

ANGELO CUMELLA

LINDA: Thank you for coming.

ANGELO: Thank you for asking me to come. This has been great.

LINDA: It's going to be a great project in honor of the 534.

ANGELO: Great. I'm really looking forward to that.

LINDA: For the record, you need to tell me your name and your rank. So you can just say, my name is

ANGELO: My name is Angelo Cumella. I was Storekeeper , 2nd Class, aboard the LST 534.

LINDA: When did you board the 534?

ANGELO: I believe it was in 1944, in Norfolk, Virginia. I boarded in 1944 aboard the LST 534.

LINDA: That was before you went to the Atlantic, right?

ANGELO: Yes.

LINDA: How old were you when you went into the service?

ANGELO: I think I was about 20, 21.

LINDA: Did you enlist or did you get drafted?

ANGELO: Drafted. That was in New Jersey.

LINDA: Where were you living then, New Jersey?

ANGELO: Yes.

LINDA: With your parents?

ANGELO: Yes.

LINDA: Something you sent in told me that you had brothers and sisters. How big of a family did you come from?

ANGELO: We were ten altogether. Six boys and two girls. And...quite bit of activity in our household. And it was a lot of fun.

LINDA: How many of your brothers got drafted?

ANGELO: Four. Four of us. Three in the Army, and I was the only one that went to the Navy.

LINDA: You got drafted into the Navy, or did you pick...

ANGELO: Well, by chance they just said a you a bunch on this side, goes to the Navy, that bunch on the other side will go to the Army, and whatever. You had no choice, really, at that time. But I went wherever they told me to go. Before that I was stationed at Newport as a musician. I played the drums. And I think I was there for about a year, and after that it got quite monotonous and I didn't like it. So I decided to ask for a transfer to sea duty, which was granted, and that's how I wound up on the LST 534.

LINDA: You said in some correspondence to me that you were lucky to get to the 534. Can you tell me why you used the word lucky?

ANGELO: Well, I thought because it was a small ship, and I ... the camaraderie of the crew would have been much closer than these enormous battleships and aircraft carriers. So I was quite happy with what I got.

LINDA: After it was over, are you still glad you got what you got?

ANGELO: Oh, yes. I tell you the truth, I had the best time of my life in the service. Carefree, a lot of chit chat amongst the crew. Played cards. And there were times when things got a little hectic and you kind of worried what was going on. Then soon we decided to leave for Europe.

LINDA: Tell me about that. I mean you were going over there, and...

ANGELO: Well, we were going with a big flotilla. Oh God, I betcha we were a couple a hundred ships going at one shot crossing the Atlantic. And I think that was frightful. I mean, that kinda threw me >cause I=d never been on the ocean before, and crossing, we had some scary moments with subs, the German subs. And one time, my notes (?), a couple of ships got hit and you could see the debris just floating by. And there may have been a couple of guys just going by hollering and we couldn't stop. We weren't allowed to stop. The destroyers were the only ships that stopped and took survivors aboard. But the ship itself wasn=t that great in stormy weather. I mean, you could stay at the bow, I mean at the stern of the ship, and you could watch the bow just going... it seemed like it was just rocking. And actually there were a couple of ships that just split in half. LST's. They weren't too sturdy. And whatever made it made

it. But the storms were terrible. I mean, that little thing like that just bouncing around like crazy.

LINDA: Did you get seasick?

ANGELO: Yes. Yes. But then after a while you got used to it.

LINDA: Was there anybody on board that didn't get used to it?

ANGELO: Oh yeah, lots of guys. Plenty. I mean we were just ...over the, everybody was on the side just stationed away. But, after awhile you got used to it.

LINDA: Now tell me what ... I'm just thinking, you were this musician, in a band plying drums, and next thing you know you're in the middle of high waves and storms and a German submarine attack. Tell me, that has to be fearful.

ANGELO: It was. It was really scary, believe me. You can't imagine what goes through your mind when you're in a situation like that. You're hoping that nothing happens, but then you could look astern or starboard and you can see fire going up, ships getting hit. And it's ... saying, well, what has to be has to be. And that's how you went, if you prayed on this stuff, I mean being fearful and afraid, it could get to you. Some of the guys just didn't ... didn't want to bear with it, you know? They didn't want to go off, or even go off with the ship. They just stayed in their bunk and just ... some of them cried. Scared.

LINDA: Well, you have to be thinking I may never see my Mom, my Dad, my brothers, my sisters.

ANGELO: That's true. That's true. Yeah, there were some scary nights. The days weren't too bad. It's ... when the dawn came ... this is when they mostly did their attacks was at

night. And you could hear this ... destroyers going in and out of the flotilla just blaring their horns and sending signals for what ships to move up or slow down or back up. It was scary, and then ships came close together. I mean, there was a few times when I thought we'd really collide. And, eventually we got through it.

LINDA: What did you do on board the ship.

ANGELO: Well, previous ... before I signed up, my father was in the produce business, wholesale, and we shipped a lot of stuff to retailers. So it was sort of a storekeeper's account of products that are shipped out, and receivables. And that's what I told the Navy what I'm most qualified for. And when I got aboard ship, that's what I went into the storekeeper's part of the ship. That's where I stayed. And our duty was to requisition provisions for ourselves and for other ships to supply, and give out what the cooks needed for the day every night. And keep records, and that's about what my duties were.

LINDA: Where did you get stuff to give out?

ANGELO: From other ships. Well, they had, like, big supply ships. I mean, these ships were enormous.

