veteran and my father was a World War I veteran on railroad for America in France. So yeah we pretty well knew it was coming. I belonged to B Company.

**Question:** B company huh?

**Answer:** When I was nineteen years old arguing the war I belonged to B company. I'll be here when you leave and I'll be here when you get back.

**Question:** That's a good company to belong to. You were on the Tennessee, right?

**Answer:** Yes.

**Question:** Was that the first ship you were put on?

**Answer:** I was put aboard the.. a destroyer for transport from San Jose to Long Beach and then I went aboard the USS Saratoga and there were about 2000 travelers on that ship. Not crew, we on there for transport and they varied from sailors to marines, I guess that was all, no army, and went to Hawaii on the Saratoga. It was so big and so exciting that I didn't get seasick. A lot of men did.

**Question:** I always think its funny because I mean Kansas there's not a lot of seaports in Kansas, and they have this Kansas boy ending up out on this ship and tossed around on the sea.

**Answer:** There weren't many rivers to speak of either to speak of where I lived, creeks that's all.

**Question:** For you it must have been A) we're coming out of the depression so it was a job but it also must have been exciting.

**Answer:** Oh yeah. I seen sailors hitch hiking through Colby, and I read about Shanghai and the China fleet and that kind of stuff. So I was interested in the navy not the army and that was the first time when I got a chance to get to the big government building in Los Angeles that's where the recruiting station was and someone had told me and my friend so we knew where to go but we didn't have any money. His brother and his friend let us live with them and fed us, cause we didn't have any money. And buy cigarettes. We weren't clear out of money.

**Question:** Funny how that works. You know, certain things there's always money for you know. That's like when I see a homeless person out looking for money right now and they have a cup of Starbucks in their other hand. I'm like wait a minute here. When you arrived at Hawaii you sailed into Pearl Harbor?

**Answer:** The Saratoga tied up just off of Honolulu, and we went by motor launches into our ships. There was quite a few went to the Tennessee so I knew some guys for six weeks of training so I knew a few of the people that were aboard.

**Question:** What was Hawaii like then?

**Answer:** It was a city to me because, I came from a town. Downtown where the sailors went was the usual trade for sailors. Booze and broads and whatever. And it was pretty

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primitive. Did you see the picture I have of The Royal Hawaiian and the Ala Moana. That was taken in 1940 and we took one when we were there last time and it's a whole new world.

**Question:** It's interesting because kids today Hawaii is a tourist destination and pretty much anybody wants to go you can get on Hawaiian air and \$500 you can get over there and seven nights.. and Pearl Harbor is so well known now when you were going there, Hawaii was..

**Answer:** We took a boat from the ship over to a dock and then there was buses or taxi if you had the money and you could ride downtown. And if you were smart enough to remember where to get on the bus it would take you back to the dock where your boat was going to pick you up. And you could get food besides navy food. It wasn't all screwing around. We went to the hotel in town where they have the Hawaiian Kings history, so there was something to see. And I went out to the Royal Hawaiian one time with a friend, we took a think we took a taxi out there and it cost so much we took a bus going home.. going back to the dock. And there was an island where you could go play ball, navy had it, it was their island, and we used to go play baseball and there was always beer if you wanted it and some men drank and some didn't drink at all, like any other part of society.

**Question:** What was the beer of choice then, do you remember?

**Answer:** No. I didn't know anything about beer anyway, Kansas, was a dry state, when I was growing up. If I wanted anything to drink I had to go to a bootlegger or go to Colorado.

**Question:** When you went out to play ball were there teams from the ships?

**Answer:** Different crews yeah. We had chosen basketball teams. Guys that were good basketball players went and challenged ships around the harbor. We did a lot of ball playing. And rowing. They'd have races with the rowboats. I never did do that, I couldn't see working that hard.

**Question:** What was your choice of activity, baseball?

**Answer:** Baseball yeah but I didn't care much one way or another I just wanted to get off the ship and be with my friends.

