

Louis H. Parker

Tape 1 of 1

Louis H. Parker WW_248

Question: To start with let's get your name, and if you could spell it for me so we can get it on tape.

Answer: Yes, it's Louis H. Parker. That's L-o-u-i-s- H. P-a-r-k-e-r.

Question: And, you're a Navy veteran?

Answer: Yes, World War II and Korea.

Question: And, were you from Tacoma originally?

Answer: Yes, uh huh.

Question: And when were you born?

Answer: March 29, 1926. I went in the Navy the day I was 17. Actually, I signed up the day before. I was sworn in the day I was 17 and left for boot camp the next day.

Question: What year was that?

Answer: 1943.

Question: '43 was when you went in?

Answer: Yes, uh-uh. Actually, my father died in the end of December in '41, so I lost all interest in school, and I went to work in the shipyards. I had an uncle that got my into the pipe fitters union, so I became a helper, then a trainee. I was a full journeyman pipe fitter in the shipyard building the CVEs down there. Then I left that, pretty good paying job, to go to \$21 a month in the Navy.

Question: So when you were still in high school when Pearl Harbor occurred, then, huh?

Answer: Yes.

Question: Do you remember that day?

Answer: No. I just can't recall it.

Question: Does, when you did hear about it, did you know where Pearl Harbor was even?

Answer: Well, I had a brother that was in the Navy, and so I pretty much followed him. Bud went in the Navy in 1936, and he was on the light cruiser Nashville, he was on the Vagadosa Tug, and he was on the Bushnell, which was a submarine tender, so I kind of followed him along like that. I knew where Pearl...Honolulu was, you know, but I never paid much attention Pearl Harbor, though.

Question: Was there a big change in Tacoma right after it happened?

Louis H. Parker

Tape 1 of 1

Answer: Um, I, I can't recall that it did. I went to work in the shipyards in March of '42, so it was right after the war. You know, we started building the baby Flat Tops down there, the CVE, and my uncle was in the union and so he got me in. I'm surprised too, at only 15, but at that time they were looking for anybody. And it was a great job, though. I really liked it. The money was good. It was an exciting job.

Question: So did you, now you were a ship fitter?

Answer: A pipe fitter. And I wound up installing a saltwater evaporator in the engine rooms in all the CVEs, and so I, that was kind of light work. You know, you weren't handling the big pipe, like when I first went in there I was out on the ways? And those are rather big pipes and they put me on the pipe bending machine, and so I finally wound up on the saltwater evaporators, and those were more small tubing, you know. So, it was a fun job.

Question: Did, being 15 and working the shipyard, you must have been pretty, you must have been pulling in pretty good money for a 15-year-old.

Answer: Oh, you bet. And, um, I can't remember what our salary was at that time. It was a couple hundred dollars a month, I think. And I could work all the overtime I wanted. But we built some AOGs. Those are the small gasoline tankers, then we built a couple of tube transports, but I worked mostly on the CVEs, though. The Prince Williams class that went, and most of them were used as ferries, then they went over the Great Britain and were used over there.

Question: hmmm,hmmm. That was basically, it was basically a cargo ship...

Answer: Yeah. They were C-3 hulls that were converted, where the Kaiser job was from, designed from the keel up as a carrier. The Kaiser was a little bit faster and could carry a few more planes than the Prince William class, but they were basically the same one. The British used them as attack carriers, much like we used the Kaiser jobs as an attack carrier. And I always kind of wanted to wind up on a carrier, you know, when I got in the Navy, but I didn't.

Question: So, but your intention was to enlist whenever you could?

Answer: Oh, sure. Yeah. Oh, yeah. Like my brother, because he was in the Navy, and every time he came home he always brought me a hat to wear, and that kind of thing. OH, yeah, I mean, that's all I wanted to do was join the Navy. You know, the fleet used to come into Tacoma in Pre-war days, and I think I was on every pre-war battleship that ever was in Tacoma, and they'd had destroyers tie up under the 11th Street dock. I can still remember one day we were down there at lunchtime and they were frying hamburgers and onions. Oh, that smelled so good. When we would go on a battleship, we would make for the bakeshop, because it always gave us cookies, or something like that. That was fun. We'd go every year that they were in there. We'd try to visit every single ship, though. And you could normally do it then, too. People used to line up for blocks to go out and visit the ships. But, you know, at that time it was an adventure. Now when a ship comes in, it's kind of old hat. Everybody's been in the Navy, but not back in those days.

Question: So that was back when the ships were still white, 'cause they weren't painted gray until '41, right?

Louis H. Parker

Tape 1 of 1

Answer: Oh, no, no, they were always a very pale, pale gray. They weren't white, they just looked white. And they were, they were shiny, too. They were wiped down, they were very well maintained. But then that's why you had, you had a lot of deck crew, and so that's what the job was, was to keep the battleship spotless.

Question: So when you enlisted and you, where did you go, did you go to boot camp first, or did you go...

