

JOHN MEDERIOS

RON: Give me your name and the ship you were on.

JOHN: John V. Mederios I was on the USS LST 534 and I was a Bulletin Mate Second.

RON: What kind of job is that?

JOHN: Deck Force. Plus I used to run radar.

RON: What does the deck force do?

JOHN: We handle lines, splice lines, and keep everything clean.

RON: How old were you were you entered the service?

JOHN: I was 18. I joined 17 but I didn't go away until I was 18.

RON: Were you drafted or were you

JOHN: No. There is a funny thing about that. I joined but I went and took my test with the draftees so they stamped me as a draftee. So I decided I wanted to be US Navy but come to find out I was better off being a reserve. So I stayed a reserve.

RON: Where did you take your training?

JOHN: Samson, NY.

RON: Where is that?

JOHN: Near Geneva.

RON: Where is Geneva? Near one of the lakes?

JOHN: Yes. Near one of the lakes.

RON: How long was the basic training.

JOHN: 7 weeks.

RON: Immediately after that what did you do.

JOHN: They gave me a week off. I went on vacation home and then I reported to Camp Bradford, Virginia. We were there I don't know how long but we went into small boat training and then I boarded the ship, I don't know the date but a month and half or so and then I got on the ship in New Orleans.

RON: You board the LST in New Orleans?

JOHN: Right.

RON: And you stayed with her through the rest of the war?

JOHN: Yep. Till she went down.

RON: Tell me a little. So you left New Orleans and where did you go from there.

JOHN: We went on a shakedown cruise in the Gulf and they told us that we would see things that we never saw before and your mind plays tricks on you in the dark. I could see submarines flying through the air. I said oh my God I know it is impossible so forget it.

RON: Did you go to Nova Scotia. What was the sequence of events.

JOHN: No we went to Pensacola and Panama and then from there we went around Florida and up to Davisville, RI. We had pontoons welded on the sides and then we went to Nova Scotia to pick up the rest of the convoy going across.

RON: Why would they put pontoons on the side.

JOHN: We were delivering them. That is what made the docks. The CB's welded them together and when we came in with our ships we would pull up to the pontoon and the tanks would come up right on top of the pontoons.

RON: Tell me about the convoy going across the Atlantic. '

JOHN: That is when I found out about the Navy. We, on the deck looking up and seeing water. They told me 80 to 100 foot waves. They looked they were going over us. How that ship came back up again I don't know. I don't know what happened but it kept coming out of the water.

RON: Did you get seasick.

JOHN: No. I was too scared to get seasick. No I got seasick one time and it wasn't really sick. I was cleaning the guys who were laying down and heaving on each other. I went down with water and I squirted them all up. Finally it got to me. But only once and then I was all right.

RON: So a lot of guys got sick?

JOHN: Yes.

RON: Were you frightened on that trip across? Any specific experiences?

JOHN: Yup. We were in coffins corner and when we came out of the storm we were so happy that we made it through the storm and then a submarine fired a shot. It went amid ship. It missed us. It went right under us.

RON: Did you actually see it.

JOHN: Yes. I saw it coming and I saw it going and it hit a tanker on the other side of us. Blew it right up.

RON: What about the crew?

JOHN: They say they picked up survivors. I'll tell you the truth I don't think there was a survivor. It was one big ball of fire. I don't think there was a survivor.

RON: You didn't see people in the water?

JOHN: I saw them in mid air. Heads, arms flying off. The concussion was blowing them apart. That scared me. I am in the Navy 3 months and here I am wondering if I did the right thing.

RON: How did that kind of experience change how you thought about yourself or the Navy or the people you are with. Did you feel like 17 going on 40.

JOHN: Could have been older than that. It makes you think. It makes you think where you thought nothing of going out on a boat or this or that when you get out in the North Atlantic and see waves and stuff like that and then somebody firing on you it makes a man out of you fast.

RON: Did you fear for your life?

JOHN: Upteen million times. Not only that of course I prayed a lot so that kept me kind of going.

