

EDGAR OVERSTAKE INTERVIEW

EDGAR: My name is Edgar Overstake and they called me Ovie and I was signalman second class, the leading petty officer in the ships control division.

LINDA: You know what I loved when you sent in your questionnaire - you said I love sailing and the sea and the Navy.

EDGAR: I did and I still do. Whenever I drive down the crossway and I look at the water my heart leaps in my breast. I keep thinking that I would love to be at sea again. I love the sea, the mountainous waves as they came in and I can remember standing on the deck and on the bridge and looking out and seeing the mountainous waves where maybe you would see a ship way off and then all of a sudden you are down in the trough seeing nothing but walls and water around you and then the next time you are way up. I love the sea, the wind, the waves and I love being a sailor.

LINDA: Did you enlist?

EDGAR: I enlisted when I was seventeen. I dropped out of high school when I was a senior in 1942 and enlisted in the Navy. Went to Great Lakes and then was in New York for a little bit. Went to England in 43, went to France in 44 and 45 in the Pacific and I can say I enjoyed just about every moment of it.

LINDA: Seventeen years old what did you think about going to all these places. You are from Illinois right?

EDGAR: I grew up in Chicago so I knew what street life was like. I was a street kid

and my school days were not the most rewarding. I was kind of an active kid and I think they were glad I joined the Navy and left the school system but I was excited I look forward to the Navy since I was fifteen. My father did not want to sign for me to join the Navy but I said to him if they draft me in the Army I will never forgive you. I want to be a sailor. And I loved it. I really did.

LINDA: Mathew and I have gone around and taped all these guys so he knows all of you guys as well as I do. Now you were in England and in the Navy on shore a lot before you boarded on the LST 534 right?

EDGAR: Yes I went to England in 1943 in a landing crew. We were a beach party and we set up a signal tower in a place called Temouth England on the coast and we were working with small boat crews. Helping to train them hit the beach. A lot of times I was out on the water with the LCNs and we were hitting the beach in dry runs and practicing. We were transferred to Portsmouth Weymouth where it was the invasion port where we loaded a lot of ships. Interesting you probably heard of the operation tiger where pre-invasion tactics took place and where there were about three LSTs that were hit by German E Boats and we lost several hundreds of soldiers and our small boat crews in moving along the coast picked them up - picked up about 40 bodies of soldiers that were killed during that thing.

LINDA: That exercise target was a mistake right?

EDGAR: Well it was a tragedy of errors.

LINDA: Say exercise tiger one

EDGAR: Exercise Tiger was kind of a series of misjudgments. They lined up the LSTs and they had an English gun boat for escort and the English gun boat

had motor trouble and went back into port and we were out there on our own. When I say we the LSTs in Operation Tiger. And then the timing got mixed up and it was kind of rough and the ships hit the beach there but while they were out on the water the German E boats came and hit two or three of them and there were a lot casualties and I think it was in April and the water was very cold and they died of hypothermia, those that got off the ships so it was a series of very serious mistakes.

LINDA: And you were out in a small boat at that time?

EDGAR: Part of our contingent came in the LCMs up the coast from Temouth England to Portsmouth Weymouth and they picked up some of the bodies of the guys.

LINDA: That must have been hard at seventeen eighteen years old.

EDGAR: Yeah. But you know we were kids. We went through the air raids, we were right on the coast and the German planes when they went in to bomb London if they had any left they would drop them on us going out. We were just kids and we thought we were going to live forever and that was all part of it.

LINDA: Doing your job every day. So when you were told you were going to go on an LST this is not the first time you have seen one. So you already had a familiarity with LSTs.

EDGAR: Had a familiarity and used to watch them and I was on a signal tower in which we were loading them and they would come into the harbor there at Port Weymouth and I was on the signal tower and we would signal them to come in. We watched them load and we would go out and go aboard the ships while they were loading. See I always considered I wasn't

fortunate enough to get in on D-day. I missed that one because we were loading the ships and preparing them and they left and hit D day and then when they came back one of the signalmen had to go into sick bay and they needed a signalman so they transferred me aboard the LST 534 which was a great day. I was happy to go aboard that ship.

LINDA: Had you ever loaded it?

EDGAR: Not the 534. I don't think I loaded the 534 before but we loaded so many I wouldn't remember all of them.

LINDA: The 534 was built in my home town of Evansville, Indiana.

EDGAR: Was it really? You know the 534, every so often the numbers 534 come up in so many different ways as a reminder and I had a good time on the ship. I was happy to be a sailor.

LINDA: So you boarded the 534 in July.

EDGAR: Yes.

LINDA: So you weren't on the 534 during D-Day. You were in England loading up.

EDGAR: That is true.

LINDA: What happened in July after you got on board and you were going back and forth with supplies.

EDGAR: Well after I boarded the ship in July we made a series of trips, I can't tell you how many but it was a couple of times a week. Take a day to go over

and we would unload and you know when we would hit the beach the tide would have to go out and then we would open the bow doors and put the ramp down and unload the tanks and equipment. Then we waited till the tide came in and then we would close her up move out and go back to England for another load. So we made a couple of trips a week and we hit all the beaches of Normandy and we went into Lahore many times. We were one of the few ships that went up the Seine River to drop off supplies up the Seine. Also we were selected on special convoy. We took 528 tons of live ammunition from over from the Normandy Beach over into a place they called St. Michele because they were trying to take Schorberg and they were running out of ammunition and I think we were the second convoy to make it through the enemy waters and that was kind of a scary thing to go in and hit the beach at St. Michele and drop off all this ammunition. Interestingly enough we lost our escort at night and that was a little hairy because we thought we were being approached by a German E Boat when in reality it was our escort that finally caught up with us. So we were part of that invasion.

LINDA: Nobody has told me this story before.

EDGAR: Is that right. That was a little bit of a scary time because it was still, the Channel still had German E Boats, we were sneaking under the cover of darkness and again lost our escort. That was our only protection.

LINDA: A little hard to hide that LST wasn't it?

EDGAR: That's right. And we would, as mentioned before in some of the story we made smoke with the sulfur. The smoke was terrible but one of the things, my job was always on the bridge and we had an air vent that pumped air out of the ship and I would always stand under that air vent. I would get

fresh air from inside but that sulfur smoke was terrible.

LINDA: My father was in Shurbert, France hospital for about a month and half. I'll bet that is when he went to Shurbert because if he was just going back and forth the English Channel he would have went to England in a hospital. He was in Shubert France in a hospital blinded and he told a story that he was on the helm and somebody called down and said mind your course and he said it is all dark down here the lights are out and the Captain or whoever said no the lights are on Alvers. The lights were okay but my dad was blind and so my dad was sent to Shurbert France to a hospital and that was one of the only when you landed in St. Michele that you would have been close enough to Shubert.

EDGAR: That could have likely been.

LINDA: Because you didn't make that trip again.

EDGAR: Only one trip up to Shurbert that I remember but we were into Lahore many times. And Lahore was always a tricky port because we ran into the mountainside and they had a little landing platform and we had to keep the motors running and keep the ship going into that and we would jockey into position and they had to try to get off the ship on onto that little landing ramp which was and it was always raining. I don't think we ever hit Lahore when it wasn't pouring down rain. So that was a miserable port to hit.