Answer: Oh, yeah. I went to boot camp. Farragut, Idaho. Company 214, and then I wound up with Scarlet Fever, and graduating Company 255 in July, and we took our whole company and we were sent by train down to San Diego, and they assigned us to an anti-aircraft battery, and land based 90 mm gun. We were going to replace all the Marine anti-aircraft gunners that were with CBs, and so they were training 40 mm and 90 mm gun crews throughout the U.S. And we trained at Pacific Beach, and we were issued uniforms, knives, and I've got a book on the Japanese land army, several books on the 90 mm gun. So when we finished, they sent us to San Francisco, we boarded a troop train, went all the way down to New Orleans to get an LST to go to Pearl Harbor. We got to Pearl Harbor. They broke our battery up. They never said one reason why they did that. They broke our battery, disbanded it, reassigned us all. I went to yeoman school in Pearl Harbor, then I went to the flag of Commander Cruiser's Pacific and then finally to the San Francisco. So, it was odd way to get around to get onto the San Francisco.

Question: Where did you join the San Francisco?

Answer: At Pearl Harbor. Um, the minute I got put in the flag, though, at Pearl Harbor, I started agitating to get aboard ship, 'cause I was 17. I wanted to go to war. So anyway, the first ship that came in was the Canberra, brand new, and they said, Oh, we can't put you on that. We'll put you on the next one. The next one was the San Francisco, and that was the best deal. Later on, as it turned out, the, I was on the Wichita then, and the Canberra got torpedoed and we towed the Canberra, so that was kind of interesting. So I reported aboard the San Francisco on March the 8th, 1944.

Question: What was your rating?

Answer: I was a Yeoman Striker at that time, and when I first went aboard ship, I was assigned to the engine room. And being a yeoman, we kept all the records of all the machinery for the ship, and the log room also had all the gauges for all the fuel oil tanks, and the oil king and what we called the water king was in there all the time because they were shifting fuel and water, saltwater from one tank to another, as needed, and it was an interesting job. I stood general quarters in the engine room, though. I was a telephone talker. My regular underway watch was on the bridge, and I was, the um, San Francisco had an open bridge, and in the center of that was a platform, and the wheel was there and the compass, and what we called an enunciator. And that was an instrument that recorded the number of revolutions the ship had to make in order to maintain a certain speed. So I was a telephone talker, sound powered telephone. I was connected to the engine room, so the officer of the deck would say, JD talker, tell the engine room to stand by to make 22 knots, so I'd say, Hello, engine room, bridge. Stand by to make 22 knots, 165 revolutions, or something like that. When he'd say, Execute, I would tell the engine

Louis H. Parker

Tape 1 of 1

room, Engine Room, Bridge, execute, and then I would dial in 165 revolutions on this machine. And so being on the bridge, though, was just fantastic, because the officer of the deck was always there, the junior officer of the deck, the Captain was there a good part of the time, the executive officer, and the quarter master, and so you had view of all the ship, the what was going on. All of the TBS between the various ships of the task group came in over the loudspeaker so you knew everything that was going on. It was just great.

Question: So now when you left Pearl Harbor and the San Francisco, where did you first steam to?

Answer: We went down to New Guinea. We were involved in the landing at Hollandia And I was still 17 at that time, and I look some of the boys now at 17, or the girls, and think, Gosh, but that was the first action. And then from there we were involved with the retaking of Guam and Saipan And Tinian And the San Francisco was one of those ships that operated both bombardment and with the task group, with the carriers. We bombarded at Saipan, Tinian, and Guam, then we went back to the task force and we were with the task force until Okinawa. So we were one of the few pre-war ships that continued to operate as a first line cruiser throughout the war. Most of the older cruisers like the Indianapolis and the Portland and the rest of them wound up with Macarthur's fleet over in the Philippines. But it was interesting being on the 'Frisco, because we did, you know, we did two things. And we were a support ship. For example, a task group was normally made up of two fleet carriers, two Essex class carriers, two CDLs, couple of battleships, three or four cruisers, either heavy or light, and then 14, 15, 16 destroyers on the outside. And we had four task groups, and so we always, when we were going to an objective, you had these four task groups and they always operated beyond 25 or 30 miles beyond each other, because the TBS had a voice range of about 25 miles, and so as to not interfere the other task group, the had to be that much further apart. And so, what you're looking at is 100 ships, practically, in the task force. SO, it was an exciting time.

Question: You said your battle station was in the engine room?

Answer: Yes. Uh, huh.

Question: And what was your general quarters station, what was your position there?

Answer: I was a telephone talker.

Question: Oh, so you were a telephone talker...

Answer: Yes, I was a talker on the bridge connected to the engine room, and then during general quarters, the yeoman that was in charge of the office then was on the bridge, then I went in the engine room then. And so I relayed any orders to the engine room officer, and I stood right beside all of these dials and everything, you know, that gave you all the pressure, and everything, you know.

Question: Your berthing compartment, were you with the, did you sleep with the engineers?

Louis H. Parker

Tape 1 of 1

Answer: Yes, I slept with the engineers. The furthest compartment aft and the lowest compartment, right over the screws. And if you don't think that wasn't....the vibration, noise, and everything. Most of the time, though, the yeomen slept in their offices because the peacetime complement of the San Francisco was 550 officers and men. We had almost 1200 on there during the war. And so you slept wherever you could. And the reason I didn't sleep in the office of the log room, because that was open 24 hours a day because of them having to shift water and fuel, you know, to, between the different tanks.