**Question:** The ships were almost like floating cities. You had quite a few men.

**Answer:** At that time the Tennessee had, I was a first division man, which is the front part of the ship and. There's two divisions up front and one is port and one is starboard and I was on the starboard side and we slept in hammocks that were rigged up into the overhead. And when we got up in the morning and took those hammocks down and stored them in hammock netting that they called it, then we had a wide open room for our quarters and our tables were put down there to eat and we could play cards and lots of stuff we did down there. There was nothing else to do you know. There were a lot of card players. Gambling and stuff like that and if we got clear out of hand then the boatswains mate said we needed to scrub the deck and so he'd keep us busy for an hour.

**Question:** So prior to Pearl Harbor it sounds like what they say in the service, hurry up and wait.

**Answer:** Yeah.

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**Question:** Did you have drills or?

**Answer:** Yeah there was always drills, firing practice. You'd have to have, "man your battle stations, this is a drill, man your stations". They always said this is a drill anyway so we'd go to our battle stations and first and second division sailors were in turret one and turret two. That's the turrets with the 14" guns, diameter of guns, 60 feet long, big guns. And I worked my way in that area. I didn't want to be a deck sailor so I worked up to be a gunners mate which gave me a working station in the turret.

**Question:** So you were where?

**Answer:** Number one turret.

**Question:** Towards the bow?

**Answer:** It was in the bow. Right up in the front of the bow was the restrooms, bath and shower area so it was handy besides.

**Question:** To me I think it would have been handy because I would have had something scared out of me that I would have needed to of

**Answer:** You needed those places.

**Question:** When you, just to give a person perspective, when you stood.. up on the deck of your ship and looked around tell me about some of the ships that are around you and what it looks like, how close things are. Are you tied up side to side to ships or anchored apart from each other.

**Answer:** Well the weekend of Pearl Harbor.. that week and the month before when we came back to Pearl Harbor. Ford Island was in the middle of the bay.. the water and their were concrete docks there made to tie up the ships so there was a big dock up here and a big dock here, fore and aft. And we'd move the ship in, tug boats would push us in, and we'd tie up to those concrete anchors is what they were.. docks. And on the 8<sup>th</sup>, the 7<sup>th</sup>, the West Virginia was tied up outboard of us, away from the island, and the Oklahoma was up in front of us. And there was another ship, I think it was the California, the California or Maryland was tied up with the Oklahoma. And the Arizona was directly behind us and there were ships tied up to her, or near her anyway. So we were pretty snug, which was a blessing for the Tennessee cause the West Virginia took the submarines torpedoes and both the Arizona and the Oklahoma took bombs. We got a couple of bombs but nothing like those that were exposed on the outside.

**Question:** So you were protected then?

**Answer:** We were really protected. The Oklahoma sank, you know... turned over, a guy from my hometown school was aboard the Oklahoma. I think he died... I'm pretty sure he died.

**Question:** Where were you, take me through as much of that day as you want to and can, where were you when it happened?

**Answer:** It was Sunday, so no work, it was a non work day, and I was inside the turret at a place called the shell deck and I had a bench on one of the bulkheads and I was laying on the bench reading a book, 7 o'clock in the morning, just finished breakfast. I went up there to

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get out of the road because there still were people that had to clean up yet, the food tables and stuff like that and the decks. I was up there reading a book and here come the alarm. I heard the bombs and there wasn't any doubt when they said man your battle stations this is not a drill. Hell, I knew that. Our crew then was something in the order of a hundred men on that turret so they come streaming in as fast as they could. And my station was on one of the guns as a. I put the primer in when they opened the breech, loaded the powder in, closed the breech, they had to have a primer to fire the powder and I put the powder in the breech and checked that it locked. When the gunners mate threw it home to close, I'd hit the handle make sure the handle went in there and locked and laid down underneath the gun. That wasn't exactly fun either, cause when it fired it went right over me.