LINDA: So they made all these trips back and forth. Would you go on liberty when you went back over to England?

EDGAR: Oh yes. In fact we even went ashore in France. There were times when we would hit the beach and the tide would go out and we would have time

and we would go and get ashore and meet some of the French people and then of course getting back to London we always had time where we would get into port and we would go into London and take time and have liberty. I have to say liberty in London was a lot better than Guam and Saipan.

LINDA: More to do.

EDGAR: More to do, more to see and of course there were the ladies there other than the natives and there were always things to see and do in London. The music, and the programs and everything that went on. I was a Salvation Army young man although I wasn't really practicing living a Christian life when I was a sailor. I was a rowdy sailor. I think the war would have been over sooner had I been a better sailor. I would see some of the Salvation Army facilities that were in London because that is where the Army began.

LINDA: Talking about the Salvation Army.

EDGAR: Yes, the Salvation Army began in London in 1865 so I would see some of the founding places of the Salvation Army.

LINDA: Did the devastation around you bother you.

EDGAR: Well again we were young and I guess it really didn't. You know when we were in Plymouth England when the ship tied up at Plymouth it was another place they called hell's corner and that got the bombs coming and going and that whole community was leveled as was Teamouth. Teamouth was bombed quite severely and we just saw a lot of devastation and then when we were in London and again - crazy kids - the bombs are falling and we were going on just like nothing was happening. We would

be in a pub or Trahouser Square or Piccadilly Circus and the bombs are falling and we just kept doing what we were doing.

LINDA: You said when you got on board you met my dad the second day coming back.

EDGAR: Interesting. I met your husband, your father excuse me,

LINDA: Tell me about meeting my dad.

EDGAR: It was the second day that I was aboard ship and it was about 7 o'clock in the morning and I was up and I was in the bathroom shaving. Your dad came in and he was kind of a goosey guy I guess some guy just gave him a goose there and he was standing behind me and I didn't know that and he took a swing, he just lashed out with his arms and I was looking in the mirror and I thought he was taking a swing at me and I was ducking and I couldn't figure out why he would want to fight with me. And I turned around and we nearly had an encounter but then we kind of hugged because we embraced but somebody had goosed him and he really went hoooo. He was wild. So that was my first encounter with him. We were good friends. He was a coxswain and he was on the small boats and up on the bridge once in a while. Most of my time was on the bridge. My job, I was the leading petty officer of the ships control division at 18 that is kind of crazy, but I was second class signalman and we had the signalmen, the radar men, the quartermasters, and the radar men those four divisions they were under me up on the bridge so I spent most of my time up there and we did a lot of training of practicing, signal flashing with the flashlight, with the signal light and with semiflor and going through the manual of how to interpret the signals. So we spent a lot of time on the bridge doing those kinds of things.

LINDA:

EDGAR: I can still do them. In fact when I see on television once in a while you see a ship with a signalman and he is moving I try to read him or the flashlight is going I try to read that. It just comes naturally. You think and did that.

LINDA: What is the hand signal for 534?

EDGAR: Well 534 we always spelled it out. You always had a prefix. It was one five three four. You go O N E F I V E T H R E E and F O U R. I still remember that.

MATT: Could you do that one more time.

EDGAR: Well the signal code number for the LST 534 was x-ray 1534. So you would go x-ray and then spell out the ONE and then the Five was F I V E and the three was T H R E E and then there was the four F O U R. (He is showing on camera how to signal)

LINDA: Were you doing it with flags.

EDGAR: With flags.

LINDA: What color flags.

EDGAR: Well they were red and yellow. And then the morse code would have been x-ray which is dash dot dot dash and the one would be dit da da da and five dit dit dit dit dit and three is dit dit da da, and four is dit dit day. I know those numbers because I sent them and received them a number of times.

LINDA: What is the funniest message you ever received?

EDGAR: Oh we used to talk back and forth, with signaling when we were up on the bridge and we were not in convoy and we were in a port we could always communicate with the other guy and write a private little message and find out where guys were and where they were going and liberty and all those kind of things. But I don't know if I recall any funny one they were always pretty serious when they said come in and load and get ready to go to sea.

LINDA: Somebody told me that they were on receiving details Captain Olsen and he had some other some other kind of signal with another Captain where they would go on leave together or village together or whatever and they would go out on liberty together or whatever.

MATT: The name was Johnny actually.

LINDA: Anyway he said that there was something with I think it was Norris Long that told me this story, Antwerp and it was how it was spelled. It was spelled wrong so when the signal came in to meet me at Antwerp or something or other Norris corrected the spelling and instead of making it Antwerp he spelled it like it was supposed to be. So when he handed it to Captain Olsen, Captain Olsen said now are you sure this is the exact message you got - yes sir and later he got reprimanded for it for because he changed it and Olsen said there was a reason why it was misspelled.

EDGAR: Yes that was the code. It could have been. I think the funniest story well not funny but Eddie Holt was on the bridge and the small boat was coming back with the liberty party and when Eddie Holt saw the small boat he flashed a little message to him and and somebody on there answered back

with the light on the boat and so Holt said who is that - and he said This is Captain Olsen. Well he didn't think it was and he gave him a little expletive you know like the hell with you all or something like that. Well the guy just signed off and didn't say anymore so Eddie Holt was a little nervous and then sure enough coming up the ladder was the Captain and he said I want to see you in my quarters. Eddie got 30 days of discipline for that. It wasn't funny but he learned a lesson on that one. What you say on the light everyone in the world can see.

LINDA: Tell us the story again because the doors creaked. Start over with

EDGAR: Well you asked the question if there were any funny incidents on the light and most of the time they were serious other than when we would talk personal between different signalmen on the ship. But this could be considered funny when Eddie Holt was on the bridge and it was his duty to be the signalman and the small boat was coming back with the liberty party and Eddie Holt recognized it so he flashed the boat with a signal and the person on the boat answered and Eddie said who is on the light on the boat and it said this is Captain Olsen. Well Eddie let loose with a little an expletive something like the hell with you thinking it was somebody that was playing a joke on him and the guy on the boat just called off the signal and made an end to it right then. So Eddie was nervous. Then when the landing party was beginning to coming aboard the ship here was the Captain and looked up and said I will see you in my quarters Signalman Holt and he got 30 days of discipline, extra duty for what he said to the Captain so this kind of tells you that whatever you say over the light or with flags everybody can read and you better be careful what you are sending the other guy because you don't know who it is. So he got in trouble with that one. It is funny but it wasn't funny for Eddie with that 30 days.

LINDA:

EDGAR: I got familiar with the LSTs in Portland Weymouth. While we were in Teamouth we saw them at a distance mostly but there was no harbor for them to come in. We handled mostly small boats like the LCMs which were the little boats that hit the beach. I got more familiar with the LSTs and the LCMs at Port Weymouth where they came to load at what we called the hard and the LSTs would come in there and they would lower their ramp and there was a cement landing there for the tanks to roll up and roll outside the ship. So there is where we got acquainted with the LSTs where we could go aboard and look them over. See what they were doing.