RON: Did the relationships with the other men on the boat get stronger as time went by. I mean as a group.

JOHN: You mean tie us all together.

RON: Yes just because of the experiences.

JOHN: Oh yeah.

RON: Talk to me a little bit about how you think that change occurred from being a young kid getting in his boat having a good time together to suddenly

JOHN: It has a lot to do with growing up. We grew up fast thats all. Some of the people were wise guys but that calmed them down. It makes you think twice.

RON: They saw a change.

JOHN: I did.

RON: If you could elaborate just a little bit how you saw yourself change from that time when you enter the Navy until the time you got out.

JOHN: You realize that you are dispensable. You don't mean nothing. You are a speck in the earth and by golly you better have some fear for somebody. And of course I mostly turned to religion. It helped me.

RON: Do you think you would be a different person today if you hadn't had that experience.

JOHN: I believe so.

RON: In what way.

JOHN: Well we were carefree. When you are growing up you are carefree. You want to always have fun. Its this and that. But when you come back from the service you kind of think twice. I was meeting some of my buddies. Some of them came back hurt and in bad shape. And you think boy we don't mean nothing. So that is life and what are you going to do. I learned life fast.

RON: From England you went to the Normandy invasion. Tell me a little bit about the trip over from England and the invasion.

JOHN: We loaded up at Tilsbury London our first trip and we went around the White Cliffs of Dover.

We loaded up in Tilsbury London and we turned around and went through or around the White Cliffs of Dover and there was a storm brewing. Two days laps in a storm we hit the beach. We took a beating afterwards but we hit the beach.

Well Normandy invasion I was on radar. I was a coxswain, boat coxswain but they kept me aboard ship to run the radar and we had no radar men aboard and they gave me a class. Threw me a bunch of books and said read them and I was a radar man.

RON: What were you looking for? Planes?

JOHN: Mostly ships. If a plane was close you could pick it up.

RON: What beach did you land on?

JOHN: We hit them all.

RON: The LST 534 what beach was it assigned to.

JOHN: It was an English beach. Omaha?

RON: Omaha was the US beach. There was Gold.

JOHN: Gold. I think it was Gold and then we went to all the others. We made 25 trips.

RON: The initial invasion where the major casualties took place was in the first wave of people. Were you in the first wave.

JOHN: Yes. We put the English ashore. We had English on.

RON: Did they have any casualties?

JOHN: Yes but you know how it is when the tide comes up we go. You don't get to see all that but they took a beating getting on the shore.

RON: And the LCD's were what left the LST's to take them in? They had to go right up on the beach?

JOHN: Right. We landed on the beach opened our doors, ramp down and laid it out.

RON: How many of those. So Henry Alvers was one of those people that drove those boats to the beach.

JOHN: Right.

RON: He had said to me one time that he still had visions of hundreds of bodies floating all over in the water and on the beach. Could you tell us a little about Henry Alvers.

JOHN: Henry laughed every day that he was aboard ship. He was a guy that you had to laugh with him. He would always have a joke. He would always if somebody else said a joke he was ready to laugh about it. He was a regular joke.

RON: Could you tell me the story about the boxing thing.

JOHN: He liked boxing. One day I was on watch I didn't see it. But he got in the ring with one guy which was about 6'2" weighed about 250 and Al was a little guy. He had a sailor hat on and they had a heck of a fight and he never knocked that sailor hat off. When he got through fighting he still had the sailor hat on.



RON: Was this recreational things that they did on the ship.

JOHN: Occupy time. Keep you busy.

RON: They never wanted you just sort of hanging around.

JOHN: That's right. You think too much.

RON: So what did you do on those long days when there wasn't a lot to do.

JOHN: We had movies. A guy would go up and pick up some movies and we would sick on the tank deck when the tank deck was empty and we would sit there on the tank deck and have movies.

RON: Did the guys share their feelings pretty much about things or did they keep things to themselves.

