

OSCAR CRESS INTERVIEW

TAPE 1, SIDE A

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Linda: Okay! Hi.

Oscar: Hi.

Linda: Before we do anything else I need you to state your name and the rank that you held.

Oscar: My name is Oscar Cress and I was a Gunner's Mate Third Class on the USS LST 534. I served 22 months at sea on the LST both here and the South Pacific and we lost our ship in Okinawa. I'm fortunate to actually be alive, a lot of us, with what we went through with that there.

Linda: That's what we're going to talk about, some of that, today, because more than once I've heard that there was something watching over the LST 534.

Oscar: That is correct, yeah.

Linda: So as we talk today I want you to give me your perspective of what you think that was or the charm of that little ship, you know?

Oscar: Yeah.

Linda: Because it apparently did have kind of a little charm.

Oscar: Bound to have or, you know, so many of them got out of that thing with not a scratch on them.

Linda: What were some of the....what were some of the things that...

Oscar: Well, the biggest thing that we had there was the ships next to us was following the plane that's shooting right at us. There's one person that's going to be here today, John, he got hit with a piece of shrapnel, because of the

ships next door hit a magazine and it blowed up and a piece of shrapnel got John. But that's the only one I know of that got hit...but...uh...there was a...oh, man, they....it was something at that time.

Linda: Let's go back. How old were you when you went into the service?

Oscar: I was eighteen years old.

Linda: What was that like? I mean, did you a letter saying you got drafted or....?

Oscar: I went out of high school and I went and volunteered, actually, to put me in the next draft, so I went in and I was out...I was eighteen years old in October and the 22nd day of November I was sworn into the United States Navy, just a young boy. Never been away from home hardly, out of the sight of home. We went to Bainbridge, Merlin for a boot camp. Then I went from there to Camp Shelton, the gunner's school and then they needed the amphibious force, so Camp Bradford was just across the fence from where Camp Shelton was, so they just knocked the gates down and sent us over there and put us in the amphibious force and that's where learnt. We made practice invasions and then I went from there to Pier 92 in New York. That's where I picked up the LST. Scared to death. Just a young boy. We left Pier 92 and went to Halifax, Canada and we rendezvoused with a convoy from Halifax, Canada. We was what they call a ship in the coffins corner. We was in the left hand corner of the convoy. There was a German submarine come in our convoy and got a freighter to our right, so they said that because we didn't draw enough water that that torpedo went underneath our ship, but I kindly believe this, if that

torpedo would have come close to us, I believe it would have got us to. But they said it went under the ship. I didn't know. So we went to...from...uh....

Linda: Seems like that's another one of those, you know, charm things about the ship.

Oscar: Right. You know, that's just one of the things that didn't happen. One other thing I can remember that scared me to death. We was making a shuttle trip from England to France and somehow or another they got close to a bouy and the line that held that bouy went down the side of the ship. We thought it was a land...we thought it was a mine. Buddy, you could of heard a pin drop. I was looking for any minute for that whole bulkhead to go right in my face, but the line went all the way down and come to find out it was a bouy that they had got to close to. We...uh...buddy, that was one of the scary things that...uh...and another thing that happened to us was when the invasion, we went on the beach, somehow or another they didn't measure the distance. See they drop an anchor to pull you off after you leave your troops and stuff and you run out of cable. And here we are high and dry on the beach, made the invasion and we had to sit there until the tide come in to get us back off of there, so we got a chance to kind of scout around a little bit and they granted us a little time to look around. So we...I went on the beach for a little bit...they get too far. And I believe that the biggest man I ever saw in my life was a German. He had...they had a trench there and they had...laying in this trench and his head was here and his feet was here. I said, "They must not have had that guy down in there right." I pulled that back and that guy....I bet

he was...oh, I don't know how tall he was. That's the biggest guy I believe I ever saw in my life, not unless a tank of something run over him and stretched him out. But we made it back out of there alright and got off of that beach. We were pretty fortunate. We didn't have anybody hurt or even....

Linda You were like a sitting target, really.

Oscar: Yeah. Like a duck. So we was lucky there. Then we pulled back out of there and went back, made....I don't know, thirty-something channel trips across there.

Linda: Were you in the first wave of....?

Oscar: Yeah. We was....we went in....we had...uh...the first thing I want to tell you though is, document this, that was the awfulest storm that ever was when we made that invasion and I can't understand why. I guess, it was because it was a surprise attack. Every person, poor soldiers on board that ship, we had spaghetti and peaches to eat and there was spaghetti and peaches all over that ship where they got sick. That thing....and there was tanks that got loose on the tank deck. We had to go and squish the trucks. When we got there to get them unload they had to take tanks and pull those trucks off where they was squished up so. There was holes in the bulkhead. It was such a storm. It was awful. We....that.....well, I couldn't understand why they did it, but you could see those small boats out there and they was...couldn't get in. They had railroad stuff like this in there and they got up on those things and they couldn't get back, so they told them to come back and circle. They sent these demolition frog people in, and they went in and set dynamite in and stuff and

blowed that out. I bet you for, I don't know how far up that beach, when they set that off there was a wall of water that went up there, I bet you, fifty foot high. Then they went in. And...but there's...a German tank was upon that hill and they was pretty well zeroed in by the time they got that thing straightened out. But I don't know how in the world those boys survived out there in those rough waves. I'd say there's a 15-20 foot wave and them with thirteen men in that small craft boat and you're dad was in one of them. He was a cox'sman in one of those boats and how in the world they ever got in there and turned around in them waves coming at them 8-10 foot and....uh...but there's a lot of them didn't come back. But there was blood in the water. You could see blood and everything in the water where the poor soldier boats had been shot and there was....but...and it...when we would make a trip, when we go in, you could sit at twelve o'clock in the night and almost read a newspaper. Guns continuously....and each day it would get further and further back. You could see the sound of the guns and things going. We had a...then we'd go back and get another shuttle trip. One time we went to London. I'll never forget this. We had got a load of troops and pulled back. When we pulled back one of those buzz bombs went right in there where that ship was. It blowed up, you know...and we was thinking how fortunate we was there. There was another one of your angel things to happen. Everybody was talking about that. But we was really _____....everybody knew everybody, but we...when you were in a battle, Condition One, a Condition Two, you are so wore out and stuff that you stand there and your legs would go to sleep and

you're legs would buckle out from under you and we stayed in Okinawa there under a smoke screen. Man, I thought I was going to smother to death. I guess, everybody else did. Then the smoke screen cleared and we had been to Guam and come back and we had pontoons and eight octane gas for Marine airbase over there and when that thing hit that...it just...how in the world anybody got off that ship I don't know. It killed that...boys down on the tank deck. I think it was coast guard guy. Yeah. Then we...uh...sunk her down and it just sank right there in the bay and they put what they call a crucker down on both sides of the hole and pumped the water and brought it back up. They took it out there and anchored it down. They sent the rest of us over to the beach and what was, you know, able to go to the beach and what wasn't able went to Guam. For...you can't...uh..._____fuel in Okinawa. That's what they say. So they sent us back to the beach and could _____ went back to Guam, which I went back to Guam where I was kind of messed up a little bit. Then I come back. We was in ships company. What they had me doing was...(Cut in tape-hissing sound)...we call them 'gooks', but they wasn't gooks. They was Chinese and Japanese mix. Working parties and straighten up around the areas and stuff. We had one little bitty boy. He was very interested in us. We'd call him 'little monk'. He'd see something out there and we'd ask him what it was and he'd tell us and we'd tell him what it was or not. Little bitty fellow. He had a sore on him and it just...flesh just fell right off of him. We'd take him down to the sick bay, but they doctored up....I don't know what ever happened to him. Then we got