Well we all manned our battle stations and waited for our orders. And we got orders. Blake, Lieutenant Blake I think was my senior officer and Shirts was the junior officer, Shirts was a lawyer from New York. Never forget him. Blake was a Texas boy with a southern accent, but he was a full lieutenant so he had been in the navy awhile and he would call, I need six men to do something, get out of the turret and go do it. And one of the jobs was to throw the cable that tied the West Virginia to the Tennessee. Throw them off the big bits where they.. you know what a bit is, it's a big steel bar about this big around and its to tie up with, it's to secure the ship. So we had to go throw those cables off and they were steel cables probably one inch and a half cables, heavy as the dickens. And as we were throwing them off there came word to clear the weather deck, planes coming in, I didn't hear it, I was struggling with one of them loops around the bit. When I felt the weight of the cable come down in my arms I looked around and everybody else had gotten out of there. And then I realized what had happened and run for cover of the turret. You could crawl underneath the overhang on the turret. That was one thing we did. The West Virginia was sinking and it.. tied up to us, it tended to pull us over and lean over a little bit so we needed to get it undone and how we did that I haven't the faintest notion. Somebody had to loose them up over on the West Virginia so we could get the loops off the bits but we did.

Next time I was called out to go get fire hoses on I believe it was the second deck, and bring them to the topside because the oil from the Arizona was burning flowing up between the West Virginia and the Tennessee and we needed a fire hose to squirt in there to push it back. I went with a marine, we found a hose down there, a fire hose, grabbed the end, pulled it off of the hanger and went a running to the stairway to go up top ladder way and apparently we just broke the end off it, the female end where it was tied up to the pipe. When we got up topside we couldn't put water through the hose. Then there was an old bosun, and he was an old man, probably thirty five, forty, but compared to me he was an older guy and he was doing the directing and he chewed us out something fierce. But just then the officer who was senior aboard ship at the time got the engines going and put them in gear so they were trying to drive the ship forward and drive the water backwards cause we couldn't go forward we were tied up and it drove the oil and fire away from the Tennessee and the West Virginia. Then we got back inside.. got called out to take the tarps.. the tarps were on fire. The tarps were shelter, shade.. when we come into harbor we put up the tarp and give us shade on the weather deck and antiaircraft on the deck above would kick its shells out falling down on the tarp and they were hot and they started a fire so we went up and untied those and threw them in the water.

Other than that I went down inside the ship and if I had a message to do I don't remember that, but I do remember being down there with two men's bodies on the deck covered over with some tarp and what happened then. Ohh it was a long long.. every wait was a long wait between somebody telling you what to do and finally they said we could come out on the weather deck and we could come out and look around and watch for planes coming in. Oh I know one thing we did, those fourteen inch guns when you practice you use a dummy shell and dummy bags of powder so you'd ram the shell in drop the bags down and ram them in and that was to get your timing down right you know, load the gun, close the breech. Well in order to get those dummy shells out of there, we had a big lead deal a bob, almost as big as a

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gun barrel, and probably so long , and we'd pull it on a rope up to the end of the gun, then elevate the gun and let her go and it'd come sliding down and hit the dummy shell, well those are still in the gun and we had to go out there and pull them out and we just took hold of the rope and started, six or eight of us, started running pulled them right out on the deck and they stayed until we had a day or two of clean up you know.

**Question:** How did they get the orders to you I mean?

**Answer:** Broadcast, we had speakers.

**Question:** Do you remember was it loud and confusing?

**Answer:** No I don't recall any confusion in what I heard, I understood what I heard. If I was inside the turret then there was a.. the officer was inside with the speaking system for the turret and he could talk to us. If it was from the officer in charge of the ship then it went all over the ship, down inside the decks and up on the topside so I didn't have any trouble with that, understanding. And there was a lot of smoke, a lot of smoke, even by noon there was still.. Pearl Harbor was covered with smoke and we'd go up and watch for planes of course and every once in a while here come an alarm. Here comes a flight of planes and it wouldn't be so. It would be our planes it wouldn't be an attack but you didn't know so you got yourself down inside the ship.