LINDA: You actually had a lot of communication with the Captain.

EDGAR: Yes. Captain Olsen and I, but you know my job was on the bridge and general quarters or any kind of duty watch or when the ship was moving or when we got underway or came into port my job was always to be on the bridge giving directions to the other signalman but also relating to the Captain because he would be the one to give me the orders for the flag hoist or for the signals and I worked with Captain Olsen closely and I was impressed with him because he had been a signalman. As a non-officer before he became an officer so when the signals were coming he knew what was coming in before we even gave him the message. So you had to be on the ball with him. He was a sharp guy. He knew what he was doing. He had been in the Navy for like 18 to 20 years so he was a good man for me to work with. I liked him a lot.

LINDA:

EDGAR: Captain Olsen was a sailor's sailor. He is what we call the mustang. He

had been an enlisted man for 18-20 years and then when the war came along he went to Officers Candidate School and became an officer so he understood the life of a sailor and like I said a sailor's sailor and like I said I really enjoyed working with him and he was a signalman, had been a signalman and he could read the messages before I even got them. He knew what was going on so I really enjoyed working with him. He was a good man to work with.

LINDA: How was it being a signalman under French?

EDGAR: Captain French, he was a businessman that had gone to what we call 90 day wonder school I think and became an officer and had worked his way up from being the executive officer in England and France to where he became the Captain when we went to the Pacific and he was a different kind of man because he was not really knowledgeable of the sailors or their lives. It was just a little testy at times and he was just not knowledgeable of all that was going on. For instance a little thing he could be asking me to send a message and so I would start sending the message to another ship and then the ship would be answering back and he would be saying blinker signalman get that light. Well I was really talking to the man and he didn't really realize all that was going on. He was kind of a nervous guy and I kind of felt sorry for him because he was kind of a loner. Even with the officers I don't think he was accepted as really being the captain of the ship.

LINDA: You were on the ship for Christmas 1944 right?

EDGAR: Yes.

LINDA: Tell me about that. Did that mean anything to you guys that it was Christmas.

EDGAR: Well I think we were in Plymouth England getting ready to come back to the states. I think we left on Christmas Day or left during that week some time. It wasn't any unusual day. In fact as you mention that I think Christmas day I went ashore in Plymouth England and it was absolute devastation as you can imagine. That sound, that City had been leveled. It was rainy and it was a drizzily day and I can remember as I think that here it is Christmas and we ought to be celebrating and that kind of thing but it was kind of a dismal day and we went back aboard the ship. The exciting thing about it was that we were getting ready to go back to the States. Of course everybody was jumping for joy about that one.

LINDA: That was a good day sailing home.

EDGAR: We were happy about that.

LINDA: First you landed in the Brooklyn Navy Yard right?

EDGAR: Right. It was exciting to come back to New York and it was cold. It was January and we had a rough crossing in the Atlantic. There were days that we did not make one inch going forward. The heavy seas and the winds we say what you call water spouts on the water but they were tornadoes that were around us. It was a rough rough sea. Tremendous waves. 60 foot waves. Days when we just didn't make any progress at all. We were battling to keep out from getting in the trough which would turn us over. So we were excited to get back to New York. We came back it was snowing and when we came back we saw the Statue of Liberty, and got into New York with the lights because you had to know whenever we went into a port in England it was always blacked out and you couldn't see and you just kind of had to feel your way along. But we came in and the lights were shining and everything was going and couldn't wait to get off

the ship, get ashore and see New York again.

LINDA: That gives me goose bumps.

EDGAR: It was an exciting day. It really was.

LINDA: I could just picture it. The American people had to feel so proud of you guys.

EDGAR: Well you know it was a great thing to be a military person during World War II. It was a popular war if you could say it that way and everybody was proud of you and you were proud to be a serviceman. You could ride the buses, the trains, the streetcars or the elevators for free. There were many places you could get in for free. They had USOs where you could go in and they would sew a button on your uniform or you could get coffee or something to eat and it was all free. And people were happy to see you. We were glad to see New York and go to Times Square and Central Park and go down and see the people and be, and get American Food. You have to know that in England you couldn't go to the corner drugstore and get a milkshake or a hamburger. Totally out of the question. You could get maybe fish and chips or burgers and beans as we called hot dogs and beans and that was it. But you got back to the States you couldn't wait to get a good hamburger, get some ice cream, and a milk shake and even American beer which was cold in England it was warm there. So it was just great to get back to American culture.

LINDA: Jack Dempsey was on 49th Street. Do you remember that?

EDGAR: Yes and I remember those places and I remember the Times Square, the USO club down on Rainbow Corners, we used to hit that place and the movies and the programs and the theaters, and all the bars of courses.

LINDA: Were you on the first 30 day leave or the second?

EDGAR: Well I was on the first 30 days. I have to tell you a little story about that. My father had been transferred from Chicago to Wichita Kansas. So we got out thirty days leave and we had to go from New York to Chicago, to Wichita which took about two or three days before you finally made that. So I pulled that thirty-day leave and came back to the ship and they were repairing the ship, putting in salt-water evaporators. The top deck was all cut out and it was cold and rainy and snowy and it was just miserable in the shipyard there and everybody was scurrying for shelter and warmth. I worked in the office because I was typist and I was a second class signalman. I worked in the office helping them type reports and papers and things. So I just after I was back from my thirty day leave for a while I just picked up two blank leaf papers typed my name in there and one guy Gene Dallas, you haven't met Gene Dallas, he was a radio man and he and I used to go on liberty together alot. Typed his name on the leaf papers and I signed French's name to the bottom of those papers. We went off of that ship and went back home for 30 days and I told Ensign Long, who was the Quartermaster when you start correcting charts to get on the way let me know because we have to get back and it is a three day shot from Wichita and Dallas lived in Streator Illinois so the train went right through Streator from Wichita and Chicago and then right back. So I called Long and caught him and said to him what are we doing and said you better get back because we are working on charts. So we jumped on the train got back through all that hassle Chicago, picked up Gene in Streator Illinois, got back about two o'clock in the morning liberty had been cancelled at midnight because we were getting underway at daylight. We just made it. We just made it back aboard that ship or we would still be in Portland prison making little rocks out of big rocks because the ship would have gone without us and we would have been in trouble and the only reason

that we got back aboard ship without being disciplined is that we had brought some boxes of books that my father had bought for the library. He thought you know the guys being at sea they might like to read some books. So I said you know we had to pick up these books and get them aboard and to pick them up just took longer than we thought so we got away without being disciplined. You know again I think for me life is fair and god is good I just have been so fortunate in instances like that. And many times being the leading petty officer in my division I made out the watch quarter bill and the liberty list so when we hit port I am the first guy ashore and the last guy aboard. Many a time I caught the ship as she was backing out of the dock and I am climbing aboard or I have had them run me out in a small boat to catch the boat/ship as we are going. So I just you know life is fair to me and God is good. I had a lot of instances like that.