everything fixed up and I went wild and just run the beach, I mean, just run the island and just report in and stuff. I went all over, Yanaboro (?), everywhere all over the beach. Go to 'C.B's' and eat wherever you was at. We had two typhoons down there. Every time we'd get a place decent to eat here come a typhoon blow it away. But one other thing, whenever I got on board that ship, I'll never forget this, they had painted the water tanks in that thing. Oh, I mean, that water, you couldn't drink it or anything else. It was awful. Everybody was sick and wanting water and everything. It was really something. But there's so many things that I have forgot that I could tell you about on board that ship. So many things that I...just like Cane. I guess you heard this tale before. He got drunk and he went up to the captains quarters and told him to turn the ship around, he wanted to go home. So he got five day bread and water over that. He even cried...tried to get into the bed with him, the way I understood it. I don't know whether he did or not. But...uh...they...Cane was his name. He was from Raleigh, North Carolina. I believe that's where he was from. He told that captain, he said, "Turn this ship around. I want to go home." He got him five days bread and water over that. That's one of the funniest things that happened. Old Larry, they was the ones that made the brew down in the...the builder down in the engine rooms.

Linda: Start that over and say Larry Gray.

Oscar: Larry Gray. Yeah. He was a Motor Mack. They made this... I don't know what...a raging jack, or something. He got a hold of some of it, Cane did, some way or another. And he got drunk. And, so, Larry and all of them had

to destroy that stuff for they were searching the ship for it. So they got out of that alright. But that's one of the things that I remember, old Cane. He was...he was all the time in trouble, Cane was. He didn't want to stand and watch his right (?) and everything else. Then we come to New York from Europe. Went dry dock. Stayed there thirty days and we got a leave. Old Cumella lived in New York. He got married. We went to his wedding. And that was some wedding, old Cumella. I want to meet him when I go to this reunion. There was two of those boys and I don't know what....he had a brother or something. I forget his name now. But that was some wedding. I remember I drank this red wine. One glass. It knocked me for a loop. I got drunk and woke up and the wedding was over. Larry was with us, I believe. If I ain't mistaking, it was Larry was with us at that wedding. I don't know whether it was him or not, but it seemed like it was Larry. We had some good times and we had some pretty bad times on board that ship.

Linda: He got married on leave?

Oscar: Yeah, when he come back from Europe. Gray did. I mean, Cumella got married when they come back. His father was a big food, vegetable exchange in New York and he was a big man. The way I understood it he tried to get Cumella out and Cumella didn't want out. He was a character. That was the meanest little bitty Catholic boy that I believe I ever saw in my life. He'd do anything and then go down there on Sunday and tell them everything he did. Asked him, "Cumella, how in the world could you get out there and do all those things and then go down there and tell that guy what all

you done all week? I'd say I'd be ashamed of myself." But he laughed at me and said, "I'm supposed to." He was a character.

Linda: We interviewed him last weekend.

Oscar: Did you? He was a character, old Cumella was.

Linda: Cumella said it was the worst of times and the best of times.

Oscar: Yeah, sure was. We had one little guy, a little colored guy...I'm trying to think of his name.

Linda: Amos Jack.

Oscar: Yeah. And he was seasick all the time. He'd be seasick, he'd pull a cap off him...bunk in his cap and stuff(?). I don't know whether he did it on purpose or whether it was actually seasick., but he'd get seasick, he'd be in the chow line or something and they'd really drag him out of there and...."don't get in here". I remember one time I got soup. I mean, I'm lucky I didn't. When you go through the chow line you go up on top and you have to go down the stairs to the table. On one of those LST's, when it's rough, it's rough. I got to the middle of that stairway and the guy above me lost control and here went that tray and everything right down on us. You can sit at the table....(pause - something happening in room)...

Linda: Okay. Let's kind of start from the beginning. When you boarded did you....oh, can you hear.....

Oscar: That was a hell hole to me.

Linda: Start over and tell us about that.

Oscar: Well, we went from Camp Shelton, they transferred us to Pier 92 in New York.

They...to me it was a hell hole for they had boys that had deserted some way or another and they had them in the brig there and there's some of them got out and they had caught some of them and you could hear them hollering going on and all. Pitiful. And they had...we slept upstairs and had to go down a revolving stairways tot he bottom. The food, to me, wasn't no good. The good part about that, we only had to stay there about eight days. Then....I don't remember what holiday or what it was, but St. Patrick's Day...we...they made us come out of there and get in the parade and march down New York. I never will forget that. We had this one boy, that he couldn't keep in step or something. He was a Sgt. Marine in the Marine Corp. or something. Was back there trying to teach him his left from the right. We was going down in New York, and Mayor....I believe it's....I don't remember now who it was, but anyway, we was laughing about it. Then we got in trouble, you see, because we was in rankbut we got out of that thing and I was glad to get out of that...that hell hole there. I was. And we went on board ship a scared to death. We....I had never been on a ship no bigger than an old home made flat bottom boat that we used to use in the river. We went on board that thing and they put me on watch a going out of the harbour and they told me, "Watch for boy's!". Man I...."Bouy? What's a bouy?" They said, "The green will be on the left and the red will be on the right." And I.....I said, "Boy, I don't

know what a buoy is or what it is, but I do learn(?)". I stood watch and I got off and then I started meeting all the crew and that's when I met Larry and all us back in that quarter, and I met your dad. We all got acquainted. Then you start, you know, finding out how far you can go with a joke or how far, you know, that they can go with you. We had a good time, but we had some bad times, too. Then we made.....we....took us...what...thirty-some days to cross the ocean and we hit some rough ones out there. You could....that LST, it'd just flop like a fish. What's his name made a song on that....if I ain't mistaking, that was....uh...

Linda: Oh, Shipes?

Oscar: Yeah. Shipes made one and there was another one made, but...uh....you could be walking on that tank deck and hit a big....I mean, not on tank deck, but anywhere, on the back of the stern....anywhere....and that thing hit and the deck just fall out from under you. You'd be in midair and that thing come back up and get you. It was rough. Just like I was telling you, you had to strap yourself in bed at night, if your sea was rough. I remember one time we had a rough one. That thing was flopping like a fish and you could hear the seams squeak on that thing. The bed....they had hooks on it....it's three _____....I slept in the middle. Ginginay (?), the heavy-set guy I was telling you about, he slept on the bottom and I don't remember who was sleeping on top, but anyway, old Ginginay got pretty well squished. We got up and I mean to tell you that ship was raising cane at that time, whenever....if they hit that and break those

chains they'd break them loose....they just went up high enough that one of the hooks come out and down. But them things were rough. And I...believe it at all, I was never was sick a day in my life, never missed a meal and come back out here and went on a fishing boat out here in the gulf and liked to died. I got so sick that I actually believed that I'd had to got better to die, for I got sick and they all kid me over that today. 'I was in the Navy. You don't get sick.' But I did...got sick.