By late, late in the day, fairly late in the day, they were calling for people to go out in the motor launches to pick up bodies that were in the water and we had a launch out there, Oliver Hardy.. hardy was the coxswain and he had been doing that all day cause he was away from the ship first thing in the morning, he was doing that without any orders. And they couldn't get anyone to volunteer. So finally the bosuns mate in our division said to one sailor hey you used to work in a funeral parlor it won't be anything to you, you go, you go with the coxswain. No way, he wouldn't go, so bosons mate, bosons mate one of them was Knucklehead, and I think he is the one that sent the other guy, and the other guy's name was Butterball, called him Butterball. He was short rotund, and believe it or not I saw Butterball over in Honolulu this last December, same Butterball, but he just went nothing to him. And when he came back in, I happened to be there when he got aboard ship, time to eat and we were eating on the run, it wasn't like we were served a meal, so he said I got to go wash up, he had oil on his hands for one thing, the bosons mate said Butterball get your butt up there and get cleaned up it's time to eat. So Butterball started that way and another guy said there's no water up there. We don't have any bath water, so you're wasting your time. Using the fresh water to wash the inside of the hull where the heat had burned the paint off back in the officer's quarters and it wasn't livable back there that way. So sailors were sent there with buckets of water to scrub the walls down. And Butter says I don't care and wiped his hands on his pants and went and got the plate or tray, same old Butterball. And Oliver Hardy I can't remember why they called him Oliver, there was a reason. He kept that boat in the water for most all the day going all around. I don't even remember what happened at night. I know we didn't leave our quarters, general quarters, we manned the guns all night so we just slept on the deck, we didn't take our hammocks or anything like that. We just lived through the night but then things got better organized. For one thing the captain was gone, he was ashore when that started so there was a junior, wasn't much a junior, but he was probably a full commander, he was in charge of the ship. And then when the captain came back, then the orders changed of course to the way he saw things. Which is what it is supposed to be. I thought the junior officer did a good job. He kept us busy

The next day they started deciding how we were going to get out of there. The Oklahoma had turned over in front of us. I think it was the Maryland on the Ford Island side of that and it was able to get underway. But we couldn't because the West Virginia had us pressed up against these quays so they got crews out there and started shoveling the sand out of the

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concrete quays, and the reason was to get down inside far enough to put dynamite in there and blow up the quays, and far enough down it would be thicker and away from the ships side. And they did, they set off three charges it seemed to me, blew it up and moved it out of the way for the next two three days, and the Tennessee was able to get under way. And it was pretty spooky because we had heard about the midget submarines you know being outside the harbor inside the harbor. And as we went out the mouth of Pearl Harbor I'm pretty sure there three ships were, out plus the destroyers. The destroyers went out ahead and they pitched depth charges so we'd be going along and ka-boom, ka-boom, scared the crap out of most of us. But that was to prevent any surprise and we got to sea and it was a long five days journey back to Bremerton.

**Question:** It sounds like from what you describe that Pearl Harbor just became this bed of oil, fire?

**Answer:** A lot of oil yes. And they finally got the fire out and I don't.. I think I was off of the topside when the fire went out. All the fires went out because they burned here and then they burned here. It wasn't a steady fire. You could see oil, yeah, oil was pretty terrible when we went out of the harbor.

**Question:** I've seen film footage but of course there isn't smell with it, can you when you think of that do you connect the smell with the burning or?

**Answer:** I've never had that, I don't remember those feelings at all. I saw it but I don't remember the tension, the smell. I remember the noise. The noise was pretty bad sometimes. Everybody started shooting you know. If one guy shot everybody shot. Whether there is anything there or not and that probably was the reasonable way of doing things.