JOHN: No we. It's funny you become a family is what you do. You mingle and that's it. If you have something to do everybody done it.

RON: Did they ever sit around and talk with each other about fears, apprehension, family or hopes for the future?

JOHN: Once in a while but mostly we played cards. We kept ourselves busy then to talk mostly about yourself.

RON: I just wondered if you're in an environment where death is potentially round you all the time. You have Young kids seeing life at its harshest and didn't have time to grow into that. I am curious how you and they felt about it.

JOHN: You get over fear. You don't fear death anymore because you have seen so much of it. All you think of is that is life. Just keep going. In fact one day a couple of us went out and in fact it was three of us and we went for a walk. I don't know if you heard any stories but there was a church and we are coming around this church and I thought I saw something move up there but you know you are just walking and thinking about everything. So anyway come to find out they let us go through. There was a German up in the church tower with a French girl and she was getting him supplies and everything and he was waiting for the people behind us to come through. There was nobody behind us. They thought we were scouts. Just scouting around and we weren't. Come to find out they had to send a plane down to knock that guy out of there because in fact it is in your I read a book, it was a World War II book and it mentions that church and that a plane had to come and bomb it.

RON: Where was it?

JOHN: France.

RON: Where in France?

JOHN: They said it was Marseilles but I don't know. If it was Marsailles we got there pretty fast. But all I know is there was a 22-foot tide there.

RON: So after the invasion you made a number of trips back and forth across the channel.

JOHN: 25.

RON: What were you doing?

JOHN: Sheddling, tanks, whatever, gas. Running it across. To France we put it on the beach and then went back and got some more.

RON: And what happened after that.

JOHN: One day they said we are leaving. We packed up and went to all the Assures. Picked up some ships that we were there and off we came to New York. After we hit New York they took the ship I think into New Jersey and fixed it up so we could go into South Pacific. They had to put evaporators on and stuff like that

RON: So we were talking about the ship being re-outfitted in New Jersey. What do they have to do to re-outfit it.

JOHN: They had to put evaporators on and make our water and they had a few changes to make.

RON: What did you do during the time they were doing that.

JOHN: Went on vacation. They gave us leave. I went home.

RON: So you came back to the ship and then you left for?

JOHN: We went to Cuba. We went in there and picked up a convoy and off to the Panama Canal. Went through the Canal and then I think we went to Treasure Island and then the convoy gathered there and we went across the Pacific.

RON: Was an uneventful trip.

JOHN: Yeah it was a nice trip and after that I think we were only in Hawaii a couple of days and then off we went.

RON: You didn't have rough seas or storms?

JOHN: I don't remember going to Hawaii having any storms.

RON: What were you carrying? You went to Okinawa first. Did they load you up in Hawaii?

JOHN: I don't know what we had on. We picked up. I don't know if they put the fuel on in Hawaii or if we took the fuel, see we hit Guam, I think we hit Saipan and Wetuck. And that was a communications island and that took us to Okinawa. I think we picked up the CB's in Guam and took them to Okinawa.

RON: How long were you in Okinawa before the Kamikaze hit.

JOHN: I don't really know.

RON: It wasn't too long if you hadn't unloaded everything.

JOHN: No we still had at least a quarter of that tank, maybe more. We had gasoline blowing up.

RON: How long did it take to onload on average LST.

JOHN: It depends on what you have on. I saw in LaHab where we had tanks and the Army came in and grab the tanks and they rolled them off and we kept backing up and we took off. So that was a good deal because we hit a

rock and they climbed right up the rock and that was it. LaHab was a good pivot point for us.

RON: Did they load you up with other things that could take longer.

JOHN: Yeah like high octane gas. That was in 55 gallon drums. They used to have to come in and pick them up. But now in Okinawa when we were sunk I went to the hospital so I don't remember.

RON: Tell me a little about the experience from the time they spotted the Kamikaze coming in.