Question: So on the San Francisco, did you use hammocks?

Answer: Did I what?

Question: Did you use hammocks to sleep in?

Answer: Oh, no. We had bunks. We were issued hammocks and the last thing that I remember about my hammock was when I dumped in on the San Francisco. I never saw it again. No. We were still issued hammocks in '43. Never slept in one. Not even in boot camp. We had regular bunk beds.

Question: Made life a little easier for you, then.

Answer: Yeah. Then in um, July of 1943, the San Francisco came back to Mayer? Island for a short overhaul, so then another yeoman and I, Striker, we got transferred over to the Flag. And the Flag allowance of Admiral C.T. Joy, and you know what a flag is. It's like a general's staff, you know the clerks in there. So then, we went over to the Wichita, and we were on the Wichita until November when the San Francisco came back again. The Wichita was the last pre-war cruiser built, and it was a single ship unit, and so it was kind of an odd ship, but had a lot of experience on her. Uh, we were in, during the Philippines, we were on Formosa when the Canberra got torpedoed. It was in our formation, and so we were ordered to take it under tow, and so we had to. This was at nighttime and there was really quite a heavy sea rolling, and so we pulled in front of the Canberra and then drifted down to it, shot a line over to it, and then the crew over there, they had to power. They had been torpedoed in the engine room, so then they had to pull the rope over, hook it onto their cable, and then we winched the cable over and then hooked them up. And several of the people got, enlisted people got citations because they did such a job. It was really a great towing job under rather difficult conditions. Then the next day, I think it was, the Houston got torpedoed, and so we were part of the group when we were trying to lure the Japanese fleet out. The Boston took the other crew, so it would be, Houston to tow, and we had the Canberra, well then the fleet tugs came up and took our tow, then, and that was kind of an exciting time, and then also off the Philippines, then, when the Japanese broke through at San Bernardino Straits and got in with the CVE fleet, we were with Halsey up north at Luzon And so then when Halsey turned around and went to their help, we were part of the battle line which included all the battleships and heavy cruisers. Well then they detached us along with the New Orleans, our sister ship, and the Sante Fe and Mobile and 10 destroyers and we went up north then, and we sank a damaged Jap carrier by gunfire, and then we had a firefight with a couple of destroyers later on and we sank one, and then turned around and came back. So I finally got into some actual surface action, too, and when I went over to the Flag, we operated, our battle station was maintaining the surface plotting board and the air plotting board for the Admiral, because he wanted to know everything that was going on. So you've seen

Louis H. Parker

Tape 1 of 1

these TVs where the enlisted man is standing behind the board marking these attacks coming in. That's what we did. Do you what a surface plotting board is?

Question: mmm. hmmm.

Answer: You know that it follows the track of the ship and you've got a paper and a light on it, and you mark every turn of the ship and you mark every time you fire, and so it was just fascinating doing that. I got to get out and see the carrier being taken under fire. It was burning and when the carrier went under, this big plumb of smoke just kind of drifted away all by itself, you know, because the carrier was gone. So then the Jap destroyer was totally on fire when I saw it. It was dark and it was burning from stem to stern. You just can't imagine, though, how a ship can burn like that. It was an interesting job.

Question: Did you finish off the Jap destroyer?

Answer: Yeah.

Question: So did you recover survivors?

Answer: Oh, no, no. This was at nighttime, so we turned around. Admiral Deboy was on the Santa Fe and he was senior to Admiral Joy. Admiral Joy wanted to go on north after the fleeing Japanese destroyers, but Deboy still wanted to go back. He felt like we were getting low on ammunition, and so we turned around. Well then the Japanese battleships that had been with that group had turned around and came back for the destroyer Held? So if we had kept going north, we would run into the two Japanese battleships. These had been the ones that had been converted to part battleship and part carrier. There were two of those.

Question: When you were on the San Francisco in New Guinea, that was your first action, wasn't it? And being a phone talker, you pretty much sat down in the hole and just heard everything that was going on, right? You were down in the engine room?

Answer: Yes, at GQ, yes.

Question: So you heard. When you were in general quarters...

Answer: Oh, yes, the bridge was constantly keeping us informed of what was going on.

Question: So were there lookouts on your phone system also?

Answer: No, we were connected directly to the bridge, and so the bridge talker kept us informed of what was going on. Because then I relayed all of that right to the engineering officer.

Question: Were you doing support for the gunfire support for the...

Answer: No, we were operating with the carriers at that time. We only, when I was on there, we only bombarded Guam, Saipan And Tinian And then Okinawa. The rest of the time we operated with the carriers. We were with the carriers when we made the sweep into the South China Sea. That's when Tokyo Rose said, Oh, we've

Louis H. Parker

Tape 1 of 1

got the American fleet bottled up. I'll bet she was sure happy once we got out of there. And um, I was fortunate, I think, because we never got hit, you know, in the entire time that I was one, and you know, we were under a lot of attack, you know, with aircraft, and the same way on the Wichita, when we sank the Jap destroyer, we got straddled one time, but didn't get hit, though.