**Question:** What is it like when you fire those big guns where you, does that throw your ship around?

**Answer:** Yes, we didn't use them against the aircraft of course. But when the week or month before we came back to Pearl Harbor we'd been through a gunnery practice. And that's something I need to tell you. They had another ship pulling a target we fired at and had airplanes pulling anti aircraft targets that they fired at. And when our.. turret one and two were fired we were free, the officers told us we could come up on deck and when one was done we could come up on deck and watch two fire so we got back on the quarterdeck on the back part of the ship. And brought that sucker around side ways, you know the ship is going this way and you're out here and fire.. and you can see the bullets and they were going SHHHT and they seemed to all come in and it took me forty years to realize that was my eyes.. adjusting, but it sure did rock that boat.. It would just go sideways a hundred feet, push it side ways I would guess a hundred feet. Just one turret, three guns, so what would happen if they all fired at once, and they did. But when we went back to port Saturday night. Friday or Saturday night we had a whole fleet out to sea, aircraft carriers, destroyers, battleships, and all of a sudden the aircraft carriers and destroyers took off. The battle fleet with their destroyers went back to Pearl Harbor and as I a sailor I didn't have any idea why, but the reason was they saw the submarine, an unaccountable submarine. We went back to port, tied up the ship, put the awnings up, got secure for being in the harbor. And next morning which I'm sure was Saturday morning we held a crews get together on the weather deck for the captain to address us about the firing practice. Every battery got an "E" except number 3 turret. An "E" for excellence and he said, I'll have to tell you later. Can we take a break. Let's see we had just gotten ready to go back out of the harbor.

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**Question:** Now how damaged was your ship?

**Answer:** There was a bomb hit on number two turret center gun. And it knocked a chunk of steel out of there I don't know how big, maybe the size of a football maybe. And part of that came right down and hit the ventilator at the edge of number one turret. And when we went in under.. to get into the turret you had to get down and crawl and you took a hold of that ventilator to get down into that hatch underneath the turret and that's where that steel hit. Number three turret took a.. took a direct hit on top of the turret. It was the one that didn't get the "E" and one of the men that I knew well enough to visit with he was killed in that turret. I don't know, other than him, I don't know, I don't know anybody else who was killed, I know who they were but only two or three people.

A friend of mine in that book back there was a mess cook at the time and out there when you are a mess cook you wear shorts and a T-shirt, that's your uniform, and an apron. And I saw him sometime after we were allowed to come out of the turret and he said as he said.. asked each other how we were doing and that kind of stuff , oh pretty good he said but I was scared to death until I went down and put on jeans, it all went away, covered up, covered up my body.. strange. One of our chief's I'm pretty sure he was a gunners mate but I'm not positive.. when the ship was going out of Pearl Harbor and the depth charges were going off or had been going off this is when we got far enough out he wouldn't stay in Chief's quarters which up in the bow of the ship below our deck, he wouldn't stay in there, he wouldn't sleep in there at night, it just scared him silly for some reason. Of course everybody was scared silly but no way he would stay in that Chief's quarters.

**Answer:** What do you want to know from now on?

**Question:** Do you remember cause you talked about being scared silly that's what Bill Ford, the gentleman we talked to in Cashmere, he said the ones that tell you they weren't scared they are lying to you he said, he had to go change his shorts, but

**Answer:** I didn't have to do that.

**Question:** Do you remember after the attack and things started to settle down, did it become life as normal real quick, what did you talk about, was there constant fear or?

**Answer:** I think most of us lost the fear.. as long as our ship was viable. I think we were just normal then, fairly normal, excited you bet, cause we didn't know what might be outside the harbor when we went outside the harbor. But I think most of us lost the fear. It tends to tie you up a little bit, but when they said they needed six guys to go out and do something, six guys went up. It didn't have to be George, Bob and Henry, people just went.

**Question:** Do you think that's from training or instinct?

**Answer:** You are trained to obey so that is part of it yes, but you want to survive to, so you do what you could to help survive. I wasn't thinking about those kinds of feelings at the time you know, but was I scared, you bet I was scared, but they said do it so we did it.