LINDA: So start that out, Awe would get our supplies from..

ANGELO: We would get our supplies from other ships which we needed for ourselves, and at some point, sometimes, we had to take provisions from other ships to supply other ships. So we were sort of like the taxi amongst the fleet to provide food.

LINDA Like grocery shopping today.

ANGELO: Right, yeah. And then, at times, we would eat good, I'll tell you that. ACause we were a small little ship, so we had plenty of provisions. It was good duty. The crew was great.

LINDA: Where was the storekeeper=s shop?

ANGELO: Most of ... astern. The storekeepers shop was astern of the ship. Way down I'd say maybe three decks down. And that's where we had our store=s stock.

LINDA: So you didn't see a lot of light of day.

ANGELO: Not much during the day. Not much, cause we were quite busy trying to feed the crew and getting the stores up to the cooks, and bringing stuff down and shifting around -- make sure that we didn't have too much stock on one side and not enough on the other side. And in the meantime we had other duties. Watch. I had watches. Everybody watched up on the tower. And cleaning decks and guns and everything, so ... we were quite busy.

LINDA: So here you are a storekeeper and you're not somebody who=s toting a gun and crawling around the ground trying to shoot, and you're being attacked. I mean, what's that like?

ANGELO: Well, my duty was, when we were being attacked or general quarters was sounded was to man the phones along our guns, and to relay from the captain to the crew that manned the guns, and this is what my job was. I never did any shooting. I was just a relay man to the fellows that manned the guns. 16mm I think is what we had aboard at that time. Or 20mm, yeah I think they were 20mm. I think we had two starboard, two port, and one astern and one forward. Pretty sure we had about six.

LINDA: The bow and the stern ones were 40mm.

ANGELO: 40's, yeah, and I think the port starboard sides were 20's. I don't think we had anything bigger than that. Plus little side arms, whatever...

LINDA: You said that you ate good. Who was your cook?

ANGELO: Oh, we had great cooks! We had a ... two ... one Spanish fellow, I remember that. And another baker. We had a head cook, we had a baker, we had an assistant cook. And then the general crew participated who got galley duty. Peeling potatoes and whatever, opening up cans and cleaning up and everything. So it was great. It was great. We ate, you know ... as a rule, you know, anybody that works in the kitchen ate good.

LINDA: Better than, maybe, my DAD would have eaten?

ANGELO: Well, not that we ate better, I think we had more of a choice. We had the same kind of food, but it wasn't that you stood in line and you got shoved a plate at you, and then you went down the line and just went plop, plop ,plop, plop. That's what was going on. But we sat down cause we ate first. Kitchens first, and then the crew.

LINDA: That's good.

ANGELO: Then we had to serve them.

LINDA: So, when you left Norfolk and started sailing to England, it took you guys 21 days to make that trip. So you didn't have to provision that ship in Norfolk for the 21 days. If I understand it right there were supply ships coming along.

ANGELO: If we need it, if we need it. Yes, big supply ships that carried everything you needed. That if we needed anything we could, they could transfer it to us if we needed, but I don't think we had that situation. The 21 days that we took ... real slow! That whole flotilla was slow. 21 days. Can you imagine being on a ... now today they could do it in, what, five? Three, five days. 21 days. And believe me that boat rocked. It was great though. Good experience.

LINDA: Would you want to go back?

ANGELO: Not really, no.

LINDA: What do you think, looking back? I mean, in my mind, you are a World War II Naval war veteran and I have the utmost respect for you. What do you think about that. I mean, do you ever sit back and go, Whoa! I was..

ANGELO: I try not to think about it because, I don't know. Looking back on it was a great experience. What happened over there ... we were young. I think we took our lives for granted and we didn't really think of death. We survived. If you didn't, you were in trouble. You had to think positive. Otherwise, you're going to be very miserable aboard a ship if you're not positive. And it was a great experience. I enjoyed it, to tell you the truth. I think most of the crew did. Of course, we were pretty close.

LINDA: How did you get close?

ANGELO: Well, most of our closeness was at night. We were pretty busy during the day. Watches and cleaning and whatever your duties were for the day. But at night, you'd play cards, shoot dice, talk. We had movies. And that's how we got to know each other. And it was a great crew. All over the country. Guys from all over the country. And it was nice to listen to their part of the country lingo and what they

were into, what kind of jobs they had, and what kind of jobs he had, and what did you do and what I did. It was ... it was great.

LINDA: Do you think Captain Olsen brought any kind of camaraderie to the crew?

ANGELO: No, I don't think so. I don't think that Captain Olsen was that great with the crew. To me, I thought he was a loner. He didn't come down to the crew that much. Any duties that were sent through were through the lieutenants. But he himself wasn't that good. I don't think so anyway. He stood up in his little ... we used to call his little cubbyhole. He was a small little guy though. I don't think he was five foot. And I don't think anybody had anything good to say about him. Maybe as a Naval officer he was good at what he was doing, but, as a person, you know, I think the Lieutenant French at that time was the guy that took all the guff from us, through him, to the captain. But nothing, you know ...

LINDA: Can you remember anybody that stood out in your mind on that Atlantic theater part of it that you would respect, and that you would say today, boy, I had a lot of respect for that guy?