LINDA: You left when you sailed you headed due West.

EDGAR: Leaving New York for Norfolk then down to Cuba then down through the Panama Canal and out through the Pacific it was kind of a lonesome feeling and we were singing this song Give Me Land, Lots of Land under starry skies. Don't fence me in. But we were singing don't ship me out. We were happy in New York. We knew when we were gone again it would be like I was gone a year and half in Europe. It could be another year and half two years in the Pacific. And that was dangerous out there. They were shooting at you. We had things under control in Europe, air supremacy and the sea and we had a few mines and a few E boats around and submarines but we were relatively safe after we made the invasion and pushed the enemy back but in the Pacific the war was still raging for the sailors making the invasions and we were all that excited about that. But we said good-bye to the Statue of Liberty and that was kind of a nostalgic moment and then we went to Norfolk, then Cuba, we were in Guantanamo Bay and then we went through the Panama Canal, which was an

interesting thing. We stopped at all the Ports of Call there. Pulled liberty in Panama. That was exciting time for the guys. They were drinking rum and coca-cola and the yankee dollar down there. Some of the guys got in trouble for that down there but we made it. Then Pearl Harbor, Quam and Saipan and then to Okinawa.

LINDA: Tell me about crossing the International Dateline.

EDGAR: Well that was an interesting thing. I really didn't know that they had they initiation until we got close to there and then those sailors that had been across the International Dateline before always initiated the newcomers. Well we were all mostly newcomers and they really made it difficult for us. They dumped us in tanks of salt water and they painted us with red lead chrome like paint and cut all of our hair off and then we had to go through a paddling line where they paddle us with paddles. They worked us over pretty good. They shaved our heads. That was quite an initiation.

LINDA: I am surprised no one got hurt.

EDGAR: Well I suppose they got skinned up quite a lot. I remember Eddie Holt who was in the signal division and I got to meeting out some of the discipline to the guys and the initiation and Eddie Holt came through and he was crawling on his hands and knees on the deck that was covered with grease and paint and I wacked him with a paddle and I hit him pretty hard. Harder than I intended to. He probably remembers that. Lifted him right off of the deck with that. He really was shocked at that one. That was interesting.

LINDA: Not a lot happened on your trip over to Okinawa did it? It was relatively.

EDGAR: Smooth sailing. Going to Okinawa from Pearl Harbor it was relatively

smooth sailing. We were pretty safe. We had general quarters every morning and every night. But it was relatively safe we were far enough away from enemy lines. From Pearl Harbor it was okay and then to Guam, and then to Saipan and then from Saipan into and then it got kind of risky because of the possibility of submarines and air raids. Then when we got to Okinawa it got really tense because the Japanese were swimming out to the ships and tying bombs onto the propellers. So when you start your motors the next morning boom it could blow the ship up. And then we had the air raids which came pretty regularly. And the Japanese Betty Bombers could fly high enough that our 90mm cannons couldn't reach them that were shore batteries and our 40mm on the ship wouldn't reach them at all. So they could fly up there at leisure and drop bombs and the fighter planes ordinarily stayed outside the perimeters. They tried to catch the enemy before they got inside the perimeter. Once they got inside the perimeter then the fighter protector plans would stay back and we would try to knock them down with 40mm and 90mm cannons. And the Betty Bombers could fly above those 90's and they would drop bombs on us and then they had also these one man guided missiles. It was like a miniature suicide attack. There would be a Japanese pilot in there and he would be guiding that torpedo and pretty direct hit so it got pretty tense then. We were all armed and general quarters much of the time when we were in the Okinawa waters.

LINDA: Tell us about general quarters.

EDGAR: Well general quarters was when the, we were always on watch. They always had a watch crew on. We always had a signalman, a radioman, and a quartermaster. They were always on duty and they had gun crews watch forward and aft. General quarters was when all hands were all manning guns and you were at battle stations on the, on alert because it got sensitive at that time. We were on the bridge where we could see

everything that was happening and all the guns had to be manned. It was pretty tense. Guys would come who might have been in the shower and they would have a towel around them and a life jacket and a helmet during those times. It was a scary time.

LINDA: When they called general quarters everybody went no matter.

EDGAR: Whatever what you were doing no matter where you were you went to a battle station to prepare for general quarters.

LINDA: General quarters you were in practically the whole night when the kamikaze came

EDGAR: When we got into Okinawa waters we were in general quarters a lot of the times, during the day, during the night, early morning, late at night. Always just before sunrise we would have general quarters and always in the evening just before sunset we were general quarters. But that particular night on June Twenty One we were general quarters pretty much all night. Off and on. The air raids were coming in and getting past the screen out there and the fighter protection. We would, on the bridge we had a two-way radio where we could listen to the dogfights. We could hear the pilots talking back and forth on the planes and talking back to the ships and the basis and they would say bogey and o five o you know so many miles out or whatever and then they would say negate bogey o five o they got him. It was kind of a sensitive time.

LINDA:

EDGAR: Well yeah. It seemed to be more intense at least it was when we were in Okinawa with the planes coming in. The suicide planes they were crazy. They would head right for you.

LINDA: So tell me about the day the 534 got hit.

EDGAR: Well we got up, we had been in general quarters off and on through the night and we got up with revelry at 0700 had breakfast and general quarters went off while we were having chow. We were there and planes were coming in. They were shooting at the planes. I was on the bridge and I was watching this plane coming right in from behind us and they were trying to identify that plane and everybody was shooting at it with the 20's and the 40's and I am standing on the bridge. We had a superstructure con. We had a signalman up there on the top with the Captain and I am watching as the smoke stake and the shrapnel was falling and I can't figure out where all this stuff is coming from because our smoke stake is being shot up and sparks and tracers and flax is falling and it is our sister ship that is maybe a 100 yards maybe 300 yards off of our port side who is also unloading, they were shooting at that plane and following it down as it came behind us you see so they didn't stop shooting when the plane got in range of us so they were shooting and we had a number of our own sailors wounded - what they call friendly fire now, but it was very unfriendly. We had a lot of casualties from our sister ship over there that was unloading on us and then the ship swung around and when it got below the deck water line they kept bringing their guns down and they are still firing, still shooting at us and I am crouching trying to figure out where all this is coming from and it is coming from these guys over here. Then the suicide plane banked around and hit us on the waterline on the starboard side and we went down immediately. They told us even if that tank deck was flooded with water that that ship would float and as I said I was on the bridge and the Captain wanted to get the ship out of there because we were blocking the harbor we couldn't unload it. So he said all engines back full. I remember hearing him say that. Well the ship just boom, boom, we weren't going anywhere, we were

already on the bottom boom in about 25 feet of water or something like that. Then there was the casualties of trying to get those that had been in that area where the bomb had gone off. It blew up the right side of the ship went out, the starboard side, and then the top deck blew up from the blast, then the bottom, about 40 feet out of the bottom was blown out. So we just went boom right down. We were unloading some of the SeaBee Battalion and I like to think it was the 125th but I am not sure and some of those guys that were still down there blow them right out on the dock and those that had been shot in the back by the other ship down the way they were trying to get them off and get them out of the hole where the explosion was. Some of the guys were trapped below deck and couldn't get out. It was filling with water. One instance where a guy was banging on it because the hatch was warped and banging on it they pried it open and the guys were able to get out. Then a fire broke out. We were carrying explosives and flammable materials and a fire broke out and we fought a crazy fire on there. We had 40 tons of ammunition and I think we had carbide and we had diesel fuel, fuel oil and gasoline, and we were fighting the fire for hours. We expected to blow up any minute. We thought they would at least say abandon ship get out of here because if you seen the pictures there is nothing but black smoke coming up and we couldn't see and we lost all our gear and everything like that. We thought they would abandon ship and get us off of there. They didn't. The Captain said to me we need some more fulmite which was to fight fire so I took a small boat crew and I think a signalman and we went out to signal other ships and ask them if they had some fulmite that they could give us which we brought some back to help fight the fire because we were running out of that stuff.