Linda: Was there a lot of seasickness on the ship?

Oscar: Oh, yeah. At first. But you got to get used to it. But...uh...I would kind of woozy at times and...uh...I remember though when we first got on board that ship we went up by Greenland to get out of the, you know....and it was cold. Oh, my goodness it was cold. And they give us a face mask. We'd stand watch and your breath would freeze ice so that you'd have to keep a knocking that (?) to breathe and that's the reason that we went up through there to get out of those German Wolf pack...those submarines, but they still got one and...might have gotten more than that. That's the only one we knew of, that personnel carrier. And you'd only last about seven-eight seconds in that cold water...whenever...like the Titanic all those people froze to death, so...

Linda: Did you see people in the....

Oscar: Naw, I never did....see, they was over from us. We didn't see anything, but, now,

I remember one time we got....see, the English...uh...took us half way....escorted us

half way to the ocean from United States...half way to the ocean. Then the

United States took over and took us from the middle of the ocean on into England. I was tickled to death to see the American Navy out there. I know one time we was going and here come a destroyer and they had a peep-peep-peep-peep-peep. They said, "Move over!. Move over!." Said, "There's a submarine right under you." So we moved over and they dropped them death charges and barely...the decks almost buckled underneath you on the LST. And it walled the water (?) and they got it. They got that submarine. They sunk him right out of there. But they told us to move over. That thing was riding under us where they couldn't get to it, see, underneath that LST. Or that's the way I figured it. They got the submarine. So we went on to....I don't know whether we went into England or whereabouts in England, but we was in different places in England. We was in Wales, Bormouth(?), IpsRidge (?), London, Penzance...I went all over. I even went up to Scotland on a five day leave. When they give me a five day leave that's where we got strutted up. But now I was standing watch and this is where I wrote that poem, there in....uh...I've forgotten where it was at, but I was there one night and this poem come to me. "Some sweet day....", says, "we will win our way from the cliffs of Dover to the USA. Then we'll get on our knees and pray that

they'll never be another day that we will have to fight our way from the Cliffs of Dover to the USA, so far away." They wanted me to put that in the _____, but I never did. You know. But...uh...a lot of them boys....(Tape speeds up. Sound stops.)

End Tape 1, Side A

OSCAR CRESS INTERVIEW
TAPE 1, SIDE B

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Linda: So you told me that...um...when you were on the invasion that there was blood in the water.

Oscar: Oh, yeah. It was where those guys would go off the end of those small crafts like your dad was driving...take....a lot of them get shot. And they just fall in the water. There wasn't too much of that where we went in, but now on the upper part of it up there, it was awful for where those guys went in. Right there at the bluff and everything. But we didn't have too big....too much to worry about at...where we went in at. One...the only thing that I was scared of is, like I said, when we went in there and they dropped the anchor too quick and we was sitting high and dry. Well, they could have been playing...but now, we had something like they have a blimp that we put up way up in the air that where our planes can't come in and scrape you. I guess you saw those on television. We had a winch type thing and I was...I was the one of the charge of what of those blimps on the back back next to where gun turks(?) were. I let that thing up when

we started in there. Then if a plane come in, tried to scrape us or if they'd hit a wing or something, and cut his wing off. But...but we was very fortunate. We didn't...never got anything there at all. I mean, ...that big ship, but now, those boys, when they went in on that first wave...they're the one that caught the.....but when we took the heavy artillery in, tanks and big trucks and stuff like that, they had things on board that ship on the deck as well that they call Butterflies that they put turn buckles in to hold those tanks. And buddy, that sea was so rough. It just tore those things out and them big old heavy tanks and they had them trucks was in the middle and the tanks on the outside and it just tore them. They had to pull a lot of those trucks off. I'd tell you about that. We got it out of there and got her unloaded and pulled back to England. We kept making trip after trip after trip. Then we unloaded a lot of stuff on the small boats that they hold. They put you....uh...relieve those boys on the small boats. I was a gunners mate, so my turn come to go on a small boat. We went on that, but...uh... we go in and....ah...I don't know how in the world that they could get so many people on the beach in the length of time that they were. So we...uh...that's all we did. Troop after troop after troop. They would bring a load of ammunition in there. Where they got all that ammunition to shoot I don't know. They were just continuously...them guns were _____ just continuously just shoot and you could just sit and read the paper at midnight, but they kept getting further and further away, like I said.

Linda: How is Captain Olsen?

Oscar: I don't....did you ever find him? Captain Olsen was...he was Navy. He wasn't
....you know, he was a gentleman. He treated you good, but....nobody...it seemed to me like he was more or less a loner. Now, French, took over after he left. But to me, French was a screwball. He....(Laughs)...John was talking about that. He could...John could tell you about how screwball that guy was. He was something else.

Linda: The difference between Olsen and French was really, in what I've heard, in terms of these two men...

Oscar: Night and day.

Linda: Night and day. So Olsen, you know, ...I mean, there was Olsen...had to manage the ship....what...did that make a difference in your reaction to him or your feeling about safety or were you...I mean, I think...I find that Olsen was a real, you know, he was a Quarter Master before and he really knew...understood. Do you think was responsible a lot of the times for the fact that there's safety on the LST 534?

Oscar: I...he was, but now French....son, I tell you what, that guy....actually sometime he didn't even know how....I believe sometimes he didn't know whether it was daylight or dark. But that guy was...he was, to me, was just like I

said, a screwball. He didn't know hardly port from starboard, in my way of looking at him. But when he took over all of us was skittish on board that LST. They'd think, "Oh, Lord, we're in bad hands now." And...which...and he wanted to prosecute ever...who shot the plane down after that plane hit it, but...uh...he was just a screwball, you know, he was one of them Navy mix-up men. But, got into that and how in the world he managed to make his way through it, I don't know.

Linda: So when you were in England, you know, and going across the English Channel and in the Normandy Invasion and what not, I mean, did you feel like you had a guidance of a good captain?

Oscar: Oh, Yeah! We liked...er he was good. But...uh...you can probably tell John about that buoy line a going down the side of the ship. That's the only time that I can ever remember that I could say....well, he probably wasn't even around when that happened. There's probably an officer on deck....was he got too close to that buoy line and made that line go down the side of the ship. But, no, he was pretty well...he could bring that ship in and bring her back out and he was good in those canals. We went in and out of London and stuff and it was real good. I mean, he was...yeah.

Linda: Did you find yourself when you were in your gun tub, or whatever, did you find yourself thinking, "I might die?"

Oscar: Well, I tell you what, you don't think of too much of nothing, only just say....sometime that they get pictures of your life(?)...comes before you. But...uh...uh...you...whenever you're in the gun turret or something like

that you....a lot of different thoughts run through your mind, but that's been so long ago....fifty-some years ago. You know, you forget a life...every day lifestyle that happened back then. You know, it's pretty hard to remember right now. But we had a good time and bad times. I remember when I taking a whiff(?) under that smoke screen so long. I tell you, I said I'd never smoke another cigarette as long as a live after that.