ANGELO: There was a fellow named, as I said before, a fellow named Szymanski. I think he was the strong man of us. Big guy. I think he stood about six foot something. And, if I'm not mistaken I think he was Polish. But we looked up to him because I think he had more knowledge of naval maneuvers and whatnots aboard ships. I don't know why, but we sort of looked up to him. And, particularly, there was a black fellow, and he was the captain's steward, if I remember right. He was a cocky little ... black fellow, you know. I don't know if I should say black.

LINDA: Well, if we don't want to use it we'll edit it out.

ANGELO: Okay. What should I say?

LINDA: That's what he was.

ANGELO: A little black fellow. And he was the only one on, if I'm not mistaken. And he was the captain's steward, you know. A cocky little guy. And he loved to play cards. I don't know where he got the money, but he loved to play cards. And he would tell you right off, if he didn't like you. And there were a few other fellows. There was this other fellow named Spetz, I think he was. I think he was the head storekeeper. I was under him. And he was kind of cocky, too. I think he had more knowledge of supplies than I did. But we got along good, and we were sort of buddies. Close. I think I was more closely to him than any other one aboard ship. Him and Szymanski. Because we were from the East Coast. And that's about it I can think of.

LINDA: When the war was over did you keep in contact with Spence or Spetz?

ANGELO: Not really. Not really. To me at that time I just wanted to run. I said I think I've had enough. And we just ... I think everybody felt that way. I don't think anybody ever stood in the Navy. I think we all .. cause they gave us the choice if we wanted to stay or leave, but I think everybody took off.

LINDA: Do you remember the first time somebody said this is where you're going to sleep I mean, what was that feeling like? Your bunk, your locker.

ANGELO: Well we were ... it was like a room, maybe about 10 feet wide, and it was maybe about 20 feet long and we had, like, bunks. I think it was two bunks on each side, or three. And a little locker, maybe can't be no more than 2 by 1, and your duffel bag, and this is about how you lived. You didn't need much clothes then anyway, just your dress blues and your work clothes and that's about it. The quarters were very small. Very

small.

LINDA: Did you ever get claustrophobic?

ANGELO: No, not really. No, because you didn't stay too long, you know, in your quarters. Most of the time you were above doing what you had to do. But it was great.

LINDA: You said that you enjoyed the time playing cards and dice and stuff...what about, did you ever do basketball, baseball?

ANGELO: No. We didn't have no room for that. No, we were a cargo. Most ... all we did was carry cargo. Tanks, trucks, whatever they told us to haul, this is what ... we had no room at all. A little room above decks, but nowhere where you could have little activities, no sports at all.

LINDA: I heard a story that, when you were going over on the convoy to England that in one of those storms, some of the tanks on the tank deck let loose do you remember that?

ANGELO: Probably got loose. Maybe. I don't really remember, really. Maybe they did.

LINDA: That would be scary.

ANGELO: Well, them things, when they get loose, believe me, there's no way of holding them things back. But, I don't remember, really. Maybe I was sleeping.

LINDA: I doubt it. I think you're like a person that lets a day happen and then you don't worry about it.

ANGELO: That's it. I don't think about my naval days when I was young, really. I sort of block most of it out. I don't know why.

LINDA: You think that's a protection mechanism?

ANGELO: Could be. I don't know. I just didn't want to think about it.

LINDA: If you thought about it maybe it would get you too ... I think that's how my father was.

ANGELO: Did he talk about it much?

LINDA: He really didn't. I think that's why I'm doing this.

ANGELO: I never did. I don't think I ever ... the only time I brought it up was when a couple of fellows would get together and talk about their army days or naval days and I would bring up little things but, other than that, there was no opportunity to bring all this up. Till right now, then ... I'm starting to remember little things that happened, and other than that, I sort of blocked it out. I think a lot of fellows did. Especially when we hit ... first encounter was with Normandy, when we hit France. That was our first encounter of battle.

LINDA: What were you doing that day?

ANGELO: Manning the phones. When we hit the shore. I think we were under the command of the English at that time. And all we did was hit the beach, unload, and pull out and get out of there. Or take casualties if we had to, or prisoners of war, whatever. But then we would go back to England and load again, and back to France again. And this was our chore for that operation. It was back and forth, supplies.

LINDA: You were like a little shuttle service.

ANGELO: Right. I think that was our main source of, you know, of what we were supposed to do. Tanks, trucks, whatever. Jeeps, food supplies, whatever.

LINDA: What's the worst experience that you remember going along the beaches -- Omaha, Gold, whatever?

ANGELO: My greatest ... was seeing soldiers, marines floating in the water. That was my ... boy, that's the only thing that sticks in my mind.

LINDA: That's hard, isn't it?

ANGELO: Yes. I can never forget that. That was ... I mean, there was bodies floating all over. On the beach, along the beach, and you just ... I don't know, I just couldn't take it. I ... most of the fellows couldn't take it. Cause it was terrible. I mean, there were by the hundreds. I mean, it wasn't one here, one there -- it was (sighs) so many. So many. Just ... can't think. I guess you just went by and did your job and back on the ship and out you went. But, that was the only thing that bothered me mostly.

LINDA: You must have been thinking that you had three brothers in the Army. This was the Army that was being shot down. Did you ever think about your brothers?

ANGELO: Well, two were left in the States, one was stationed in England, and I got to see him. I haven't seen him in about a year, year and a half. And, that was great ... moment for me ... to see him there in England. We stayed together about three or four days. Periodically.

LINDA: Did you just bump into him or ...

ANGELO: No, no. We corresponded, and I found out through the Red Cross that ... where he was stationed, and I went to go see him at his camp. That was great.