Question: So the Jap destroyer actually was a gunfight.

Answer: Oh. Yeah. What happened was that we were trying to go north and every time we would turn away from the Japanese destroyer to go north, it would come back and it was a suicide mission for the Japanese destroyer, and it would veer toward us and then, of course, and we would go toward it and start shooting, and he was trying to stop us from trying to go after the rest of the ships. When we first started shooting at that destroyer, we think there were two pips, and we think that one disappeared and we think that maybe some of our first salvos might have hit it and sunk it, but the air boys, the flyers got credit for it. The destroyer that we sank was the Hesasuki and that was one of their more modern destroyers. The carrier was the Chiyoda, which was a converted sea plane tender.

Question: So were you up on the bridge in this?

Answer: During that time I was in flag plot?

Question: So you were up in the, you were like combat information or something.

Answer: Yeah. Actually we were above that. On the wings of the bridge, the open bridge was above us, and we were on the flag bridge, and we maintained the air plotting board, the surface plotting board for the Admiral, and right outside us was two quad 40 mm guns, and the same way on the San Francisco. So that we could look out the door and see what was going on. The Admiral always wanted to be out there to, and the Chief of Staff who was a Captain, they were as interested, too, in going and seeing what was going on. Admiral Joy, before he made Admiral, he was captain of the Louisville in the early battles in the Guadalcanal area, and so he was a cruiser, man, he really wanted to go after the rest of the Japanese ships, but Deboy was a little bit senior to him. Both Rear Admirals.

Question: So did you sneak out and get a look at the, what was going on between you and the destroyer?

Answer: Oh, yeah, yeah.

Question: So what, were they just firing their 5-inch guns?

Answer: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. They were shooting us, and...

Question: So what did that sound like when one of those came, did it sound like they say in the movies, when a shell comes it at you?

Answer: hmmm. I can't really recall. I might not have been outside when we were straddled, either. I can't remember.

Question: So you felt your main guns when they went off?

Louis H. Parker

Tape 1 of 1

Answer: Oh, the 8-inch guns really kind of made a rumbling sound, but our 5-inch guns, though, they made a crack! And on the San Francisco, our flag officer was right under one of the 5-inch mounts, and every time that thing fired it was just crack! And dust and paint would flicker down from the ceiling. I never minded the 8-inch guns, and I'd been on the bridge on call fire when we'd been bombarding the islands, and I never, the 8-inch gunfire never bothered me at all.

Question: And then you were right next to quad 40 mm?

Answer: Yeah, yeah. We had two quads. One on each side of the bridge on the San Francisco and the Wichita both.

Question: And they were anti-aircraft, were they?

Answer: Yeah. Yeah. They were the best short-range anti-aircraft that we had. You know, we had lots of 20 mm, but their range wasn't very good, though. Wasn't very far, and they just didn't have much hitting power, either.

Question: so did you deal with lots of air attack?

Answer: Oh, yeah.

Question: So they would be going, they'd be hammering away during this.

Answer: In a fleet, in a task group, it's just amazing though how many guns we actually had. If you, the San Francisco had two quad 40s, two twin 40s, it had two quad 40s and two twin 40s. And you can imagine that every other ship, the battleships especially and the carriers, you know, we just put up an absolute curtain of fire on these, on the Jap planes as they came in. In the earlier part of the war when I got in, the pilots I think were much better. During Okinawa, some of those pilots could hardly fly. They'd only soloed, and so they'd come down in waves toward Okinawa and they'd see a picket ship and 10 of them would dive down. Well they should've flown on down to try to pick off the ammunition ships, the oilers, the trooper ships and everything else, but they weren't very good pilots, and you could certainly tell, though, the better pilots when you were shooting at them, the way that the plane was reacting. And in our task group one time, the Enterprise got hit, and boy, that plane just came Plat! on the deck. I mean, there was no hesitation. The Belleau Woods got hit, but the plane came down and I guess he misjudged it, made a little loop and then came down on the deck. But his bomb didn't go through because he didn't hit hard enough, but after Okinawa, though, some of those pilots were just so poor that they didn't know what they were doing. I think I got more hours solo than what a lot of those pilots had.

Question: So you never had to come across a strike on the San Francisco, huh?

Answer: We had some close ones, though. WE had a modified GQ one day, and I was on the 'Frisco looking aft. I was outside the door and this quad 40 was right here. And we were overcast, there were some clouds and everything, and these was an IFF, and I don't know how it works, but that's a friendly messy job, I guess a radio signal that came into the fleet. This Japanese broke out of the clouds right over us, and this quad 40, the fire control director must have seen it the minute it came out of the clouds. This quad 40 went straight up and shot and shot the plane

Louis H. Parker

Tape 1 of 1

in half. Bomb and fuselage went on one side, the tale on the other side. Another time, a Jap was coming in on our port quarter, and we were shooting at it with a 5-inch and the 40s and the 20s and then all of a sudden you could just see a whole stream of 40s go over the cowling. It probably took off his head, and then the plane came out a little ways and did a flip and blew up. We were over in (inaudible) one time. That's where we, you could re-oil and take on ammunition up at Okinawa, and we started taking ammunition, an attack came down, and we shot more ammunition getting out of there than what we had taken on, but that, you know, that's what happens. I remember this one time, though, everybody gets trigger-happy. Well, this Jap attack was coming in, so the CVE that was anchored over here launched an F-4 or an FM, and the LST right next to it shot it down as soon as it got off the flight deck. You know, this guy was so trigger-happy.