Linda: What is a smoke screen?

Oscar: Where the ships were...they'd sit....

Linda:a smoke screen is....

Oscar: They set stuff out where the smoke covers your ships where the enemy can't see you. You know, it's just a smoke that you can't see that wall hardly in front of you. And we...I've even put my gas mask on. Man, it was bad. It was awful at that time and then beat it all, after it lifted that thing....they lost a lot of ships in Okinawa with them kamikazes. But that wasn't actually a kamikaze that hit, that was a zero come in there. But it had a 250 pound bomb on it when it hit that ship. The only danger, I guess, that we was in there that...he didn't...I don't know whether he come in to make a scrape or...it might have been a dive bomb or something, come in to dive bomb, but the ships around us shooting at that plane and shooting a rig right off of our ship. That's how John got hit. One of them hit that gun turret and blowed it a cliff of forty millimeters that got him. I remember when they brought him down by there. He was...taking him to...uh...off of the ship. But it just settled right down. If we'd have been out in the bay, we'd have to

abandoned ship, but it just sunk. Oh, Gosh, there was a hole in that thing for from here to that wall there. You could...you could see big old fish swimming down in there. It took quite a while before they got it back out of there.

Linda: There were fires. You had fires, right?

Oscar: They had a fire. Yeah. That eight octane gas exploded and hit...the peeled...a lot of that LST was like a banana, I mean, when it blows up. They...uh....very fortunate. Very fortunate, the gun.....you know they....badly....but...uh....

Linda: You said my dad was really good. Can you tell me a little bit about my dad.

Oscar: Oh, yeah! Your dad was a good coxswain. He could...uh...when we was in rough sea they had this small craft that he'd take thirteen men to the beach and then waves along those personnel carriers would be 12, 15, 30 foot up and down the side of them. He'd bring that ship in there to load up those troops and if you weren't careful, you'd get squished, which a lot of them did. You get down beside of that then the boat come over and hit them. But he could set that thing....about everyone of them could do it, but he was really good. He could sit those things up and down and when he went to the beach, you have to learn to....between waves with those things. If you've got a twelve foot wave coming at you and you're this way, you've got to turn that boat around and if you don't turn it around and hit that wave head on, it'll turn you over. He was good at that. A lot of them were good. Told old...uh...Cumella at one time, "You turn the boat over and I'll shoot you." So he said, "If you want to shoot me, you'll be drowned." (Laughs) So we had a

good time, had good times and bad times. I wouldn't want any of my...any of my family to be able to have to go through with what I went through with that.

Linda: Do you think it was hard when you came back from the war to make the transition....

Oscar: Sure was. My mom couldn't...

Linda: Tell us a little bit about that.

Oscar: When I got out of the Navy my mom couldn't even come in the room where I was at and speak to me. I'd jump plum off the floor. Now, I had a little dog named Nancy and she'd send the dog in to wake me up. I had a hard time getting adjusted to talking. I would talk stuff I shouldn't talk in front of my mom and, you know, this and that and the other things. Pretty bad language. But I told them they'd have to...uh...bare with me until I got kind of straightened out. It took me about three or four months. I was back pretty well normal, but I told them I wasn't going to do anything for one year. Boy, I had a thousand dollars...mustered out stuff(?)...that I could get so much a month and I called it blood money, that I was going to spend it all and then I'd do something. So....uh...I think I was down to my next or last check and I got married, but this marriage didn't last too long. We divorced and I met Helen, my wife now. We had a good life together. Sure have.

Linda: Do you think some of the guys had life long trouble adjusting?

Oscar: The only one I figured that's like...would have anything like that would be that fat Ginginay for he stayed drunk. Like I told you, I saw him the last time. But

it seemed like all the rest of them were pretty well adjusted to, you know, the life of...uh... everything.

Linda: My mom said that when my dad came back he had nightmares. He didn't talk about them at all.

Oscar: Oh, Yeah. Oh, I sweat. Oh, I'd have wringing wet...the bed would be wet. Mom would have to change my beds about every, you know, for a while. Then...but you....a little kindness and knowing where you're at and when you go to bed that's....but I still have a lot of night sweats and stuff, not a whole lot, but I still have a , you know, a tendency to sweat a lot at night and stuff yet. But I don't know whether it's due to the fact that...I never had no nightmares or anything now. The only thing that I dread now is my wife's rolling pin.

Linda: She probably has a mean right, huh?

Oscar: Yeah.

Linda: Talk to me a little bit about going on liberty and how important that was for you.

Oscar: Well, we...the only thing is is with the liberty you go on....over in England we couldn't just say one person could go by themselves. Englishmen were jealous of us. We'd have to go say three or four. For they'd....you know, there were a lot of American boys who got killed over there, beat to death by the English. They'd catch them out by themselves. They would tell you, "Don't go on liberty by yourself. Always have somebody with you." But...uh...and we....I remember one time that we got in trouble and I don't

remember now who was it with, and I think Pennington....he was a boatson mate. And he was with us and...well, it was with a pretty rough bunch to start with, you know, a pretty radical bunch. They got to counting cadents(?) of these guys standing watch there in London. I don't remember now what city we was at. They started...they had them hobnailed shoes and you could hear them coming for five blocks and they started that cadencies song, 'Hip, Right!' (?). They come after us. So there was a big pile of bricks laying over there and so all of us run over behind the bricks and started throwing bricks at them. So we run them off and we got out of there. But...uh...that's the only time I could ever remember ever getting in trouble on liberty. And I remember one time me and Larry....Larry got a magnum of champagne, or I got it one, I don't remember now. But we went into the theatre....we were both pretty high. He opened the champagne and it was hot and it went on everybody. They throwed us out of that joint. I never would forget that. That was one time that we got into trouble over that, but we laughed about it. And foggy....oh, man, it was so foggy one night and I stepped around a corner of a building and somebody hit me right in the back end with a bicycle. Boy, it hurt me. And I turned around I was kicking that bicycle and I heard them spokes go , "Bing! Bong! Bong!" And she kept saying....it was a woman....and said, "I'll call the barby on you. I'll call the barby on you." Then I'd realized what I'd done. Then I apologized and give her money to fix her bicycle. I guess I kicked one three or four spokes there. But, boy, that hit...hurt me. Hit me right in the back end. I never will forget that. I believe Larry or somebody, I

don't remember now. I believe it was Larry was with me. But we had a...a lot of time we had stuff like that fine(?), but you go...me and Pennington went into London once and the food was awful. Pigeon...we had Pigeon pie. I believe...I actually believe if somebody had a hollered, "Wool!", I'd of choked to death for I know I ate horse meat over there. It was sweet, you know, big _____ and it was pretty good. But if somebody were to ask that, I'd said, "I believe somebody would have hollered, "Wool!, I'd of choked to death." (?) But we had a pretty good time. We'd go into Bormount. I remember one time there's a place of Penzance. I don't remember who it was that went down there, but they was a place down there called a Star Hotel. These boys went down and got them a room and the bed bugs like to eat them up. They come back and they had sores all over. Then they would tell us, 'Whatever you do, if you go to that hotel, don't go tot hat hotel", said,"You'd get bad eat up with bed bugs." Yeah, they had welts all over them. I never will forget that. We were laughing about it.