LINDA: Was he older or younger?

ANGELO: Older than me. A little older, yeah.

LINDA: I'd have liked to been there that day to see him go, Hey, my little brother!

ANGELO: Yeah, that was great. I remember that day. He was an MP in fact. He was stationed at the MP ... Course, he was a big guy. He stood about six foot and ... great seeing him. Periodically we met while we were stationed in England. I think the town was ... we were stationed at Southampton, was the little town that we were shipping out of, and then I think I went to London. That's where we met him. Piccadilly Circus. That was the hot spot.

LINDA: Did you go there?

ANGELO: Oh, yes. I think everybody went there. It was like New York City Times Square. I would put the two together. It was a lot of fun. That's where everybody took their leave from.

LINDA: What went on there?

ANGELO: Oh, it was like Times Square, you had everything. We had all kinds ... you had bars, go-go girls, whatever they used to do there, whatever. You had ... you had the choice of what you wanted. There was good bars, nice restaurants. Thousands and thousands of servicemen. Oh my God ...

(TAPE ENDS)

ANGELO: Met during the whole time I was in the service. Kids were great. I have it in my mind to go out there and beat them up out there. I think we had a lot of spunk.

LINDA: Repeat what you said about the guys - about the camaraderie.

ANGELO: The average age aboard ship was just about 19, 20, 21, 22. They weren't much older than that except the officers. We were all full of spunk there to get lets go over and do our duty and get things done and I think that was all through the services of all force, Navy, Army. There weren't that many elderly fellas. We were all in our good 20's and that is what I think really won the war was that drive. Get this thing over with. Yeah I think we did a good job. May have took a little long but I think we did a good job.

LINDA: When you were 18, 19, or 20 did you have that same feeling of pride?

ANGELO: Not really. I think at that age I was carefree. Just getting out of school. Nothing bothered me then. Whatever. I think we were very happy then.

LINDA: Actually that is good. You guys landed in England some time around April and then it wasn't until the first of June that you hit Normandy so what kind of things happened all that time. You were stationed there right?

ANGELO: When we first got there we were pretty well informed not by anybody but through skuttlebut that there is going to be a big push because there were lots and lots of ships of all kinds just anchored and they were just loading these ships up. So we knew something was going to happen but when we didn't know. In fact if I remember, that whole episode there was cancelled on a kind of the weather. I think a few days later

they said they had to go because they couldn't hold on any longer. We were pretty well loaded. So I think what we did for 2 or 3 days, we just stood aboard. The ship wanted for the command for the ship to take off. So I think everybody came down a little bit when we were going across the channel. So everything just quieted down just thinking about what was going on, you know. I am told the excitement came, we told hit the beach. Until you got there you couldn't imagine what was going on. I mean you thought it was the Fourth of July. Planes and the big cannons from the big battle ships that were just hauling shells right over you trying to hit targets. I'll tell you when those. I'll tell you those Germans they stood. I mean they gave all their . I have to believe it. They stood and they got plenty of us. We didn't know where they were. There were bunkers that were like 6 to 8 feet thick and it was just a matter of time before we put them outpoint. Couldn't move. Once you hit the beach you were dead docks, Nothing like you could move here move their. We just had to stay there. I think we stayed there one night. Then we pulled out but we came back a couple of days later and everything sort of cleared up. A lot of _____

. Could you imagine the thousands of soldiers or marines coming aboard Dumping them off and coming right back. Pick up another bunch. Gee I could see it in my mind now. Well you got over it and then when you went back to England then your thinking OH I have to get leave now and sort of blocked it out. I didn't think about it that much. I think that was the worst time of my life. That incident.

LINDA: I think that is why liberty was so important to the guys.

ANGELO: Oh yeah so you let go. You get drunk. Everybody got bombed I think.

LINDA: Say liberty was important because

ANGELO: It relieved or sort of let yourself go because if you didn't and you bottled all this up I think you would go crazy. That is why a lot of the fellas used to get drunk. Not

because that was the thing to do I think they did it to forget. And you went back to the ship and everything turned back to normal again as long as you had your leave. You have to do it. Everybody else was doing it so it must of meant something.

LINDA: Ever get homesick?

ANGELO: I don't know if I did or not. Maybe I did. May I did I don't know if I did or not. I guess everybody did at one time. I guess if you were alone at night the thoughts might get you.

LINDA: Tell me about Christmas 1944. You were sitting in England on a little ship. You had been through D Day. You had seen all kinds of things. You knew your buddies, by this time you had been on that ship a year.

ANGELO: Yeah, I think we were pretty well close whenever we met each other. You didn't meet the same guys every day. From my understanding we were not that big of a crew. Christmas was like, to me it was like any other day. Nobody changed gifts or anything like home it was just Merry Christmas and goodbye and that's it. There was no celebration or anything. I don't think we had time if I am not mistaken. We were shuttling back and forth to England, to France to England.

LINDA: So Christmas was not a big deal.

ANGELO: No.

LINDA: Did you get letters from home.

ANGELO: A few. My sisters used to write but we didn't get that much and besides they could never catch up with us. We were a very busy ship. It was the only ship really that

could deposit materials that they needed because we could go right on the beaches and unload and that was their only source of supplies. That was all flotilla. We used to be in a flotilla. I think there was about 8 or 10 of us. The 539, 540, 534 that is a few of them.

LINDA: Tell me what you think about the LST role in World War II.

ANGELO: I think it took a big major part of that whole

LINDA: Say the LST..