Question: Did the, uh, when the fleet was moving forward like this, you said it was a place to get ammunition and oil, was, did you enter, was there just ammunition and oil ships just waiting for you or were there port facilities, or?

Answer: Oh, no. They were anchored. You had to tie up along side of them, and they would transfer the ammunition right out of the holes of the other ship. Ordinarily, we would operate out of Eniwetok or Uliihe We'd go on a strike that would take maybe three weeks, and then we'd come back and re-ammo and get supplies and everything. The tankers would meet us, if we were going on a strike, the tanker group would come out. They would take on fuel from a tanker, we'd have a destroyer alongside of us that we would be refueling, there'd be a cruiser on the other side of the tanker and he'd be refueling the destroyer over there. And then the same way with the carriers, you know. They'd pull up alongside of a tanker and they'd be feeding another destroyer on the other side. It was quicker doing it that way then to have the individual destroyers run up to the tanker. Once you got connected, 'cause it took a long time to get up with the tanker and get the hoses all connected, but when you came back into port, like into Uliihe they had repair ships. They had destroyer tenders, they had repair ships, they had all the supply ships and everything so they could take care of any immediate repairs that had to be done, but we were so flush with ships that we could send them back to Pearl Harbor and never miss them. There was always another ship to take its place. You know, we wound up with so many; you know we stopped building carriers before the war ended because we had so many of them. On the San Francisco, we were down to 3 SOC scout floatplanes. We had five pilots. We didn't need 5 pilots. We had a surplus of pilots.

Question: Did the Uliihe, was it. When you going into Uliihe for repairs, that was a secure area, was it?

Answer: Yeah.

Question: Was there anything, Uliihe, was it like, could you go on shore?

Answer: Yes, we had Mog Mog Island on there. That was the famous recreational island, and you could go in there and they'd give you two beers or two cokes and you could swim and play baseball and everything. But they were all repair ships. They had no dockage or anything like that. You had to go back to Pearl Harbor for that. And whenever you did that, Pearl Harbor normally would update radar, and then the major repairs, if you were going to do anything, you'd be sent back to Mire Island or Bremerton, to the West Coast ports.

Louis H. Parker

Tape 1 of 1

Question: Do Mog Mog Island, was that any type of relaxation?

Answer: Well, no. You go there and swim. It had a nice beach. The reef was probably out maybe a couple of hundred yards and the water between the end of the beach and the reef out there would be maybe two feet to eight feet deep, and so you could go swimming through the coral and the fish would come up to you and then flip away, and guys would play baseball and get drunk. It's just amazing how much beer they could get hold of, you know. But it was kind of fun, though, but it was always nice to get back to the ship, because you had, you could take a shower, you know you had, the ship was clean and it didn't have air condition, but it had blowers and everything.

Question: so it was hotter on a ship back then?

Answer: Oh, yeah. Yeah. The engine room, when we would go to GQ, they would shut off the blowers, and you know, they sucked outside air into the engine room, so when we started shooting, anti-aircraft or anything else, they would shut off the blowers because they didn't want to suck smoke down into the engine room. So then the temperature really went high. And but, you learn to use it. You just got used to it. We went to GQ one night, we were in GQ all the next day and the next night and the next morning before we came out of general quarters. Well, I would get relieved on the telephone and lay down on the steel grating and go to sleep. You know, use my hat for a pillow. And they would open the armor deck was about 4 inches thick, I think, on the 'Frisco. They'd open the armor deck and pass down food and then close it again. But at that time, it just didn't seem like it was a big deal. Now I don't know whether I could take it or not. But, I didn't really like being in the engine room. I wanted to be up topside and seeing what was going on.

Question: So when you went to general quarters when you heard the, your general quarters alarm go off, you were in the Pacific for how long?

Answer: Couple of years.

Question: so after a couple of years of whenever you hear that sound, if you're watching a movie, say, after '45 and out of the corner on TV you heard a general quarters alarm go off, are you on automatic, the first thing is like....

Answer: Oh, no. That never bothered me.

Question: Never did?

Answer: No. um, I was always an easy one to wake up on watch, too. You know, they would send a messenger down to bridge to wake the relief up, and the messenger, couple times said, Wow, I touch you and you're awake, and some of the guys you have to shake and practically call them out of the bunk in order to get them to get up, but I was always an easy one. GQ would go off, you know. It never bothered me. You know, air defense, too. Have you ever heard air defense. When they blow air defense, it starts out ta ta, ta, da, da, da, da. Well, general quarters goes da, da, da, da, da, da. Air defense just sends a chill up and down your spine, because of the high note that it starts out at. That always got everybody going.

Question: When I was, we just had an alarm.

Louis H. Parker

Tape 1 of 1

Answer: Where?