**Question:** I hear you describe your gunnery team where you are the primer, somebody is loading the sack, I mean it sounds like this team, this group of people?

**Answer:** That's the right way to go when you man the turret. You go to your job, yep.

**Question:** Was it the same people with you in the turret all the time, I mean was that kind of a group of people you knew?

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**Answer:** Yeah, turret one was manned by division one sailors. We all went to the turret.

**Question:** Do you see those guys at the reunions?

**Answer:** I have in the past but I don't, Butterball is the only one I saw that I remembered and there may have been other men but if they came over with other men they tend to stick together and if you didn't go to looking for somebody from the Tennessee how in the heck would you know, see it on his hat, that's about all.

**Question:** So when you left Pearl Harbor, you were headed to,

**Answer:** Bremerton, the navy yard, we had to get the guns fixed. Turret three had to be fixed. I presume there was some damage in the deck from the planes shooting. But it wouldn't be very severe because there was three inch teak wood on the weather deck and it wouldn't have been bad enough they would've had to fix it. They did have to change the guns and they did that, they changed the turrets, number three turret had to be rebuilt and our turret had.. didn't have any damage just where that one gun had been hit and that was number two turret so very little damage to us.

**Question:** How long did it take you to get from Pearl Harbor to Bremerton?

**Answer:** I think it was five days, but I'm guessing. I know I was at sea at Christmastime so from the seventh to sometime to get out of the harbor and then maybe it took longer because we may have taken a zig zag course you know.

**Question:** Do you remember if they were running hard or were they?

**Answer:** I didn't have anything to do with the engines only time I know is if the bow went under and water washed our deck, it did that once in awhile.

**Question:** You were out at sea for Christmas. Christmas on the ship what was that like?

**Answer:** Pretty quiet, that Christmas, usually we had a good time, there was a lot of stuff available to eat and Horse around with. People got gifts ahead of time but this time we just, I don't even remember what it was like. Not having been a very big fan of Christmas it didn't bother me one way or the other. Some of the fellows suffered from that.

**Question:** Homesick?

**Answer:** Yeah.

**Question:** Do you remember what guys talked about if you were sitting around having a smoke or whatever? About home or sports or?

**Answer:** The guy I mentioned, Red, I liked to go with him, we'd go get coffee and stand on the weather deck for hours and he'd tell me about living in Alabama. I was just fascinated. He come from an Alabama family. He come from an abusive father. His sister did something, didn't suit the family, and the father beat up on Red. Cause he's the one who logically would've done it you know. So he didn't even ask, he just gave him a beating, until he left home as a kid and he went to stay with the relatives somewhere away from Alabama, Birmingham, Alabama. But he was a fascinating storyteller to me anyway. We were in Los

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Angeles, brand new, before the war started, brand new sailors. We went into a town in downtown Los Angeles and there was a bar, just like a drinking bar, and we sat in a couple seats, and the bar ran down here and on the end was a black man and when Red saw him, he said come on let's go. And we went outside and I said what the heck is the matter with you? He said I'm not going to eat anywhere there is a nigger and he felt that way and do you know what he did aboard ship, he'd go visit with those guys that were mess people for the officers. That's who he would talk to when he got homesick he'd go talk to them. Amazed the hell out of me but he got over that. He was a different man the last few times I saw him.