ANGELO: The LST took a major part in the invasions, not only Normandy and France but all of Africa, Italy. This was their main source of supplies was through us and I think we were second to land, first I believe it was the Marines that would spearhead the opening for us to come in and the Army was shuttled off other big ships and they won't let us in until everything was clear because this was their main source of supply. Ammunition, food, tanks, jeeps, whatever they needed. We were fast. We had to come in under all any other circumstances. We had to come in. And we were strafed but we were kind of careful because we didn't stay above we stayed below ships not to expose ourselves to the outside. Get our stuff off and get out of there. Because we had to come in only at one time when the high tide and once we hit the high tide and if we stood there any length of time you couldn't get out until the high tide came back in again. So sometimes we were stuck there maybe six, seven, eight hours before we could pull out again. And I think we were a good part of the war with them LSTs. I think we did a good job.

LINDA: Well when you left and got orders that you were going to go back to the United States you were leaving England, do you remember that day?

ANGELO: When we left. I thought we were going to go home and be reassigned or thought maybe the war would be over. But no. After the Germans gave up I thought we would stay on the East Coast but most of the flotilla we belonged to was assigned to go to the Pacific. That is why we picked up our second crew.

LINDA: Yes, a lot of them came in through the Brooklyn Navy Yard and then went over to Hoboken and got some repairs. And French's crew got reassigned and a new crew came on and you were actually one of the people that stayed on board.

ANGELO: Yeah I stayed on board. We stood home I think for a couple of months, refitted whatever we needed. Right to the Pacific. That was a hectic ride. You talk about 21 days going to England, we took two months to get to Hawaii. We hit Frisco, I think it was Frisco or somewhere around there and then we hit Hawaii first and that is where we worked out of Hawaii. I think oh my God I think that took 60 days. That was a long trip. Crossing that Pacific but some reason or other we felt a little more safer there than in the Atlantic. Atlantic was kind of scary. The waters were rougher but we had a couple of typhoons in the Pacific. You talk about a ship twirling and being rattled arund, my God I said I don't believe this big tub over here is shaking like crazy but we got through it.

LINDA: It was really shaking?

ANGELO: Oh my God when that bow used to come up it used to hit the wave and that thing would go boom and I honestly believe that ship just waved. Those waters are rough. A little ship like that you feel every little bump. We got through it though. We hit Hawaii and I think we stayed there a couple of months I think until we got supplied, re-fitted whatever you had to do and then from there I think we went to Guam.

LINDA: Enroute there you went through the International Dateline.

ANGELO: Yes.

LINDA: What do you remember about that.

ANGELO: Oh that was fun. Yeah everybody got dressed. The fellas that, I think the whole crew got dressed and you dressed whatever way you wanted to dress. A lot of fellas were half naked with Hawaii garb and whatever and the Captain and all the crew and all the superiors got into it also. It was a good time. I remember that. That was great. No liquor aboard but we found it.

LINDA: I am sure you did.

ANGELO: There were some fellas especially the Southerners they knew how to brew. This concoction they used to make with canned fruits. It could be any kind of fruit, cherries, pineapples, oranges, anything and they would put it in one big pot and let it ferment and believe me when that thing started to bubble and they used to squeeze it, it was good.

LINDA: Was it like 100%.

ANGELO: Oh my God plus they used to put what we used to call torpedo juice. It was sort of a liquid that they used to put in torpedoes. It was torpedo juice and they use to pour a little of this in the juice and if I remember right it was the little black fella that concocted this thing because he was from the South. I think there were all moonshiners down there. We had a couple of moonshiners on board so they knew what they were doing plus I think we had some beer. That was fun day.

LINDA: Did you get oiled up.

ANGELO: I think a couple of the guys were feathered up and greased, the black grease. It was great. I don't know who got the best part of it.

LINDA: Did they get hurt?

ANGELO: I don't think so.

LINDA: A lot of shenanigans going on.

ANGELO: Oh yeah. Whenever you got greased we would call the guy over and somebody behind would have him turn around and ____ anything went.

LINDA: Anybody ever go overboard?

ANGELO: I don't think so.

LINDA: Is that a dumb question?

ANGELO: No because it was normal for sailors especially in rough seas to go overboard during the convoy. I think it happened. Oh yes I think it happened. Not too often.

LINDA: When you were going from Hawaii over to the Pacific, you said for some reason you felt a little bit safer or something

ANGELO: Yeah.

LINDA: Didn't you hear about the suicide missions?

ANGELO: Well that was on the islands mostly. On the sea that didn't do this until you got into a naval bombardment situation where the aircraft carriers were. I don't think we ever got into anything like that. I think we were sort of by ourselves and I don't think we participated in any of the naval bombardment, you know the fighting that was going on with the big ships. No I think we were pretty good. I don't think we were bothered that whole trip across the Pacific.

LINDA: But there was a war going on.

ANGELO: But I don't think they were looking for the small guys. I think the Japs were looking for the big guys.

LINDA: Big guys are..

ANGELO: Battleships and aircraft carriers. I think that was their main function, Japs at that time. As far as supplies were concerned I don't think they bothered us too much.

LINDA: You must have been surprised when you got hit with the kamikaze.