Question: I as in the Navy in the '70s, so it was just bong, bong, bong, bong. So you actually had bugle calls.

Answer: Yeah. Yeah. We had regular bugle calls. Yeah.

Question: So you had a Marine bugler?

Answer: No, he was Navy. We had a Marine detachment, of course, aboard the ship. All the heavy cruisers and battleships and they manned a couple of the 5-inch mounts and a couple of the anti-aircraft guns.

Question: so was the bugler, what type of bugle calls. Do you remember any other bugle calls?

Answer: Oh, we used to, he used to blow sweepers. I can't remember now how that went. Um, but also, they used the Boatswain's Pipe, you know. My brother was a Boatswain's Mate, so I happen to have two of his pipes.

Question: That's a real talent.

Answer: Oh, yeah.

Question: Did you ever, 'course in your position not being a Boatswain you never had to use a Boatswain's Pipe.

Answer: No.

Question: So I supposed your brother was pretty versed at it.

Answer: He had been on tugboats. He had been on the Vagadosa an old World War I tugboat, and when he made Coxswain, he went to the national. He just hated all the rules and regulations. So, later on then he got transferred to Alaska, so he was at Dutch Harbor during the attack, and he just loved that kind of a rough sea, and handling the small boats and everything, but he never liked rules and regulations. I was the exact opposite. I liked flag duty, because you knew what was going on. You know, you had to endorse all of the battle reports, all of the action reports. You had to endorse all of the court martial, everything for the ships that were under your command. And so, it was fascinating to be up on everything. I made copies of the war diary for the San Francisco and the Wichita all the time that I was on it. I've got deck logs and, I'm a saver.

Question: So your brother actually was stationed in Dutch Harbor, before it happened?

Answer: During the attack. And he was on an old 3-inch anti-aircraft gun and he gave me a fragment of a Japanese bomb that fell up there. Oh, and then he spent almost the whole war up at Dutch Harbor. Just loved that kind of duty.

Question: So, was he on an old, like a 4-stacker?

Louis H. Parker

Tape 1 of 1

Answer: No, no, he was shore-based at that time.

Question: Do did they expect that? That the Japanese would do that?

Answer: Well, the Navy knew that there was going to be an attack, you know, just like they did at Midway, and I think that they were ready for it, from what I remember seeing. Couple of years ago we took a trip to Alaska, so I went up to Dutch Harbor, because I wanted to see what it was like. Some of the buildings, the old concrete buildings are still there, and when they talk about that one mountain, Ballyhoo or something like that, it's still there. A good friend of mine, Admiral Russell, Jim Russell, from Tacoma, that died, he had a PBY squadron up there, and I used to go talk to him, and he'd say, See that black spot on that mountain, that's Ensign Brown. See that black spot, that's Lieutenant George. They had so many crashes lost so many crews because of the bad weather, you know, they'd fly into the mountainside.

Question: I was just up in Dutch Harbor.

Answer: Oh, so you know what..

Question: Yeah. It is. You see remnants of pillboxes and barracks and stuff.

Answer: Have you seen the new hotel up there? The Grand Aleutian?

Question: No.

Answer: Right where the Army base was or the Army barracks, they've got a brand new hotel. We stayed in it. It's just fabulous, you know, huge!

Question: Hard to imagine out in the middle of nowhere. So back to the Pacific and the San Francisco, now you went from there to the Wichita,

Answer: mmm, hmmm, and then back to the San Francisco when the Wichita came, when the San Francisco came back out in November, we transferred the flag back from the Wichita to the San Francisco. The San Francisco was the only one of the 7 cruisers of the New Orleans/San Francisco class that was a flagship. It wasn't built as that, but it was modified after it was built. And the, so the Admiral always like that one. It's like, um, Admiral Lee, he liked Battleship Washington, and so he spent the whole war on the Washington. He could have had one of the new Iowa's. Instead he liked apparently the flag quarters on it.

Question: Did, the San Francisco, when you went back out to it when it came back, were you in a different, were you in the same position on the Wichita or,

Answer: Yeah. The whole flag moved back.

Question: So you were still up in combat.

Answer: Yeah. Admiral Joy just moved his flag from the Wichita to the San Francisco. We never operated as a cruiser unit like they did in pre-war days. Pre-war days you had a cruiser division for the New Orleans class, plus the other three, and then, plus the Wichita, so that you had 8 ships, 2 divisions. Well, during the war, you never operated that way. The Tuscaloosa was over in the Atlantic, and the

Louis H. Parker

Tape 1 of 1

Minneapolis was down with General MacArthur, so the New Orleans and the Wichita and the San Francisco tended to operate together then. When the Tuscaloosa, then it tended to be under us, but like in pre-war days, the scouting ships were the heavy cruisers, because they could outfight anything that they couldn't outrun. And so the light cruisers were kept into the battleships, they were to take care of the destroyer attacks. But that all changed, you know, during World War II. The old concepts were thrown out. Aircraft came into being.

Question: Did the, uh, slipped my mind.