LINDA: Norris Long told me about the guy that came on ship that was the fulmite specialist. He was apparently off another ship and he was a pro at fighting fires and he was saying do this do that. When he heard you had

ammunition on board he apparently said why didn't you tell me that in the first place.

EDGAR: We had fulmite specialists and fire fighting crews that were brought aboard from other ships, other small ships that came along side that they put on these asbestos suits and they were fulmite fire fighting specialists. They were telling us where to spread the fulmite which would smother the fire and these guys with the suits were going inside to rescue anybody that was trapped inside where they couldn't get out and then when they found out that we had more flammable material explosive on board then they were saying man we better get off of here and get out. Well I was one of the fortunate ones that got off on a small boat and went after some more fulmite so if it had blown up I would have been away from there but then I did come back to help finish fighting the fire. These guys in the fire fighting suits, asbestos suits they were trying to get people and trying to salvage some of the valuable equipment that is aboard the ship.

LINDA: So the fire is over, the ship is sunk, tied to a liberty boat, raise it up with with a cofferdam tie it to a liberty boat, then what happened?

EDGAR: Well after the fire, we finally got the fire out and it was evening. You have to remember that we had been at this high pitch since 9 o'clock in the morning because we got hit about 9 o'clock on June 22. We had been at this fever pitch of adrenalin running trying to put out the fire, the casualties. We were carrying an LCT, that is a small landing craft. We were carrying that and when all of this the shooting and being hit by one of our sister ships, one of the officers I saw him run inside the conning tower of that LCT and one of the shells from our sister ship 20mm armor piercing shell went right through that armored conning tower and exploded on the inside so when we took him out he looked like a sieve. He must have had about 500 holes in him where that shell had exploded

there. We finally got him out. We got the casualties off the ship. Got the fire under control and then we had to go someplace. So they took us ashore, we had really we had rags around our feet because the decks were absolutely boiling hot trying to put that fire out. So moved ashore, got us some new shoes and new clothes and then they put us up in tents so that we could sleep off of the ship that night because the ship was in absolute shambles. We stayed on the beach for quite a while, several days. Then they sent, because we blocked the harbor and they couldn't unload in this particular place anymore, and they need that, they sent divers down and dammed up the hole in the bottom of the ship, then they pumped the water out and floated us so that, then a tug boat took us out tied us up against a cargo ship an AKA that had been torpedoed and we provided some of the electricity from our motors because our motors were still in tact for them and we were tied up against that cargo ship and we just, part of the crew stayed ashore part of the crew came back and in lived in part of the salvageable part of the ship which we did. We ate on the AKA because our galleys and all were ruined and the food was awful. We had to, you can imagine all the stuff, the food, the refrigeration went out. All that bad food the deck crew had to carry all that bad stinking putrefying stuff out of the ship and throw it out on a rhino barge to take out and dump and sea and then the typhoons came through.

LINDA: Before we go to the typhoons which is another whole story, lets go back a second. Talk about your clothes you said they were at the fire

EDGAR: Well after we got here and explosion and time to get to the casualties and then with the fire that broke out it really got hot. It really got intense. We were afraid the ship was going to blow at any moment with the inflammable material we had and the 40 tons of live ammunition that just could go off at any time. We were throwing ammunition out of the gun tubs. Any ammunition that was not below water we were throwing it

overboard so that there wouldn't be any more explosions and the fire was so intense that everything in sight was destroyed. After we finally got the ship floated again and we went down and tried to salvage what we could but I remember going to my locker and getting my clothes out and taking out a t-shirt and it was just scorched and fell apart. We lost everything that was down there. If it wasn't burned totally if it was in another part of the ship then it was scorched.

LINDA: Did French tell you to fire? Do you remember that? Did French give the order to shoot down the kamikaze plane?

EDGAR: Well I know it was a long time before we started to shoot and we kept saying shoot shoot, fire fire, other people were shooting but from, as I remember we were a long time before we unloaded and I think it was our people couldn't really distinguish what that was. Whether it was an enemy ship or one of ours. I don't know who gave the order to fire. To be honest I just don't know. I know all of a sudden we starting firing and shooting everything we had.

MATT:

LINDA: Did you have a smoke screen there, at Okinawa?

EDGAR: Can't remember if we had a smoke screen at that particular time. I think there were other times when we had smoke screens because we were a sitting target after some of us moved back on the ship and tried to exist there before they dammed it up and floated us out. The air raids would come and we would have to get off of the ship and try to find cover. Got underneath other vehicles or tried to hide from the bombs that were falling.

LINDA: Was the sister ship the 1022?

EDGAR: I think it was. I think it was the 1022. I wasn't totally shore. I can't remember the numbers of our sister ships exactly but I think I remember 1022.

LINDA: At the reunion in Chicago the guys from the LST 534 were always trying to talk to the guys on the 1022 because they said that was their sister ship.

EDGAR: It would be interesting to know if anybody has ever talked to the members of that 1022 to see what their reactions were. I remember and it is kind of a satire the whole thing is that they were out the next day or so painting a Japanese plane on their conning tower like they shot it down. They didn't shoot him down the guy hit us and we went down.

LINDA: Symanski told me him and another guy went over to that ship, oh Alex Fielder and Symanski went over and threatened to shoot them if they didn't take it off.

EDGAR: Well Symanski was our bosman mate and Fielder was an officer and they were the ones I think that were exercised the most about that. We all were. We were all upset that the suicide plane crashed into us and they shot some of our guys and they marked it down like they shot the plane down.

LINDA: Well you guys didn't let them get away with it. Now before the typhoons came the end of the war came. The end of the war was August 14th and then the first typhoon was September, right?