ANGELO: Oh that was a surprise. That was in Okinawa. That was the second invasion we did I think. Our second encounter was Okinawa. That was another disastrous morning too. We didn't have it so easy then either when we hit the beach. We were unloading at the time and we were the last ship on the right as you came in. I think two or three ships at one time came in on the beach. We were the last on the right so we were exposed to a lot of open area and at night I am almost positive that we would get hit by snipers on the right side. I think at one time the Captain order everybody on the starboard side whatever arms we could find and just spray that whole area one night. I am pretty sure that happened and after that we didn't get bothered. And we stayed

there that morning. I am not sure whether we got hit at night, dusk or in the morning.
I am not sure.

LINDA: It was 9:30.

ANGELO: In the morning. I guess it was morning everybody was getting up but things were pretty quiet then and we were unloading whatever we had and general quarters were sounded. We knew there was activity, action going on out at sea not too far we would see the planes and they bombing, whatever, the Japs, and general quarters was sounded and everybody ran to their stations and I was astern on one of the guns and watched to see what happens and then we heard the Captain holler action, fire at will. We looked to see what we were going to fire at and he told the crew there is a plane coming in on the starboard side and that thing was coming in close and everybody started to fire and I am sure we hit it whatever guns were aimed at it and it just plowed into our starboard side. Blew a hole and I don't know if we had a couple, I think we had a couple of casualties. Most of the fellas got thrown from the explosion and that sort of put us out of commission. But that thing really pushed that ship. We couldn't imagine why anybody would want to do a thing like that. I mean what was their purpose. We never heard of the kamikaze death, I mean we heard of it but us get hit with it no. No such thing. Never happen to us. It did. Most of the fellas that got hurt were mostly concussion and then sort of survived. Couple of fellas were hospitalized. I think that was the end of our Naval career. I think that was the end.

LINDA: Now Captain French was determined to raise that up and sail it again.

ANGELO: Yeah but it never happened. They tried to refloat us fix it but we were pulled off the beach and laid to rest somewhere else along the docks or whatever they had. e sort of stood there, unload what we had, fuel, provisions and most of the crew was reassigned. But I stayed aboard until that thing was pulled out. I and another fella and I am trying to think who it was. And we stood on it for about two minutes just

watching, waiting for something to go. But then we heard they are going to pull out the ship and scuttle her.

LINDA: So literally there was just two of you on the ship? What did you do one slept and one stayed awake.

ANGELO: We were sort of like security. Just stay on board and watch it. We did that for a few, I think about two months and then we got word that they were going to pull her off the beach and scuttle her.

LINDA: Well it must have been like one of your children being pulled away?

ANGELO: Well that was your home. It was like your home. We were aboard that thing for 2 1/2 years. It was like your home. You knew every spot on that ship. Every hole. After that I think all the crew was disbursed.

LINDA: Did you get a tear in your eye when you saw that ship going out to be sunk?

ANGELO: Well I had a sore throat bad. Maybe I did.

LINDA: Tell me that. The day the ship went out to be sunk I felt like this..

ANGELO: The day that ship was pulled off the beach and I had to get off it I stood on the dock and just looked, kept looking and I was saying my God there goes my baby and it took a long time before she got pulled off. It was sort of like sagging a broken wagon or whatever it is just slowly slowly being pulled off and seeing it go out to sea. And all I kept looking was the number 534, 534, 534. That is all I kept in my mind, the number. So that was the end of that.

LINDA: They towed it about a mile, right?

ANGELO: Oh yeah. I think longer than that because what they do with ships that get hit is they try to make a barrier, barrier reef, so when the typhoon comes in it wouldn't be too rough on the beach. I think that was part of it, part of the reef and that was the end of that, the old 534. I never saw the crew any more. I don't know where they were.

LINDA: What happened to French? He left before you did.

ANGELO: Yeah. I don't know why I stood alone. Me and this fella stood back, why we were left alone. I could never figure that out. Nobody ever came to the ship and said well you fellas have to go here, there. Nobody ever came and told us what to do. We were just like two lost souls on a broken down ship. Do for yourself, scrounging for food and I thought they forgot us and we just hung around. It was good duty though. Nobody telling us what to do or anything until one day we went to the headquarters and we told them where we were and soon they said okay you guys stick around. It wasn't long after that, that the war was over.

LINDA: The war was over in middle of August and you guys were still on that ship in November for whatever it was if you could at that point even call it a ship.

ANGELO: Yeah we were there quite a while. Until yeah we heard the war was over and it was another 30 or 40 days before I got shipped home. That was another ordeal. Being shipped home. My God. That was 60 days aboard a ship. And another 20 days from I think we landed in Washington on the troop train that was a disaster. 60-70 guys in one little car trying to do for themselves

LINDA: You are doing a good job. You remember more than you give yourself credit for.

ANGELO: Yeah, well when you are talking to somebody about it, little bits and pieces come back to you. Sort of remember the little things. It was great.

LINDA: I saw you looking at the death logs.

ANGELO: Yeah. That brought back a little memories.

LINDA: You have to start out when I was looking at the deck logs

ANGELO: When I was looking at the deck logs it sort of triggered little incidents that happened from the time that we got hit that is what I wanted to see and what transpired from that point on that we left Okinawa. I didn't think you could get that stuff but you did. You did a good job.

LINDA: Would you ever want to go back to Okinawa?

ANGELO: No I wouldn't.

LINDA: Normandy?

ANGELO: No.

LINDA: Not you, you are the kind of person let it all be gone.

ANGELO: No. We went to Europe but we only went to Italy but I don't think I would be

interested in seeing it.

LINDA: Do you remember the day that the war was declared over. Was there a lot of celebration going on.