Answer: Well, after we went back to the San Francisco, then we went through the typhoon, you know, in 1944, when we lost the Monahan, Hull?, and Spence?, and that was certainly an exciting time, and thinking back on it. I was never afraid during that typhoon, you know, um, the typhoon the winds were so terrific, the ship would roll and just hang there, and then maybe come straight up again, and then roll again, and we lost the Monahan, Hull and Spence, well, we were trying to refuel, and whichever way Admiral Halsey directed the third fleet it seemed like the hurricane followed us, or else we followed it. And they, the 3 destroyers capsized, actually had pumped out salt water to take on oil and couldn't re-ballast quick enough, and so they were too light, and so they turned over. In the tanker group that was with us, one of the CVEs with the tanker group lost all power, and it went down through our formation, and it would drop down into a trough and we'd lose it on radar, and then pretty soon that thing would come up and it just went, you know, everybody had radar, and so you know, we could track it, but it was quite exciting, though. We lost two people in that storm. One sailor, just before the storm when it was making up, he got knocked against the bulkhead and died of internal injuries, and then we lost another guy came down over the, off the ladder and his feet went out from under him and he was gone. That quick. But that was an exciting storm, though. I missed the one in '45, because I'd already left the ship. I left it on April 30, and the one in '45 was June, I think. But they did more damage to our aircraft than what the Japanese did, though. Have you ever seen pictures of the interior of the Essex class carriers from that storm? One plane would break lose and then crunch, crunch, crunch, crunch, and they had fires going, they were losing people over the side of the ship, you know, trying to fight the fires, trying to tie down the aircraft. It was nasty.

Question: And how long were you inside the storm?

Answer: Oh, that must have gone on maybe for 3 days. We went through the eye of the storm, too, and that was an eerie feeling because all of a sudden the wind stopped and the sea was pretty calm, and then we hit the other side of it and then it just got ferocious again. I think we were about 3 days there. I've got the deck log and the wind speed, and everything else that we had.

Question: And what was that like when you were in the storm. What was daily life like on the ship?

Answer: Oh, um, you were hanging on. Everybody was warned not to go topside. In the mess hall, we had ropes, so that you could hang on to the ropes, and you were trying to eat, hold your tray, you know, and the ship. Like I say, the wind, the ship would roll and then maybe come to an upright position, but then would roll again, it wouldn't roll all the way over. But you survived it. We tied our chairs in the flag office; we tied our chairs to the desk so that we could type. And, you know, all

Louis H. Parker

Tape 1 of 1

the TBS communication between the ships and the task group, it was all by code. Every ship had a code name. Um, like Beaver was our task group, I think 38.1, I think Quaker was the commander of the task group. Well, he would say, Hello Steadfast, which was the code name for the San Francisco. Stop making smoke. And so, you'd get bawled out in front of all the other ships. During the storm, though we did away with all the codes because everybody was, there were so many messages coming over the TBS, and we typed all of that, and the Admiral would be standing right over your shoulder looking as you typed this, and it was so hard on the guys that we relieved each other every hour, but there was a typewriter that we used that had just an endless roll of paper so we weren't typing on like an 8 x 11 sheet, but it was a big roll. Some days, on, when you were on the flag you stood watch on the TBS for your underway watch, and we typed all the voice communication between the ships. Well, sometimes at nighttime, there wouldn't be maybe one or two talks between the ships, and then other times, like during the typhoon, you'd sit there for an hour just typing. Just without any stops. Same way in battle, um, you'd have to type everything down, and so, you know, the Admiral's looking over your shoulder, the chief of staff, and but like I say, though, that's, you got to know everything that was going on with the fleet.

Question: Did, how many kids in your family?

Answer: I have 4 boys.

Question: Brothers?

Answer: I have 4 brothers.

Question: Now where were they? There was one in the Navy,

Answer: um, just me. The other ones were too young.

Question: And then your oldest brother.

Answer: Yeah. He's passed away. The one that was in the Navy. He went in in 1936.

Question: So did you hear from your Mom quite a bit?

Answer: Yeah, but I never wrote, though. You know, there wasn't much to write about. Hello, Mom, you know, I'm feeling great, and the weather's great, the ship's great, and that's about all you can say. I didn't have a girlfriend, so I didn't have anybody to write to.

Question: So was mail call a big thing, or wasn't that big a thing for you?

Answer: pardon me.

Question: Getting mail from home. Was that a important?

Answer: Yeah. No, because I could hardly get in the Navy and I was doing what I wanted to do, so um, I never missed home. I can remember boot camp. We slept in bunks, double bunks, and I can remember this one guy. I slept in the top bunk, and I can remember this older guy crying one night. He so missed home that

Louis H. Parker

Tape 1 of 1

he was moaning. I felt sorry for him. 'Cause it was big excitement for me, you know. Being away from home.

Question: He was older, though.

Answer: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

Question: So, boot camp. That must have been an experience, cause you must have had people from all over.

Answer: Oh, yeah. I was in Company 214 to begin with, and we got over there in March at Farragut, Idaho, and there was snow on the ground, you know, colder than heck, and the barracks were heated, but they weren't really that good. Food was not bad, but we had to march every place in formation. You couldn't do anything and there wasn't anything to do. 'Course you kept pretty busy, though. But I wound up with Scarlet Fever and I spent 3 weeks in an isolation ward. That was terrible, so then I got put back a company, and then graduated I think July 3 or 4 then. So I was in April, May, June, so I was in 3 months in boot camp, including that stay in the hospital, though.