JOHN: There was a flight of them. They were raining kamikazes and just before that Tokyo Rose was on the radio saying that two landing crafts were going to blow up and we were the only two unloading on the Southern tip of Okinawa so we knew we were going to get it. We were on the guns for two days and three nights. The third day is when we got hit. That is when they secured the island and we got hit.

RON: What happened.

JOHN: It was raining kamikazes with 2500-pound bombs on them. We were shooting them down. One as a matter of fact landed 50 feet off our fantail and scared me because I was on that gun but the other one came over the hospital. You saw that picture of the hospital and when it came down it went to the waters edge and did this to the ship and what I think they planned to do was to drop the bomb on us, hedgehop us, and hit the other ship. Now the other ship, I forgot the number, but she was loaded with TNT detonator caps and we had high-octane gas. So if had done what he was supposed to do I think that Southern tip of Okinawa would have gone. But he didn't get the chance. One guy got jittery started firing and then

everybody started fired. In fact they wanted to court martial one of the guys for firing too early. Never got the word. But it worked out.

RON: Where did he hit. What was the force of the plane.

JOHN: Well he came in and he was going to drop the bomb and hedgehop us and this fella on the single pumped a shot right through the plane. Dead center. And the plane just tipped like that and went right into the ship.

RON: Pilot dead before he hit?

JOHN: I believe so.

RON: So he shot in the cockpit and killed the pilot.

JOHN: Right through the dead center of the plane.

RON: If you look at the markings on the hole you can see that the plane came in on an angle.

JOHN: It looks like it was nothing but that bomb went right under the ship. It went right through under the ship and blew us out of the water.

RON: What happened to you?

JOHN: I was up on the gun and I was second loader. Some guy was handing me the shells and I was putting them in the gun. When the ship sank, the main deck was out of the water, and it was still raining kamikaze and we knocking them down and of course like I said one was 50 feet off our fantail. I had just taken my shirt off. I was sweating. And this kid got hit when the ship went down. This kid was a operator. I think his

name was Blair and he got hit in the arm and I seen it because I felt something hit me across my shoulder and left this little gash but it hit him in the arm. So I tapped him and told him to put it on directive fire and that way I didn't need to turn and point him. I told him to go to sick bay. When he started to go to sick bay he was just taking his time. All of a sudden I reached back we had a moment there where nobody was coming and I reached back and felt blood coming out of my back. I jumped down on the main deck and ran and passed that kid into the sick bay.

RON: The picture we have of you they are carrying you out on a stretcher.

JOHN: Yeah. I had a pack of lucky strikes. The chaplain gave me my last rites and he put the cigarettes on my chest and you can see the lucky strikes on my chest there. But he let me have my last smoke and they threw me in the ambulance.

RON: What had happened to you. Did you have shrapnel?

JOHN: Right. I had shrapnel in my left leg and right shoulder. It went right into my joint.

RON: Still have it?

JOHN: Yeah I still have it. I don't know how many pieces. They either took 13 out or left 13 out and took 9 out. I don't know. I heard those numbers but that was it.

RON: But it didn't cut any major arteries or get into

JOHN: Yes it did. They couldn't stop the blood. But the corpman he took care of it. He laid down on top of my back. They put sulfur and laid on my back and put pressure and sealed it. He kind of saved my life.

RON: But were they life threatening.

JOHN: My shoulder was. You can't put a tourniquet around your neck to stop the blood.

RON: Do you suffer from arthritis or anything due to the wound?

JOHN: My shoulder stiffens up a little bit but I was a carpenter and swinging a hammer kept that jarred, kept my shoulder jarred and I could move it.

RON: Where did they take you?

JOHN: They took me from the front of the ship there on that dock to the hospital. I went to I think the 74th field hospital and then they transferred me to 75th station hospital in Okinawa. I was supposed to go to Guam. There were two of us we were going to go to Guam but they couldn't get us ready in time. So the plane went and I understand, I don't know for a fact, but I understand that the plane went down. It didn't make it. I guess it wasn't my time to go.

RON: Did you get out then?