**Question:** Was he the one that ended up in Bremerton with you when you?

**Answer:** He was the guy after I got married said I'm signing up for long distance and hazardous duty, why don't you sign up.. go with me? I knew my ship wouldn't be there long and I wouldn't be with Betty long so I might as well take the excitement of the long distance and hazardous duty being twenty one years old. And they wouldn't take him he was only twenty, but they took me because I was twenty one. He left the Tennessee and went to a destroyer escort and was killed in the Philippines and I knew that because he had gotten married. He married a woman from San Francisco, a bar.. a bar woman, tougher than nails and really a handsome woman and older than he was so she could tell him what to do, but they got along pretty well when I was around them, and for some way I got a hold of her after the war and Betty and I was living in Oklahoma where there was a Navy discharge center. We were discharging central United States sailors. And I got a hold of her some way and she told me she was on her way to Alabama to see Red's family. Last I've heard. Interesting. I would guess he had the ten thousand-dollar life insurance that most people had and that went to her and she was going to do something for the family as she saw the need. I don't know that but she went back apparently. She was one tough broad. Don't think she wasn't. He said they went to a big fancy restaurant in San Francisco, and the waiter come and took their order and brought it and when she took a bite of hers it wasn't hot. So she called him and said this is not warm go back and get me a new ration. So he went out and came back and she took a bite and went whist and wiped it all over the floor and got up and walked out. He said I don't know what in the heck was going to happen to me. Bunch of good sailors.

**Question:** What was Bremerton like when you came steaming in there?

**Answer:** Bremerton was a.. navy town because the yard had been there for years and there was a.. an entertainment place for sailors, Craven Sailor, is what I think was the name of it and they had dances and meals, special food and stuff like that. And that's where we run into Betty. Go down there at night to dance see the girls, there was Betty and her sister, so saw the girls and eventually took one home with me.

**Question:** Do you remember how you met her cause I assume there were a lot of women there and ?

**Answer:** Eddie and I were sitting at a table and here were these two girls sitting over here and he went over and asked one of them to dance. I wasn't much of a dancer, and he danced with Betty and pretty soon he come back to the table and said you ought to go get a dance so I guess I danced with her. Anyway we got together we were talking together and Eddie made arrangements to meet her in two days, we had to stay aboard ship for one day and we met her again. And this time I danced with her and we took her home, her sister wasn't with her this time, the two of us took her home and her dad wasn't.. not very happy having been a sailor himself in World War I but he didn't kill us. And he said to her its bad enough coming home with one sailor let alone two sailors. And I don't know what happened from then on. I kept going up to her house and it was wartime you know, and there was no

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housing. All these people come to work in the navy yard and building temporary housing type stuff and her father and family came to Bremerton from Missouri. Because she had an uncle Bill there and they all moved into the same little house and next door was Uncle Red and Jim, so it was a Wagoner community right there, and I would come up to get her and if I remember right, you can correct me on this, Betty, if you want to. I think I had to go in the house any time I came there I had to go in the house and we just started dating. Didn't have a car, so if we wanted to do anything we'd walk from the house downtown and down to this town, there was two towns, Cal something. Go down there and drink a chocolate malt, big time and we'd hold hands and we'd only be out for two hours and we'd go walking and looking at the stores and talking, but we pretty well stuck close to home and when it come time for Betty to be home she was home. And of course I had to go into the navy yard and then the navy yard was right around the corner from home probably four blocks or five blocks so it was a snap.

**Question:** Did you ever go back to the dance club then or once you started dating you went other places away from

**Answer:** We probably did at least once. I wasn't much of a dancer, and I've got a girl why would I go back to the dance? And Betty was nobodies dummy even if she was pretty young.