Question: Now everybody hears about Farragut, Idaho, and they think, Farragut, Idaho, a Navy base?

Answer: Oh, yeah.

Question: Was that just World War II?

Answer: Yeah, oh yeah. You know, it was a place that was isolated, and I imagine that the ground didn't cost very much so there was plenty of lumber, and so they decided to build it there. They had 5 camps, I think, over there. Like, I was in Camp Scott that I was in. There was Binyon, and I can't remember the other 5. I've got it at home, but they built a huge gymnasium that you drilled in when the weather was too bad outside. You drilled in that. They had swimming pools, and then they had the individual mess halls for each grinder for each camp, and then the individual barracks. I don't know how many must have been going through when we were there. I never thought about that count. But, you know, we learned a little bit about seamanship, you know tying knots, but most of it, think, was marching. We had to work the mess hall, the scullery during one period of time. We got down in the lake and rowed, we went out on target practice for part of that time. But a lot of it, though, was really just getting indoctrinated in taking orders, you know.

Question: So you didn't have. You really didn't see any ships or mockups or anything.

Answer: No. Row boats on Lake Pend Oreille. That's all we had.

Question: Was the rowboats just physical activity or was there a lesson to be learned from ...

Answer: Oh, yeah. WE were out there rowing. Yeah, oh yeah. When I went to yeoman's school over in Pearl Harbor before I got reassigned to Comcinpac and the 'Frisco, we even got sent to a telephone talker's school sound powered telephone, and that was interesting time. You know, they had all these different

Louis H. Parker

Tape 1 of 1

models and they'd flash 'em up and I think we spent two days there learning to be an operator, so when I went aboard ship, even though say, I hadn't been on a ship before, well, heck, I knew how to handle telephones and everything.

Question: Did the San Francisco. That was the last ship you were on in the Pacific during the war?

Answer: yeah. When we went back to the San Francisco at the end of November, then we were involved with the sweep in the South China Sea, then we came back and then it was Iwo Jima, and then Okinawa. Well, we bombarded at Okinawa. Our Admiral had a sector of the island. There was a lighthouse, and we knocked that over one time because we thought that the Japanese were using it for artillery observation and I left the ship then in April 30 of '45. Came back to get new construction, but I've always had a soft spot. They always say about chief petty officers, the best ship that they were ever on was the last ship. Well, my first ship, I think, was the San Francisco. The Wichita was alright, but during Korea, then I was reserved during Korea, and I got called up and was on the Mount McKinley and the El Dorado, and they were amphibious landing force command ships. I was on Admiral Keeling's flight allowance, and they just didn't begin to compare to the San Francisco.

Question: Were you back here in the states when the bomb was dropped?

Answer: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

Question: So what did you think about the atomic bomb?

Answer: Hey, I thought it was great. When I came back to the states. I got back in May, and I froze, you know, because to come in out of the Pacific. Anyway, I was regular Navy. I wanted to go back to sea, and they put me in charge of the, I was a Yeoman Third. They put me in charge of the swing shift processing people. And one night I might have 5 typists and the next night I'd have 25 and the next night none. We grabbed everybody out of the general pool to type, because we had to type cards on every incoming man, a card on every outgoing man. It was just paperwork, paperwork, and I was regular Navy, and Commander Ault was in charge of the processing center. He had won the Navy Cross on the Lexington when it was sunk. So anyway, Commander Ault, says, Parker, I want to go to sea as bad as you do. When I go, you go. Well, I spent the last 18 months in Bremerton. Hated it, hated the Navy, because you know, I was 19 when I got back, and I wanted to go to sea. So that just killed me on staying in the Navy. Commander Ault retired when the war was over, that bummer! But, who knows, I might have stayed in the Navy. I like it well enough that I went into the Reserves. I was active duty Reserves, you know. I went down every Wednesday night and I went every weekend and once a month and that, learning to steer, oh, did I tell you that. We had a couple of officers on the San Francisco that wanted us to learn how to signal both semaphore lights and steer the ship in the event that other people were killed on the bridge. So I got to steer that big old ship, you know, and there was always a helmsman right alongside of me, but we'd take the reserve destroyer out in the Sound. My brother was a first-class boson? Aid. He was a qualified helmsman. We had a chief quartermaster and then me. I was a second-class yeoman. So, it was kind of fun, though, taking it down, around Carr Inlet, but I was in the Reserves and I never objected to being called up, because that's what I was in the Reserves for. And so I

Louis H. Parker

Tape 1 of 1

spent 18 months active duty. Six months over in Korea on the Mount McKinley and the El Dorado.

Question: What was the worst day you had in World War II?

Answer: Scarlet Fever.

Question: What was the best day you had?

Answer: Probably joining the Navy. Like I say, if your ship didn't get hit, it wasn't a bad war. It's like the air, like the bomber pilots, you know. If you didn't get knocked down it wasn't a bad war. You got back and you got meals every night. I thought it was great.

Question: Well thank you for coming in and talking to us