EDGAR: You are right. The war ended and that was a glorious day. I think there was more shot and shell going up in the air and we probably had as many

casualties as if we were hitting the beach because everybody was shooting everything. Everybody was so happy. Jumping up and down for joy that it was finally over. And that was going to be the end to everything. Then we were still trapped there and then the typhoon season came. The typhoons really, we went through several typhoons in Okinawa. One broke us loose from the ship that we were tied up to that AKA. The big, I remember seeing those big lines that we were tied together with, cables, and big housers that were like about that, and that just snapped those and we were adrift and while we had engines we had no control, no ships, no screws, no rutters. All those were either damaged or gone and so we were being blown across the harbor. You have to remember an LST is about the size of a football field 327 feet long, not quite as wide. But that is a big ship and we were crashing over boys and crashing into small boats that were out there and small boats were trying to signal us and say can we tie up with you because we can't stand the waves and all and we did say we are out of control get out of our way and the larger ships, all the big ships were gone that were sea worthy. It was just those that were unsea worthy that were in the harbor. So there weren't a whole lot of them but we smacked into a few and I remember a big ship that we plowed into and we tried to miss it. Scraped the whole side and tore some of our lightings off and sparks were flying as electrical cords were parting. So that was a scary moment. We didn't know what was going to happen. All the crew was lined up around the railing of the ship with life jackets on and ready to release the life rafts and all so that they could abandon ship. I was I think the only one on the bridge with the flashlight - with the signal lights you know saying stand clear - we are out of control - and look out.

LINDA: The crew that lived on the island, some lived aboard ship, some lived on the island, was everybody back on the 534 at that time?

EDGAR: I don't think we had the full complement back on board. I think some of

them were still on the beach because we couldn't accommodate them all. The ship was damaged and the feeding we couldn't feed on our ship. We had to get our chow from the AKA.

LINDA: But there were still substantial numbers..

EDGAR: There was a large contingent, yes aboard the ship even though there were a number of them on the beach as I recall.

LINDA: Even though you said you loved the Navy and loved being a sailor weren't you saying about that time enough is a enough?

EDGAR: Well during the typhoon time or during the burning time when the ship was afire and when the torpedo plane, the suicide plane crashed up, those were tense moments. That was not the romantic part of the sea that you were going port to port and having liberty. These were stressful moments and we were concerned about our own safety at that time. We weren't sure when that typhoon was coming because again we were listening to the radio of ships that were being rolled over. We were hearing about ships that were actually picked up and thrown on the beach. We were hearing of sailors who were have accidents and one in particular I remember fell down the ladder and they didn't know if he had a brain concussion or not and they were trying to communicate with a doctor on the beach or on another ship - what are the symptoms, what are the signs. This type of things. So these were stressful moments for all of us because first of all we had the bottom of the ship out, we had a big hole in the starboard part of the ship and there was a big hole in the top of the ship so we were wounded and not really the masters of our own faith. Anything could happen to us. That could have filled up with water, the dams could have broken, the cofferdams gone out, anything could happen and our small boats were washed away. I saw them as they waddled the wave they

just broke loose and we lost our boats so all we had were our life jackets and the life raft and we were at the mercy of the typhoon and the wind was absolutely vicious. You could hardly hang on.

LINDA: I can't image the wind being so strong it could turn over a ship.

EDGAR: I brought some pictures with me that I will show you that shows big ships, just threw them up on the beach. I have a picture of a flagpole that was bent in a 93 degree angle. Now a flagpole doesn't have much resistance to the wind but here is a steel flagpole that is bent 93 degrees. It was vicious. They say the winds were 150 miles an hour with gusts over that.

LINDA: Wild and you were signaling

EDGAR: Yeah I was up on the bridge trying to hang on and wondering what was going to happen to that ship.

LINDA: So what did happen?

EDGAR: It finally blew us onto a kind of sand bar where I felt like we almost buckled because we washed up on the sandbar which was a blessing because we were secured then. As long as the typhoon winds were blowing and we were on the sandbar we weren't going anywhere. We at least weren't going to roll over and drown. So it was a fortunate thing that we weren't blown out to sea or that we didn't crash into heavier ships. It would have done severe damage. So we were on this sandbar kind of like a little island. So we were relatively safe there. Just had to wait out the storm.

LINDA: How long was that storm.

EDGAR: Well now the typhoon came during the daytime and went through the night. So I would think that was a good twelve - twenty hours that we were under typhoon winds. At least that long.

LINDA: Longest 12 to twenty hours you ever had in your life?

EDGAR: That was a long time because for each one of us it was a stressful time. Because again we weren't able to handle ourselves. To go over the side of the ship into the water was suicide because there were mountainous waves and turning water in that harbor and so many things could have happened. It was a long night.

LINDA: In talking with you guys during the process that I have been going through this I have had a sense that something was watching over the 534. Do you agree with that?

EDGAR: I believe that. You know somehow, I became a Christian after I came back from the Navy. I think all of that helped me to think that there is more to life than just doing a little work to buy a little food to get a little strength to do a little work to buy a little food. There is more to life than just living. And I became a Christian and I more and more believe that God put his hand on my life and of course the people on the ship all of our lives and particularly during those critical times because there were a lot of them that did not come back. We lost a lot of men. We were the fortunate ones.

LINDA: Never lost a man on the 534?

EDGAR: I don't think they were killed. We had a number of them wounded. The ones that were killed I think were the Seabees we were unloading.

LINDA: I think that officer that was in the LCT conning tower was Wayne Jens.

EDGAR: I think Wayne Jens was the officer that was in that conning tower and I suppose he felt you know he was on that ship, that was his boat, he probably felt he wanted to be there with the records and the value papers all were but boy when he got in there and that shell exploded on the inside he came out of there he looked pretty bad. He lived which is fortunate, which is a miracle.

LINDA: Did you see him afterwards?

EDGAR: I saw him when we got him out of there but never saw him again. They took him to the hospital and I never saw him again.

LINDA: They took all the guys to an Army field hospital. Did you ever go up there?

EDGAR: No I never did go visit the men. I stayed aboard ship most of the time trying to bring that thing back and only moved ashore when they finally decommissioned it when they said it is all over. They moved us all out of there and then we moved ashore and lived off on a hillside in pup tents. I shared a tent with Johnny Mederious. We tried to survive the rains. Learning not to touch the tent because if you touched that tent the water poured through there. And you know they fertilized those fields with human secretion so it was bad and the bugs were bad. We were not used to that. We were used to showers and coffee and hot chow and that kind of life - clean clothes. We lived like beach bums when we had to finally evaluate the ship.

LINDA: How long were on that island like that?

EDGAR: We must have had to live on the island for a couple of months because we got hit in June and while some of us moved back aboard the ship in July and August, I know we were aboard the ship then, we didn't get out of there until December. So we lived there on the beach probably for a couple of months.

LINDA: So you never did see the 534.....

EDGAR: No. Never saw the, the last time we saw the 534 it was on that sandbar. I felt like it buckled so I didn't see it anymore from there.

LINDA: The bow and the stern were actually pointing the same way.

EDGAR: Well no. It looked kind of like it was bent in the middle. The bow was up a little yeah because of the breakage. The suicide plane hit us up towards the front of the bow on the starboard side. It kind of looked like it buckled a little there.

LINDA: What was French doing all this time.

EDGAR: Well after the fire and after we moved ashore I don't remember seeing much of the Captain. I think I saw the Executive Officer and the Communications Officers and the Engineering Officers as we worked together to see if we couldn't bring the ship back but I don't remember having much to do with the Captain after that.