**Question:** And you are now about nineteen or twenty at this point?

**Answer:** I was twenty two.

**Question:** You're an old man compared to a lot of the sailors.

**Answer:** Yeah. I enlisted in '40 so I was 20 and this was two years later, I believe I was twenty two.

**Question:** So how long were you in Bremerton?

**Answer:** Well, this was our second time back to Bremerton.

**Question:** Oh.

**Answer:** We had repaired the ship and there was a call for the battle fleet to go to the Battle of the Coral Sea, way down south. So we took off from Bremerton, ship was repaired, and went to the Coral Sea area. I never did see any battle because it was almost all airplanes. And we went back to San Francisco we were at sea for 29 days, left San Francisco, refurbished the ship, the food, I helped carry food from the freezers and we were getting pretty damned low. And when we got the ship reloaded came the Battle of Midway and the battle fleet went out from San Francisco towards Alaska and we.. it got cold and dank. Everything fogged over, and the battleships had two little scout planes and launching ramp that used some kind of propellant that'd shoot them off and they sent them out to scout and couldn't use the radio, against the rules, never did see them and we were told to come up on deck and keep an eye open and find them. Never did see them again. And then when that was over went back to Bremerton because they were going to put double bottoms on the Tennessee and double bottoms meant they were putting another sheet of steel out here roughly four feet from the side of the ship down somewhere so if a torpedo hit it it would explode somewhere outside of the ship, instead of inside the ship and that was a long job. Took us off ship, put us in barracks, so we were bored out of our minds, wasn't anything to do aboard ship except stand watches the yardmen working in there. And so I didn't miss

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anything, when I left the ship was in dry-dock being repaired. The only thing I missed was going away from Betty and that was, we got married on November 11, and I left on the train on December 31<sup>st</sup>, that's not very long, and went to Washington D.C.

**Question:** How long had you know her before you got engaged?

**Answer:** From August to November.

**Question:** Did her dad like you by now?

**Answer:** We stayed away from him. When we got married Eddie went with us and her sister. They stood up with us with.. at the preacher. Her dad was always nice to me. He was never rude or tough or anything. Good guy.

I went to Washington D.C. alone.. into a strange situation. I was put into a dormitory barracks for sailors who were on assignment, but hadn't been assigned. And that was I can't remember the name of the station in Washington, across the river from the capital. I set in there for a week or two just waiting. There wasn't anything for me to do, I had to go pick up cigarette butts or something like that. Some guy came into tell me. I was gunners mate second class by then. And then one day I got an order to report to the office of naval intelligence and a.. not the pentagon it was somewhere downtown. How the heck I got there, I have no idea, I must have taken a cab, cause I was rich then, I was making money, got married, got \$37.50 marriage allowance, plus \$57 for being a second class gunners mate. But I got over there and they told me to go into Washington D.C., find a room, place to stay, and report to that office every morning. So I did that for.. I found a room, in Georgetown and it was a room that there was a fire chief and his wife lived there and they rented their spare rooms to transients like me, there was a couple of women there and me and I think there were two men. And it was within walking distance of the naval office of intelligence so I could walk over there. And I'd go in and we'd sit around and I suppose an officer would talk to us and one day a senior officer and I don't remember if he was a captain, admiral, or what, but he had a lot of gold and he got me in the office and began to talk to me about what would I do if. And they are talking about fighting strangers on the ground, not on the sea, and they uncovered a table covered with guns, all kinds of hand guns. And there was a notice on that table in amongst those guns, they were guns that had been picked up by the Chicago Police Department and given to the navy. All kinds of 45's, 22s, 38s, hand guns you know and I thought that was fantastic. I had never seen those kinds of guns, and they asked me what I'd do and how I'd perform and this kind of stuff and apparently I was scared enough they thought well he is going to be alright.

And after another two or three days they told me to get a civilian suit and meet.. go down to such and such a corner, street corner and wait there and don't bring anything with you except your toothbrush and that kind of stuff. And there will be an army car come by with an army man in it and he will stop and you give him a secret signal, what do you call those, a password, and here it is, and you go with him and he will take you to a training camp. So I bought the damned suit and standing on the corner and I looked to see who was going to shoot me next and there was another guy standing down there on the corner 50 yards from me or 50 feet. And he was twitching and a turning the same way I was and here come an army vehicle with two or three men in it and a driver leaned out the door and said hey you guys you going with me, you supposed to go with me? Password, my eye, that was naval intelligence. And he took us down to a camp in Virginia somewhere, where they trained us in the use of small arms, explosives, mortars, sixty one mortar, sixty one millimeter, and eighty I think it was, two different mortars. And we used them to blow up a house. The group I was with used them to blow up a house out there in the woods. We hit it with the mortars and then went in and put dynamite and TNT charges in it, taught us hand to hand combat, a guy from Norway was doing that, a Norwegian.