Linda: Was there fog out in the sea when you were trying to...

Oscar: Sometimes you run into fog, but they had radar. They could tell where they was going, compasses and stuff.

Linda: Did you know that when they were preparing you for D-Day.....did you know what was about to happen?

Oscar: Yeah. They had put it pretty well in front of us and told us...they had things that, you know, they'd document and tell you different things. They'd have sessions of where they was going and what they was going to do and what

was everybody was supposed to do. See, they had what they call practice drills at General Quarters. Everybody had to....all of this....certain things that they had to do during General Quarters.

Linda: Did you ever get homesick?

Oscar: Yes, mam. Very homesick. But, you know, I never did cry for mommy. We was in basic training and them poor boys had never been... some of them had never been probably out of the shadows of home. And they'd just lay and cry at night, "I want my mommy." You know, they'd really cry. We had one...I never will forget this too... in basic training. We had this one smart alec and he was pretty smart alec. And we had this Chief petty officer, he was from Sweden or somewhere, but he'd come over there and got in the service. He was chief petty officer. He was pretty strict. I mean, he made us walk a tight line. He'd come in...they had a light on up in the front of the barracks and they'd smoke when the light was on or off. You wouldn't...dares them to smoke with that light off. He come in and says, "Smoking light off." This smart alec in the back hollered, "Smoking light out!" Boy he turned the lights on and told us to fall out. He said, "Who said that?" Nobody never would squawk on him or anything. But, anyway, he made us pull out toothbrushes out and there was this flight of stairs, top and bottom, and we scrubbed on those steps with out toothbrushes all night long. I'll never forget that. But that boy will never forget....him either, for saying that. They got him in the shower with a scrub brush and he looked like a lobster when they got through with him. I don't think that he ever.....and we had one other boy in basic training.

He was...poor boy couldn't do nothing. He...if you didn't have a perfect inspection...they had inspection, made inspection and inspect you. He never would fix his foot locker or have his clothes where he was supposed to and you'd flip a quarter of fifty cents on a bed it'd better bounce. Well, the poor boy, he couldn't do nothing. He kept us in trouble all the time, so we made it up, get ready for inspection all the time. But...uh...we wasn't doing him any good. But...he...about two weeks before it ended, he was so dumb they had to get rid of him. He just could not make ends meet. He just...he just...uh....that's how dumb he was. I was dumb, but I wasn't dumb enough to know that I wasn't going to get a gigged all the time. Poor guy, all he did was wash pots and pans and peel potatoes all the time in basic training. But I only had KP one time in basic training. Then we were on board ship we started at the stern...I was a seaman... chipping paint, chipping paint. Well, the opening came for a gunners mate for I hadn't been to Camp Shelton for gunnery school, but I didn't get to finish it, because they put us in their in that amphibious force. So I got to be a striper. That was a good break for me. So they put me on twenty to forties. That's all I did was work on guns and stuff. About maybe three to six months before the ship got hit they made me gunners mate third class. That's one of the reasons that a lot of the ranks and things you have a hard time with, see a lot of those records and things got messed during that ship...that sea sinking out there, so....then my discharge...I got it destroyed and where I had to go get it, that place burnt down. I was having a heck of a time. You ought to see what kind of a

discharge...looked like a piece of newspaper with a big piece on it. I can only read so much of it. So I'm going to try one of these days to get me another duplicate of my....I can't even tell you what kind of medals I've got on there or anything. I talked to Larry and I'm going to.....Larry say he had a copy of all of them that I could get to see what medals and stuff I had, but it don't matter nothing now. I ain't going to use it for nothing.

Linda: Tell me about celebrating Christmas in England.

Oscar: Well, we left...we give us liberty on Christmas Eve, I believe it was and we was going back to the United States on Christmas Day, I believe it was. Me and Larry and bunch of us went out on Christmas and I remember we went and this barn had holly everywhere. They just had the smootcheness(?) party ever was all through there. That beer...that mild old beer and I couldn't drink that stuff. One that wasn't what you'd call a drink anyway and, so we finally picked us up a couple of girls. And my....I....ATS girl was in the air force and she was going back to a base out....walked her to the train station. I remember that. We come back and Larry was sitting up there waiting on me. He said, "The train late?" I never will forget that. I said, "No, it was early." He said, " I thought it was," said, "You told me you'd be back in about twenty minutes and I said you was back in ten minutes." I never will forget that either. He was...a lot of time...but now we went to....when they put us in dry dock in Hoboken, New York, we was the wildest bunch of boys that, I guess, that ever done...we tore that bars up about every other night and then they started making us...MP's often would board of the ship to look after us. First, I

never will forget this. The first time we tore that bar up up there...I don't remember when it was, we even put the jukebox on the outside and was out in the streets a dancing and the MP's come around there and got it. We...with what they was working on the ship and they was hammering and beating and cutting...you couldn't sleep. We'd get mad and go up and throw their stuff off into the water and be about half drunk anyway. Finally got wise and moved us all to one up to front for wherever they wasn't working. Man, you'd be laying there in the bed and they'd cut a hole up over you, sparks flying down on you.

Linda: Remember Jack Dempsey?

Oscar: Oh, Yeah. Oh, yeah, Jack Dempsey. Yep. We used to have good times, a lot of them. We...you know, if you go back say fifty some years, you could get a lot of stuff that you and all would like to talk about and different things, but...uh....I remember one other thing that I used to do that I never did get in trouble at...But John might have been a sitting...near these Johns with water running through them all the times(?). If you had to go to the bathroom, they'd stall....a lot of them would go in there and read papers. You'd wad you up a piece of toilet paper, set it on fire and you'd throw it down in and it'd be on fire going down. You'd see heads bobbing up all down through there and you'd better run if you did that for, you know, they'd get you. That way you could get to use the bathroom. (Laughs) A lot of things like that, used to do.

Linda: Did you ever get in trouble?

Oscar: Yeah, one time. Me and Larry and some of us got in the brigg one time

over something that didn't amount to anything. We wouldn't admit that we was wrong in it and they'd said...they gave us...what was it...three or four days bread and water. One of the boys wouldn't eat it and the next day one of them said, "You don't want that water," said, "I'll buy it from you." He said, "No, I want it." So he was glad to get it. He was getting hungry.

Linda: Do you know what happened to the 534?

Oscar: Yes, it got hit and they moved it back...out and they anchored it down and a typhoon came. It blew it up on the beach. Then we all... we could all go down there and go on it and that's where I got a mirror that we used to shave with and we'd pass it around _____. Then they moved it out to the ocean and sunk it out there... they took everything off of it and sunk it out there somewhere. I don't know where about. But, I remember one time there come a typhoon and we walked the beach and we found a barge of beer and we stayed lucid for a long time on the beer. He hid it in a tomb and everybody was wondering where we was getting our beer from. There's three or four of us go every day and drink four or five beers, old hot beer. We...if they'd ever caught us even messing around one of those tombs, we was in trouble. But there was a lot of them a broke into over there in Okinawa.