LINDA: Did you get to go home after that?

EDGAR: I have to tell you. This is an exciting story. Again it is a marvelous way in which God watches out after us. Like I say life has been fair to me in spite of all these circumstances. God has been exceptionally good to me.

We got back and we hit San Pedro California on an APA. You have to know there were thousands literally thousands of servicemen on the West Coast. All coming back. Marines, sailors, soldiers, airmen, coast guard, flooding that place. There was nothing but military personnel absolutely swarming. When they put us up at San Pedro at the Navy base there and then said you have leave papers go. Well how are you going to go. We went down to the train station and it looked like Dunkirk. There were lines, snake lines of servicemen lined up to get to the window to get a ticket to get on a train, to get on something. I said I am not going to do that. So another fellow and I, I think it was Gene Dallas, we walked out and we walked by a travel agency. And I said I am just going to check this travel agency and we just walked in and I said do you have a plane to Wichita Kansas and they looked and they said yeah we do. We have two planes one that leaves like at 4 o'clock this afternoon and one that leaves at 9 o'clock at night that is going that way. So I said to Gene I'll flip you for who goes first. I won. I got on the plane at 4 o'clock and I was home that night in Wichita. My folks had not heard from me. They thought we were either going to Japan or what happened that we had been hit and I had written about the survival and that kind of thing. They didn't know where I was, they knew I was out in Okinawa but they didn't know anything more than that and the next thing they knew I knocked on the door and here I am. It was midnight and I was home. I tried to check on some of my shipmates where I had their numbers and all and they didn't get home until weeks till after that but I was home that very night so I figured I was a fortunate guy.

LINDA: And that was it you were discharged from the Navy?

EDGAR: No. I had to report back, I was not discharged at that point. I had to report to Kansas City. There is a Navy Base called the Lather Navy Air Base right outside Kansas City Missouri and I had to report there for my

final termination discharge. I stayed there for about a month while they were processing us. So every night we were going into Kansas City on liberty, coming back and resting in the daytime and going back to Kansas City at night. So we had a good time doing that. And then finally the discharge time came and I went down to Norman Oklahoma and was discharged from there. And I have to tell you this in all honesty, Linda that I was thinking of re-enlisting. I love the Navy. I wanted to stay with the Navy. I enjoyed that lifestyle. I was like I say a second class petty officer, and that was pretty good for a kid that was 20 years old and I was going to stay in but when I came home and while I was home I met this girl and it was either she or the sea and I chose she. Again that was one of my smart decisions. God guided decision because she helped me put my life back together. My life was pretty messed up but she helped me get my life back together. She was very patient, very loving, very kind. I went back to school. I finished by high school. Sitting 21 years old in a sailor suit in a high school finishing my high school getting that diploma. Then I went on to college and studied to be a CPA and after working in the accounting field I became an officer with the Salvation Army. Had 36 1/2 wonderful years with the Salvation Army. And my lovely wife we were married for about 45 years had five children. Great lady. Great lady. She helped me be what I am today. And we retired out of Chicago. I retired as a full Colonel Staff Officer. My job was personnel. Responsible for all the officers in the 11 central states and appointing them where they were to go. Their discipline, their education and their health and all of that. And then my wife got sick right after we retired. She had perfect health. We went through the University of Minnesota Cancer Detection Center and she got a perfect rating. Perfect. She was concerned about my health because I am a type A hyper guy. She got a perfect bill of health and within 90 days she was sick and five months she died with cancer. So that was a blow to me and I was retired, alone and lost. And I didn't really know what to do with myself at that time. You know when

she was dying she said to me now you will want to get married again but you will want to be careful because there are a lot of woman out there and they will take advantage of you, you know. And she had a couple she didn't want me to marry. So I said to Mo you know I am not looking but if I did who do you think I should marry if I ever did get married again. Well she bowed her head and said my sister. Well I (her identical twin sister) I said she is married you know and she is a nice lady but she is not you. Well do you know that in about a year her husband died and we got together and I married my wife's identical twin sister and it couldn't be better. I am the most fortunate guy in the world. Absolutely wonderful. Just an absolutely wonderful life. I am of most people most blessed.

LINDA: Are you.

EDGAR: I really think I am. An exciting life. I have been everywhere, I have seen almost everything, I have done almost everything, and here I am at this point in time I have my health, a lovely wife, we have enough money so we can at least go do what we want to do. We have been to Russia, we have been to China, I have been to the Holy Land. Life is fair. For me God is good.

LINDA: What is your first wife's name?

EDGAR: Darlene. So it is Darlene and Arlene. They were absolutely identical in every way. They look alike, talk alike, trouble is they think alike so they she knows me for what I am.

LINDA: You have a great story.

EDGAR: Wonderful story.

LINDA: So Darlene helped you to make the transition from Navy life to civilian life.

EDGAR: Darlene was the one that helped me become civilized again. Darlene are the one that helped me become civilized again. You know I was a rowdy sailor. We just lived from moment to moment. Did what we wanted to when we wanted to do it. We didn't have to, as long as I was aboard ship on time and conducted myself in a manner and did my job and all and that was all that was expected of me and I had no responsibilities. Only myself and when I came back like I said I fully intended to re-enlist but when I met her she helped me make the transition from being a sailor and being a rowdy sailor into being a civilized human being. She was very patient, very loving, very kind and helped me see the more valuable things of life. She was steady. Fine christian lady. Helped me really find the lord d find my way.

LINDA:

EDGAR: Yes, she always took care of me. She was very bright. We worked together in the Salvation Army see because if you are an officer the spouse has to be an officer. My wife had to go through the seminary the same as I did. She was very helpful. We worked together as a team. Very creative. She kept me out of trouble. Five children and Arlene has five children. We have ten children and 21 grandchildren.

LINDA: Tell me the names of your five children.

EDGAR: Curtis, Sally, David, Nancy and Lea. So we have two boys and three girls and Arlene has three girls and two boys.

LINDA: And their names are?

EDGAR: Now come on now. The oldest daughter is Gazelle, and then Marty, and then Wesley and then Linda and then Jeannette.

LINDA: So it is one big happy family.

EDGAR: Really. They have accepted me into as being Arlene's husband. They don't call me dad, which they wouldn't. I am not their father but they treat me with respect and have accepted me and I think that is wonderful that they have done that.

LINDA: Do they call you uncle?

EDGAR: They call me uncle, yeah. Uncle Eddie.

LINDA: Do you have any old letters or

EDGAR: Yes I do. As a matter of fact my mother saved all the letters that I wrote to her and I ran across those some time ago when my father died and we were going through his effects. So I kept them. I think I still have them.

LINDA: I wish you had brought one.

EDGAR: That would have been interesting. I could maybe get those out. I did bring some pictures of the tornadoes that came through and some of the guys on the ship. I am sorry Eddie Holt didn't make it today. It would have been nice to be with him.

LINDA: I think he must have a lot of stories to tell too. You have been kind of in touch with some of the shipmates because of the LST Association.