ANGELO: Oh yes, yes.

LINDA: Start out you know the day the war was declared over.

ANGELO: Well you know we had rumors for like three or four days the war is over and everybody was jubilant about it but then they said no, a mistake, it isn't true. Then so maybe the next day we heard it again. We where on a little island off Japan and we didn't have too much communication with the outside world and so we got bits and pieces like what happened, how come? Then we heard about the bomb. We heard that there is a bomb that the atomic bomb that was supposed to be devastating. It was used and this is what caused the Japs, I should say Japs, the Japanese. At that time really they were my enemy at that time so, I maybe I shouldn't say this but at that time I was glad that we did drop it. I am sure every GI, Sailor, Marine was glad that it happened. It sorted of stopped it all and I think President Truman did a good job by allowing it to happen. I am not sorry for it. Well when we heard the final word that the war was over, I mean everybody just went crazy. Things were so hectic. Everybody is running around. I think everything stopped. Everybody was just jubilant. It was great.

LINDA: Were you talking to people on other ships?

ANGELO: No.

SIRENS WERE GOING ON OUTSIDE. TALKING TILL NOISE STOPS.

LINDA: So were you celebrating with other guys?

ANGELO: Oh yes. Everybody was running around. Hugging each other. Just having a great time and everybody was just thinking about going home. Just couldn't wait to go home. That was great.

LINDA: Especially you. I could imagine you saying if I ever get my feet back in New Jersey I will never leave it!

ANGELO: Yes, I thought of that and I said Jesus what good, we were away from home a good year, year and half, and mail at that time wasn't too good. We didn't get too much mail especially me because I got lost in the shuffle there somewhere. Pretty soon things got organized and finally shipped home but I never saw the crew again. I don't know where they went.

LINDA: Do you remember when you came home your mom and dad and you sisters and brothers were there, do you remember that day?

ANGELO: No. We got dumped off in Washington. Washington State and then we were put up for a couple of days and then put on troop trains and that is how we came. I think we - was it Norfolk we were discharged from - I think it was Norfolk and then from there that is how we got out.

LINDA: Everything that happened to the 534 it is amazing that you didn't have any major injuries.

ANGELO: No not really. I had a little concussion when I was thrown against the railing but other than that. I think I did pretty good.

LINDA: Do you remember my dad?

ANGELO: I am trying to think. Tell you the truth as I said before I kind of blanked out that part of my life. I don't think about it that much. Why I don't know. Maybe it is my nature. My wife will tell you that.

LINDA: You know my dad was a coxswain so he would drive the little LCVP. People would tell me that he would take them in, him or the others, there were like 4 or 5 coxswain on board. Do you remember having coxswains take you in.

ANGELO: The LCVPs were little boats that were if we were anchored off shore this is what took us to shore and back. This was their duties. They would wait for us at night to get back to the ship. Most of us back. Few got drunk. Stayed ashore or whatever. A sailor's life wasn't like the Army you know. They were drunken bums to me.

LINDA: You know the night before the kamikaze attack you guys were watching a movie called the constant nymph do you remember that?

ANGELO: Not really.

LINDA: I am just checking.

ANGELO: A movie? Maybe we did.

LINDA: I am going to read something to you and I want you to respond to it. You said my service in the Navy has been two years on the LST 534. I would like to thank all my shipmates for their togetherness and bond we had aboard ship.

ANGELO: Yes. I think we were very close compared to the other ships. These little LSTs were

very close. We had to be for functioning and for your sanity. That was good duty. I liked it. I liked the duty on that.

LINDA: What did you think the day I called you.

ANGELO: I was very surprised.

LINDA: Say the day you called

ANGELO: The day you called I was very surprised. I thought we were forgotten. I often wondered what happened to most of the fellas that were aboard the LST 534. Gee I said to myself God I wish there was a reunion. Often I would look in the papers and see reunions for armies and navies but never for LSts and I said gee I hope she does something about it. I would really look forward to getting together with some of the fellas. That was great. I was really happy. I want to thank you.

LINDA: Your very welcome. Rose was a little suspicious.

ANGELO: Naw. She is a good woman. I love her.

LINDA: Is there anything else you want to say?

ANGELO: Well I am looking forward to the reunion and I want to tell all these guys, even if I don't remember you, I want to thank you for the good times we had and the camaraderie that we had aboard and I think we did a great job and thank you Mrs. Alvers for bringing this together and I hope in the future that we can do it again. Thank you.

LINDA: Your welcome. It is all your story. I am just putting it together. You have been great

today. I really appreciate it.

ANGELO: I hope so.

LINDA: You told us more than I thought you were going to be able to tell us. (Asks Matt if there is anything else). Matt mentions the kamikaze. Yeah, you had said that when you saw the kamikaze that Captain French said fire at will but some of the guys said they never heard a firing order.

ANGELO: Yes, I think we fired. I don't think there was much time. I know this plane came out of the blue because they fly low when they want to come into a target. They don't fly too high, because they fly too high chances are they might get hit but this guy came in low so I think he was pretty well upon us when the order was given. So I don't think we fired that much. Maybe we didn't hear it because the guns were going off not only from us but from the batteries on shore and other ships. There was a lot of excitement going around. Maybe it was confusing and maybe some guys didn't hear it but I am sure that the command was given. I liked Mr. French. He was an alright guy. I think he held the ship together a little bit. I think he was the only one officer that really got into the crew.

LINDA: What did he look like?