Linda: Sounds like you had a lot of fun amidst a lot of danger.

Oscar: (Ringing phone) I did.

Linda: Hold on one second.

END TAPE 1, SIDE B

OSCAR CRESS INTERVIEW

TAPE 2, SIDE 1

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Linda: That's amazing! You were up in that LST flopping around like this....

Oscar: That thing, though, seemed like it wanted to roll. I mean, it dipped water in the smoke stacks.

Linda: The Destroyer?

Oscar: That Destroyer....well, it scared me and went on board that dog gone thing they put me in charge of number one gun turret. They did that every new guy that come on there. I walked down in that and underneath it where they had that....and that was rusty as an old tin pot. Chip and paint.

Linda: Uh....are you on? Uh, Norris Long....what can you tell me about Norris Long?

Oscar: Long. I remember Long, but....uh....I can't tell you too much about him.

Linda: He said for me to ask you about Kilgore.

Oscar: Oh, Kilgore! That Kilgore! He'd....uh...can't remember exactly, but the name rings a bell.

Linda: Something aboutsomething about...they would tell the gunners, "Keep it up! Keep it up!"

Oscar: Oh, I don't remember. That's been too long.

Linda: That's alright. Uh...what did you think when you....when you finally realized that you were going to get to go home?

Oscar: Joy. Yeah. Tell you what happened to me....I tell you this story about this. When I was got off that Destroyer and went to Camp Shelton, Virginia to get discharged I was...had enlisted for six years, but I talked to a warrant officer that said I could get out by hardship, wait, you know, that I really want out, so I went to Camp Shelton. They had my records all messed up, couldn't find nothing, so had to put me in ships company up there and I was playing baseball. Camp Shelton, Virginia. So I couldn't get along with the coach guy. He expected too much out of me to playing baseball. I was a pretty good baseball player. He wanted too much out of me for what fun I was getting out of it and I told him, I said, "Hey, man, if I was getting big money, I'd stand here and let you ball me out, chew me out and spit me out and everything else, but", I said, "I'm in this for fun, and if I can't have some fun with me playing baseball here," I said, "I'm out of here." And he said, "Well, you report back over to ship company over there taking boys around to get them discharged. So I went to another warrant officer and he said, "We will fix you up, but," said, "it might take say a couple of months. So that's the way I got out of the service. I went....and he got me out on a hard....what they....hardship...wanting out of the Navy so much and with my past record that I had been in service and all this stuff, that they let me out of the Navy. I guess I....I never slept a wink that night when they told me I was going to be discharged the next day. No, I was happy....I went....they give me a leave to

go home and then come back to Camp Shelton to get discharged. When I got back to Camp Shelton they told me that I couldn't get discharged. They couldn't find my records. Then I was down. That's a...that's the only time I ever remember crying, I guess, that I was in the Navy, but I did cry a little bit, because I wanted out of the service so bad. But I had to stay I think two....maybe two or three months in Camp Shelton. All them ruptured ducks they was sewing on those guys...if I could have gotten one of them legal, I guess I'd give \$10,000 for one of them to get out of there. But I wouldn't have stayed in the Navy, if they made me Rear Admiral. I hated that place. I just didn't like the Navy.

Linda: We're you proud?

Voice: Hold on. Let me just.....

Oscar: Here's what it is. That wrapped around my leg.

Voice: There it is.

Oscar: Yeah, I was proud of what I did, but I...you know, they didn't need me in the Navy. The war is over. And I'd be more benefit to a hill of ants then I could be with anybody in the in that service after the war was over. I wasn't no military person. I don't like that....when I was in there it was spit and shine. When your dad's in there it's spit and shine. Now, they got it made. They don't do nothing only they'd go out there and spend their day wear any clothes they want to. Buddy, when we was in service we saluted and we respected uniform. Never would forget this time me and Larry Gray come back and we...give us seventy-two hours to get our....seabag. We had all of our clothes

destroyed. Me and Larry was walking down San Francisco streets and somebody walked....grabbed me by the shoulder and I turned around and I never saw so much brass and stuff in my life. And I saluted him and he said, "Do you respect this uniform better then that?" He says, "You go back up there and you pass me the way your supposed to." So I went back up there and I come by and I said, "By your leave, sir." He said, "Carry on, sailor." Now, wasn't that something? Yeah...you know, they don't do that now. That, you know....but when we was in thee we was spit and shine. And I will never forget that Larry. He....Larry, a lot of the times after that he said, "By your leave, sir." He couldn't.....aggravating me about it.

Linda: Is there anything you want to say about your time in the service?

Oscar: Well, I tell you what. I'm glad to have met all those guys and I am glad I got to serve my country and if something like this happened again, if it was my duty to do something, I'd do it over. But as far as any of my kids, I got two sons, I wouldn't want them to go through what I went through. And I am, what you say, uh...really, really truly happy that I have met all the people and the fun that I've had. You know, I never did have a fight, never did even want to fight. We, you know, we just jolly...we...we knew how far we could go with one another for you live with a person, what? Twenty-two months? You pretty know well know how far you can go or how much joke that can go and...but...you know, I'd do it again if I had to. Yeah, be glad to.

Linda: What did you feel the first day that I contacted you?

Oscar: I was pretty surprised to know that, you know, there was somebody that was thankful enough to know or to feel, you know, a persons feelings and to know that something like this could come together...you know, and be happy and be...you know, meet all these people that went through the same thing that we went through. There was some good...all of the people that I had any dealings with on board that ship was...they were gentlemen and...you know, they was love-caring people that cared about somebody else. And it just made a world of difference to know that you were with a bunch of people like that. And, if you was in trouble, they'd help you out. Yeah.

Linda: Have you enjoyed the newsletter and the...?

Oscar: I've enjoyed every bit of it and I think my wife had just about enjoyed it about as much as I have. For she...she couldn't wait to meet you.

Linda: Well, I couldn't wait to meet you guys. You do a lot of good works, you and Helen, right now.

Oscar: Yeah, we have a mentally retarded home down in St. Pete with eighteen people. And they're pitiful people. They're pitiful. And if it wasn't for us, while we would...uh, you know..._____ to look forward to. You can speak to those people and give them a kind word and you've got love and care for the rest of your life. I could tell you some stories about those people that you'd sit there and cry about. Now, the reason I just tear...I had a bad blade here and they messed my ducts up in here and I have a little drainage here.

Linda: Now, you have eighteen homes. Eighteen beds at your home for these people.

Oscar: Yeah.

Linda: How long does somebody stay there?

Oscar: Oh, we've got people been there 15-16 years that don't have nobody. We got people down there that's got mothers and fathers and they won't even come and see them, because they're mental.

Linda: This is the subject of a whole other documentary, but tell me how do you get these people? I mean, like...