EDGAR: Well it was interesting. I happened to have been in Wichita Kansas in about the 80's sometime, 87 or 88 somewhere in there and noticed in the newspaper something about an LST Association. Well I made a phone call to a fellow and he was an LST sailor and he showed me one of the scuttlebutts. I couldn't believe it. I looked on the back and here were state chapters and here was Jim Sarres who is the President of the chapter in Wisconsin and he was the Communications Officer that I gave such a bad time to, he was the guy that knew I was AWOL and I thought I would love to meet that man and apologize and how sorry I was that I gave him a bad time during the war. I could have been a better sailor. The war probably would have been over six months earlier but I called him and talked to him on the phone. And then we met about 6 of them at the LST Association Convention in Saint Louis when Darlene and I attended that one. We met about 6 of them or so and their wives, interesting. And then we kept in touch. I wrote to them. Called them, talked to them by phone. But I didn't attend the one in Chicago. I feel awfully bad about that. It was just not possible for me to get to that particular one. And I feel bad because I would have met you then and all the rest of the guys and I often wondered where these guys were and what they did with their lives. And here they are. Get a little nostalgic once in a while. I have to tell you that those years were such a part of our lives that there is hardly a day goes by that you don't think about it. Something associated with the service, with the Navy. It is amazing the impact those little over three years had upon our lives.

LINDA: All your life?

EDGAR: Yes.

LINDA: Sometimes in

EDGAR: Yeah. I think they were great guys. I could only remember the good times. I liked the food. I had no trouble with the food. I didn't miss a meal. I had no trouble with the food at all.

LINDA: What did you think the day I wrote you that letter and called you? The newsletter and everything.

EDGAR: Well Linda when you first contacted me and I heard about all of this that was going on I was really excited. I really was. I remember saying to Aldine how wonderful it is that this lady is doing this research and finding these people, the buddies that I haven't seen since 1945. Fifty years plus ago and I have always wondered where these guys were, what they were doing and what happened to them. What course of action did they take in their lives. What they did with their lives. It just would have been interesting and to talk about some of the old times and what we did and I ran into Gene Dallas. I met him, he lived in Streator Illinois and I was stationed in Chicago so I got to Streator and visited with Dallas, Gene, so I had a chance to meet him and his wife and now Gene is dead. Gene died several years ago. I talked to his wife since. But just to find out about all these guys. Who they were and what they did and to think that you were doing, I was really excited about that. I went down that list that you sent and I thought isn't that wonderful. Here is these people and some I could remember and picture and some I couldn't place their face. In fact I met some of them here today and I don't recognize some of them. Life has changed.

LINDA: Why is it so important. Everybody talks about getting together. Why is it important for you to have these memories.

EDGAR: I think it is important for us to get back part of our past into our heritage and to you know our families but you have to know that I was in the Navy

a little over three years and that was such an important part of my life. Hardly a day goes by that you do not think about certain aspects of that Navy life and to think to meet with some of these people after 50 years, have a chance to visit with them, talk to them about certain things, they will remember things that I have forgotten. I will probably remember things that they have forgotten. Then we can talk about and relive some of those days and again like I remember only the good days. I don't remember any real bad days. There were some exciting moments when we were under fire and tornadoes and typhoons and those kinds of things but when I got that letter from you, and the call from you and the roster from you this is really wonderful. I have called some of the guys and talked to them. I really need to settle down and get the rest of them.

LINDA: When I said on the questionnaire when they say every ship has its own personality, how would you describe the personality of LST 534 - you said casual, a group of kids trying to pretend doing their duty

EDGAR: Yes you wrote to me and said what would be the personality of the 534. I had to think about that for a few moments because I think we were all kids. We had a few older guys aboard the ship like Ensign Long, I think he was thirty something, he was old old man aboard the ship. Some of the officers were old but most of them were young as well. So I thought to try to classify we were young kids trying to do a mans job. We were thrown into a situation that was absolutely far and above us but we responded. We assumed the responsibility that was given to us and I thought we were kind of casual guys. We weren't angry with each other. There weren't any fights aboard the ship. There were some arguments but we got along pretty well when you think there must have been about 125 - 150 guys aboard the ship. We got along I think real well. We had no problem in my ship's control division. We just got along well. We did our job so I think we would say casual and we were young guys trying to do a mans

job and we did it and you know the thing that I thought today as I look at the young kids growing up today you know you hope that there is not another war but you would hope that these kids too would be able to respond positively and I was so pleased when we had the desert storm. Those men made us really proud. I was quite emotional and proud of them that they rose to the occasion and I have to believe that the American kids if the time came while they seem kind of soft now and kind of spoiled and kind of a_____ I think they would do it. They would rise to it. They would become men overnight and do the job they had to do.

LINDA: Well it must make you feel proud that you had a little role you played in the freedom of America.

EDGAR: Linda, I am very proud to have been a part of World War II. I really am. I don't know what would have happened, I would have been very disappointed if they rejected me and said I am sorry you can't go. I was proud to be a sailor. I was proud then and I am proud today. Whenever I see anybody that I think has a Navy tattoo or some identifying mark I talk to them. And we talk many times about sea stories. For instance last night we were in a restaurant and a guy had an anchor and it had US Navy on it so I got up from my table and went over to him and said I see you were in the Navy. He said no I was not in the Navy. I said you have an anchor with the US Navy on it. Well he said I enlisted but they didn't take me and he said I had this on so I joined the Army. So I went through the war as a soldier but he had a tattoo on him that was Navy. But anybody that is military or looks like or I think in fact I generate a lot of comments, it has really helped me in my work as I relate it to in the Salvation Army we worked with all kinds of people. We worked with down and out, we worked with up and out, we worked with middle class. The Salvation Army touches the lives of people from all cross sections and my military helped me relate to a lot of them who are having trouble finding their

place in life because I could identify them first as personnel, as military, as a sailor or a soldier and I have been many of the places they have been so we have a common denominator a place where we could start and I could identify with them and relate to them and begin to talk about the values and the things that need to happen in their lives.

LINDA: Your Navy life helped.

EDGAR: It did. My Navy life was great. I just wish I had been a better man at that time. I wish I would have volunteered maybe, I wish I would have been qualified to have been a chaplain or an assistant chaplain or something to help the men. I see where I could have been so helpful to them but I was just a kid and a rowdy sailor. I had more trouble taking care of me than I was helping anybody else. But it is different now.

LINDA: Was there somebody on board that assumed that role of chaplain.

EDGAR: We had an officer who called the meetings together and led the chaplain's service, protestant service when we could on a Sunday morning. But we didn't have a ready chaplain and I wish I could have filled that purpose. Now as I look back having, being a minister I could have helped a lot of kids I think.

LINDA:

EDGAR: Well Linda let me thank you for what you have done. I think this is a very noble and admirable thing that you are doing. I am so proud of you I can't wait to see the finished product. And your dad would be proud. I enjoyed and appreciated him. He was a good man. A young man at that time.

LINDA: He was a great dad.

EDGAR: I appreciated him. He was a good boy.

LINDA: Thank you.

EDGAR: Thank you.