ANGELO: He was a tall fella. I think he came from Northeast, Massachusetts.

LINDA: California. No wait he came from Deluth Minn. and Olsen came from California. French came from Minnesota.

ANGELO: Okay. He was a nice dashing young fella. He was good. I liked him. I don't think we had too many officers aboard. I think it was two or three.

LINDA: One thing I heard, over in the Pacific there was almost a mutiny or something with French.

ANGELO: I don't think Olsen and French were too close from what I gathered and there might have been. I don't remember. I could remember but it is gone now.

LINDA: Well thank you very much. I think you will be pleased with the end results. We are going to edit it down and let everybody tell a little bit of their story and I will send you a copy of the whole thing so you can share it with your family. You must be proud of your son.

ANGELO: Oh yes. We did a good job. We have two girls also. We have four children. Two girls. One is in California, two is in New York and one is in Jersey. So we are spread around a little bit. Four grandchildren. All boys.

LINDA: Oh boy. Get that Cummella name out there.

LINDA IS TALKING TO ROSE NOW:

LINDA: It occurred to me while we were interviewing Angelo and you were sitting in there what did you think of it all.

ROSE: I thought it was wonderful. I was surprised to see he was so touched after so many years and to bring back things he went through in WW II as Archie Bunker says the Big One, and that he remembered what he said he remembered. I was surprised. I guess talking and looking at the log brought back memories that were in the back of his mind all these years because he is not a person that remembers things and I guess

like your father he wants to block that all out of his mind because there are bad times, a lot of bad times.

LINDA: Where were you when World War II was going on.

ROSE: I was born in 31 so what I remember is in 1945 when the war was over and I lived in Newark and my friends said lets go down to Broader Market because all the Soldiers and Sailors Marines will be there and lets have some fun. Well Broader Market I don't know if you know Newark, Broader Market is a very wide street like Broadway, even wider, and all these Sailors and Soldiers and Marines were coming towards us, kissing us, and we are going yuk we don't like that too much. We were young what did we know. Later on we liked it but at the time, it was really like one great big party in Newark because it was the end of the war. You know sad times bringing good times in the future. I remember that. I was a teenager at the time.

LINDA: So you didn't know "Andy" then.

ROSE: No.

LINDA: So after you met him and married him and you then knew he was in the war and do you think that made him a different person having had that experience and you have to start out saying Andy's war experience.

ROSE: Andy's war experience probably made him more aware of what men have to go through, or what people have to go through in the world to have peace in their country. I think being a man I could never, I can't even think of going through that. I am not that type but I guess, and he is not like an extrovert. He is a quiet person. I think deep down that probably did something to him and to remember all those things and bring them all out it was really an experience for him to say it and for me

to hear. I never hear any of these stories. I am not like your mother. Your mother was married to your father when he came home from the service. I never knew anything about his past. I think that most men have gained some kind of wonderful experience through this sad, but it made them men. They went through hard times and they defended their country and they did the best they could. I think all wars, Vietnam, every war, Korean meant to help our country. To give us freedom. You should appreciate every one.

LINDA: You have two sons. Have they been in the service?

ROSE: No. They had to register for the draft I remember but they have never been in the service. I have a son in law that was a Navy Pilot, but it was peace. It was a different time. It is not like war time. My two brothers were in the service. I remember that. How fretful it was for my mother. And the worry whether they will ever come home. They never left the United States but we were always wondering if they would go overseas you know. But I think for everyone and it was a proud time too when you had someone in the service you hung out a star or two stars or three stars. How many children you had in the service. They were good times. Everyone was united. The women went to work. There was Rosie Riveter, things like that and the songs and the way people dressed. It was really different times.

LINDA: I wasn't even born. So you learned something about your husband today.

ROSE: I think so.

LINDA: Say I learned

ROSE: I learned today that my husband does remember some things the good and the bad and I am sure when we are in the car going back to Jersey he is going to tell me some

things that he remembered after sitting here that he should have said but it brought back memories good and bad. Now he is looking forward to seeing the guys on the ship to meet them once again and talk about the times I am sure. He will get more things from them and they will get some things from him, talk about it and see what goes on in September. We are looking forward to it. And you are doing a great job with all your research and all the time you have devoted. It takes a lot of time.

LINDA: Wish I had more time.

ROSE: If I was close I would help you but I can't. I don't have a computer so...I'll write it on stone.

LINDA: Does it make you proud?

ROSE: Yes. It does. Because he did his best. He was in the service. he did not shirk his duty. Whatever he was supposed to do he did. Even though he was on the boat for two months, I don't he makes me proud that he was in the service and he was a good patriot for our country. Gave us freedom. Everybody that went to war for us we should appreciate that.

MATT: At one point he said it was the best time of his life and then at another point it was the worst. What do you think of his military life?

ROSE: Going back through, his name is really Angelo, I gave him the name Andy. Going back to what he said about the good times and the bad times, I guess it is like life we have. We have good times and we have bad times. The good times we like to keep in our heads and the bad times we like to discard just like an old newspaper. And I feel that he did have good times on the LST 534 and he did have bad times. So whatever he says I do believe to be true.

LINDA: Before I called did he ever say anything about the 534?

ROSE: No he used to look in the paper sometimes and see people having reunions and he would ask gee I wonder why we never have a reunion. But that was it. Nothing more than that was ever said.

LINDA: You're going to like this documentary. You are going to learn all about the LST 534.

ROSE: Yes. I'll buy the book.

LINDA: Thanks.