Oscar: You get them through HRS, see this is all licensed through HRS. And each one of them have what they call case managers. And there's quite a few of those homes in St. Petersburg. A lot of them come from Arcadium, that's a mental hospital. And you...sometimes you get some that don't work out, but we've got there now in that home that's been there 15-16 years and you couldn't run them off. They think we're Gods.

Linda: Must be like your own children.

Oscar: Oh, gosh, I got a couple of girls down there, Ann and Arlene and them, and they think that we are their mother and father. Yeah, and they've been there...well, Ann...little Ann, she's been there...what?...I guess, 13-14 years. There's Roy and Billy and a lot of them. They just...you know...and when they leave they want to come back, want to go back to Rainbow Guests. That's the name of our place, Rainbow Guests. Yeah, we've been there...Helen's been there fifteen years. I...she'd come down here three years before I did. I lacked three years before I could retire. So I came down and I've been down here...I've been down here....I come down in '85. So

we've been pretty fortunate with that place. The only trouble about that place is you can't get people out to work. You....oh, man, what a turn over we've had. You don't know anybody that wants a job do you?

Linda: Oh, no, I can't find people for my own work.

Oscar: Oh, man, it's awful.

Linda: Well, I have to tell you something, Oscar, this has been great.

Oscar: I've enjoyed it, yeah, talking back....there are so many things that I could tell you that I forgot. You take fifty-some years...

Linda: I think you remembered a lot, actually.

Oscar: Yeah. We....we've...I've been, you know, a lot of things that you...you get by yourself and you think of at different times.

Linda: Let me just throw a couple of names out. If you remember something, fine. If not, don't worry about it. Jim Sarres

Oscar: Old Jim Sarres. Yeah, I knew Jim. We've had some good times together. But, you know, it's just like I said, fifty-three...fifty-some years you forget what was said and done and stuff. Yeah. He's a good person.

Linda: Alex Fielder.

Oscar: Yeah. Yeah. All....they all good. Had good fun together.

Linda: Have you ever been to a reunion?

Oscar: Un-uh. I'm going....if the good Lord's will and the creek don't rise, I'm going this year to Washington.

Linda: We're going to have a good time.

Oscar: Yeah. Yeah, I'm going to....me and Larry was talking about taking Amtrak up, but I don't know where, whether it'll come to pass or anything. Yeah.

Linda: Well, I think you've got some guys in there waiting to talk to you. Unplug you and....

Oscar: Yeah.

Voice: ...about the happiness factor about your dad.....you didn't cover that.

Linda: Yeah. You did say my dad was a , you know, a happy guy. Say a little bit about my dad.

Oscar: Well, your dad...actually, he....I don't know that I ever saw that man what he didn't have a smile on his face. And he was a happy-go-lucky person. What dealings I had with your father, he knew what's a going on and how to treat people and, you know, he was just a nice gentleman. That's all I can say. He just...he just one of the guys that fell in line with the rest of us and they just, you know, everybody ticked just like a clock.

Linda: He was a lot older than....

Oscar: Yes sir. He was...say he was quite...he was more like...more or less like a Godfather to a lot of us young people, but he was the Shipes (?). The Shipes were only seventeen years old when he was...come on board ship and they were going to send him back out of there and they didn't. He come age before they got to him. I told him, I said, "Your shell cracked before they got...you was hatching before they got to you, buddy." He was a character. Yeah. He was a nice....anybody I ever had any dealings with in the service was...well, a good person. I mean, I don't regret one person that I, you

know...I don't reject anything that anybody ever said to me or anything. We just, you know, just a happy-go-lucky bunch. If there's something said that you didn't like, you didn't make an issue out of it for, you know, you had to live together.

Linda: You said I look like my dad.

Oscar: Yeah. You do, right through the eyes. Yeah. You look like him, got his smile.

Yeah. Yeah. You sure do. I remember....I don't know where....it might have been the second or third time that I met him, we was getting our stuff together or something and he dropped it and I put my foot on it and he kept juggling, and I was just doing it for pure meanness. He looked up at me and he says, "You big footed thing. Get off my stuff, so I can put it away." You know,...and I can remember that one time that we was having fun, but he laughed about it and stuff. And I told him I did that on purpose.

Linda: Somebody told me there was a song that was, or a show that was popular in the '40's called 'Henry Aldredge', and they said that they would say to my dad...the show...the radio show they would say, 'Henry! Henry Aldredge!' and this little boy on the radio would say, "Yes, Mother!" And they said...somebody said that they'd say that to my dad. They'd go, "Henry! Henry Alvers!" and my dad would go "Yes, Mother!" Do you remember?

Oscar: Yeah, I remember that. Yeah, now that you brought it up. Yeah, I can remember that. Yeah, I used to run the movies on board the ship, show movies and stuff, but I finally graduated from that. I gave it to somebody else. You do that so long and you get tired of it. You'd have to swap movies. You

come along and the first thing you say, "Hey, you got any different movies?"

Then they'd transfer them over. "We give you ours for yours."

Linda: What was the movie that was playing the night before the kamikaze attack?

Oscar: I don't remember. Don't remember. There wasn't....the night before....well, there wasn't no movies. We was sitting under a smoke screen. John can tell you about that smoke screen. Anybody that was on board that ship can tell you about that.

Linda: What did it smell like?

Oscar: Oh, Lord, it's awful. It's get to you after a while. Yeah, you breathe....

Linda: I mean, is it a cigarette smell....?

Oscar: No, I don't know how I can describe it to you. It's just a...just a deep old burning thing after you get to it for so long, but I was glad to get out from under that.

Linda: Do you remember where you were and what you were doing when you heard the war....that the Japanese had surrendered?

Oscar: I was in a theatre. It was an outside theatre out in Okinawa and they started shooting and going on and all of us fell down. We thought the Japanese had come in there after us, so everybody just fell right down and the war was over. It was at night when we heard it, in the afternoon or something. I remember I was watching the theatre. They used to....they took these skids that they had on board the LST that they launched the LCT's off of and put them up there and made seats for us to watch the movies. Yeah. That's a long time ago.

Linda: Happy day.

Oscar: Oooh, yeah. Then that's when I started running the islet without any duty. I mean, I'd report, but I'd eat different. CB's, R4's....just wherever I was at and it come chow time, why that's when we'd run in and get something to eat. yeah, I went to Yanabaroo (?)...I forget all the names of those places on that island...to.....well, I was in the motor pool at the last two that....uh...they'd put in the motor pool to check out vehicles where the people come off board ships to get supplies and stuff and I asked you....you know, log out a vehicle to them and then they'd bring it back and the Lieutenants or Captains ever what, you know, that wanted them, why that's....and...uh...that's what I did there on the last two. Had a good duty and then we'd go to the bulletin board every day to see how close you were to getting off that island. And _____ when we shouted....up and down and going on whenever we did find it out. I'm trying to think of that personnel carrier we come back on. Don't remember. It was a bunch of it (?). Then we got on board, why you either had KP or put you in charge in cleaning heads, that's the bathroom, so I was...had to take care of Shipes watch for he was gambling and I pulled KP for him once, then I had to pull my duty end of cleaning the restrooms. So I was pretty busy. It passed off pretty good.

Linda: Tell me about Shipes giving you \$175.

Oscar: Well, he come to me whenever we got on board that ship and....about Shipes, I tell you about Shipes. His dad....he said that his dad used to give him .10 cents and they'd play poker. Then if his dad would win that playing penny poker, if his dad won that .10 cents off of him, he'd whoop him, because he

lost his ,10 cents. He was a professional gambler, old Shipes was. And I had \$150 and I let him have it. And he said, "If I lose it, it's lost. If I win, you get half." So when we got in San Francisco he brought me \$150 up there. I mean, \$1,500 it was not \$350, \$1,500. He about cleaned that whole ship out. We...me and Larry, we spent a little of it there, different hotels, eating and stuff. I remember one time on board ship we found some peanut butter and we hadn't had any peanut butter in a long time and, I don't know how many of us was it, but we got that gallon of peanut butter and we was sicker then horses. That made us sick as a horse. I never will forget that.

Linda: Bet you don't eat any peanut butter these days.

Oscar: Oh, yeah. I eat peanut butter. Yeah. That spam.....that's another thing that we had over that. You....spam burger. We'd fix spam any....oh, gosh, I don't know how many menu's and to this day I like spam it you fry it good brown, I like it now. But as far as eating it out of a can....and them K rations....Lord, they...them things is awful, but them sea rations wasn't bad.

Linda: Hey, was Mr. Drew a good cook?

Oscar: Yeah. We used to have a baker. Now, I don't forget his name. He used to bring us some pies and things down there whenever we...uh...he slept in our quarters and he'd bring us a pie or something back there every once in a while. But I tell you what, that coffee they had from twelve to four, many you could have put that on a cut and bruise and called in quinine. I mean, it was...I mean, mircurcom. It'd....that'd take the hair off a billiard ball that stuff would. That stuff was awful.

Linda: Did you ever think that this little kid from Virginia would be in England and Hawaii and New York and San Francisco?

Oscar: No, never dreamed of it. No, never dreamed of it. Back when I was a boy we was so poor we didn't even know what the word meant.

Linda: Hold on just a second. There's someone knocking.

Oscar: What...uh...

Matt: Just about your family.

Oscar: Oh, about my family. See we was very poor people. My dad worked in the coal mine. I from Appalachu right in, you know, southwestern part of Virginia right in the coal field. The only thing actually we went to the store for back then would be get suger, salt and coffee and sometimes, if we could afford it, flour. But everything else we raised ourselves. That's just the way we was raised, you know, and whenever they got rid of those farms....my had 65 acres. My grandfather had 135 acres. And.....work....and when they got rid of those farms they bought them a little country store in a little place called Ben Hur, Virginia. And I said, "Oh, buddy! I'm in hog heaven." Son, they took me down there and made me work in that store and I's have rather been up there on that farm then sitting in that old store. I wished myself back on that farm so many times. Then time come for me to go to the Navy and I went to the Navy and I come back. I spent one year back in Virginia after I got out of service. Then I left and went to Michigan first. Didn't like Michigan. I'd rather be in jail then Detroit, Michigan. I come back home and spent

Christmas and Thanksgiving and I went back to Ohio in 1953 and I stayed there 'til '85, then I came down here.

Linda: Where did you meet Helen?

Oscar: In Virginia.

Linda: Say, "I met Helen...."

Oscar: Yeah.....

Linda: Say, "I..."

Oscar: I met Helen in Virginia and I wore out two cars a going from Ohio to Virginia, you know, every other weekend and we finally got married. She...her first husband died planting his garden, had a heart attack. And I divorced my first wife and then we started going at it. She had two little girls, Deborah....we lost Debbie. She died when she was twelve. She got sick and vomit and drowned in her own vomit.

Linda: Wow.

Oscar: And died at school. That took the wind out of her sails. Now, Glenda, her sister down here now....she just come down here late yesterday. But I can't tell no difference in....see, we had two kids and she had two kids. I had one kid by my first marriage, a boy, Steve, so we got a good, pretty happy family. Yeah.

Linda: This is going to be great for your kids this kinds of a....'cause I'll send you a copy of all of this.

Oscar: Oh, well!

Linda: I bet you've said things her for the documentary that you've never told your kids.

Oscar: No, I have....there's a lot of things I've told here that I, you know, that never did tell my kids for you don't sit down and tell your kids a life story of your Navy, but, you know, they set and looked at the pictures and asked me stuff like that, but as far as a documented thing....now, I could tell you different things about getting hurt and stuff like that, but.....that's far fetched. I don't like to talk about stuff like that. I've been fortunate. I had a nice family, got a wonderful wife. We...you know, we don't fight....we...everybody has their little disagreements every once in a while, but as far as getting along good we've had a good, happy life. We've had to scratch and paw to make a living, but we made it. I've....uh...pretty fortunate to be alive. I've had quite a few things happen to me, but, you know, that's far fetched too. Don't like to talk about stuff like that.

Linda: Well, this had been great.

Oscar: Yeah, been real great. And I've been looking forward to meet you for over a year and every time I call you I always get your answering machine.

Linda: I'm not home a lot, am I?

Oscar: Just like my baby boy. I call him all I get is the answering machine, cost me . 20 cents. I told him last time I called him, "I ain't calling you no more." I said, "All I'm getting is that answering machine. I'm getting tired of paying him."

Matt: Linda, we didn't get anything about the one person that had real trouble djusting after, was drinking heavily.....want that?

Linda: No.

Matt: Okay, then...uh..there's when the night sweats started.

Linda: Yeah, when you came back from the service did the night....did you start having nightmares and night sweats right away?

Oscar: Yeah. Yeah. That was quite a while. It took me 3 to 6...I'd say 3 to 6 months to completely...yeah, my mom could....come in and wake me up I'd ump plump out in the floor, you know, it was just tough. I had a hard time adjusting to my language. I'd say different things then I'd turn around and apologize for it. Then I'd go out with a girlfriend and I'd say stuff that, you know...then you'd have to apologize for it.

Linda: I guess a lot of guys had that problem.

Oscar: Oh, yeah, you know, you get in there, you sit with a bunch of guys...you say this and you say that and different things and, you know, you have to watch yourself. But...uh...it all comes back to you.

Linda: You know, Johnny Wilson was from that area in West Virginia, wasn't he? He was from Morgantown. Is that....

Oscar: No, that's old Virginia and this is West Virginia. That's the next state down from us. Yeah. Yeah. They...Larry...now, Nitchie, he got married too from Chicago. Richard Nitchie. And he came down to see me on his honeymoon. He was a character. He had a hole in the back of his....right there...in back of his...rib out or something. I don't know what it is, how he got it or what happened to it. Might have got it during the service, but he was....I was a laying on the couch and he got a straddle(?) me and I begun to think I was

going to be paralyzed. He sat there and talked for two hours about different things.

Linda: On his honeymoon?

Oscar: Yeah, on his honeymoon. He just come down there to see....and I told him, I said, Boy, what a place to come to go on your honeymoon.” It’s beautiful in those mountains and stuff, but you wouldn’t....well, I guess it’s because I’m there....I’d want to go somewhere and do something.

Linda: This is great. Okay.

END OF INTERVIEW