JOHN: No. I went back to duty in sixteen days.

RON: On the 534.



JOHN: The 534 was on a reef. We went to live on Okinawa. They gave us half a pup tent, told us to get a buddy and put them together the two halves and that was it.

RON: What was life like?

JOHN: The first day I was there we had a heck of a storm and all of us that were in those pup tents it took us half way down the mountain. So we had to do something. So everybody was moving and taking their stuff and drying it out. I went back to the ship. I got some nails, a handsaw and hammer and some canvas and I went back and put a decking on some block and I made a frame around it and put the canvas right around it and put the pup tent on top of it. I lived there six months.

RON: What was the ship doing all that time.

JOHN: It was on a reef.

RON: Where you on the ship in the storm? The typhoon.

JOHN: Oh yeah. That is how we got on the reef.

RON: What kind of experience was that.

JOHN: It wasn't good. Number one our engines were under water. They couldn't run for too long. And the captain told the engineering officer I guess, look we are afloat. We have to do something. I am going to try to hit the beach. They had a little spat about that I guess. I don't know and the Captain said we are heading out to the yoke sea now you either give me juice when I want it or put on your life jackets we are going to swim. So we did. They started up the engine then shut it off. Started up shut if off.

And we were afloat because we were moored to a ship and we broke loose. Then we put out an anchor and we parted that. A chain and that went and then we put out the stern anchor, ten inch cable and that went. So you know the power that is in a typhoon. We see a little hurricane and you think that is something. It is nothing compared to a typhoon.

RON: Was that more frightening than the attack?

JOHN: I don't know. Almost about the same. I wasn't thinking about that other one.

RON: Fear is fear.

JOHN: You better believe that one.

RON: You were on there for six months when did you do day?

JOHN: Well you had to walk down the mountain to get breakfast. Walk back up again. Walk down. We were on C-Rations anyway so that is what we done mostly. Back and forth, back and forth and we had nothing to do. Played cards. But I got my place. I kept rebuilding mine and I used to be able to make coffee.

RON: Good guy to know.

JOHN: Well we had another guy. McDaniel. He was a baker. Not on the ship but he knew how to bake and he used to make all kinds of stuff so between him and I we kept enough food for us.

RON: Did you dig a trench around your tents so the water

JOHN: Who the heck told you that. I did. I sure did. I dug a trench right around it and had it, taped it so it would go back down. Mine was dry. High and dry all the time.

RON: A lot of the guys that do that get blow away. Were you a boyscout? How did you know to do that?

JOHN: I don't know. My father came from the old country and he was always believing in being prepared. So.

RON: Taught you the basics of survival. Old country what Italy?

JOHN: No. Portugal.

RON: Do you speak Portugese.

JOHN: Yes. They came from the Azure Islands. My mother was born in this country but my father was born in the Azure Islands.

RON: So six months later they say okay we are taking you home just like that?

JOHN: Yeah but before that the guys that had enough points went away. In other words most of the older fellas went. I'm a young punk kid. They kept me and a couple of other guys. I don't know how many they transferred at that time. But they sent them back to the States. What they done I don't know. But after six months then we came back. Came back on a Braxton. USS Braxton. So anyway we came back and we had to come across country. We hit San Diego and we came across country in a train. A 34 day survival leave. So they gave us a survival leave and we all scattered. All of a sudden they are putting us back on ships. Yeah my rate was

frozen. They froze out rates and they are shipping me back out. My arm started hurting and I missed that ship.

RON: Where were you supposed to go?

JOHN: I don't know. I think it was a destroyer escort.

RON: The war was over.

JOHN: Yeah. The war was over but they wanted me to go back out. They were giving me another rate. They were going to give me first class boats. They thought that would entuse me to go. I didn't go but.

RON: Back home you went back to living with your folks.

JOHN: After that yeah. I did get transferred though. I got transferred into Newport, Rhode Island which is only 17 miles from home. So I stayed there on range boats and then they discharged me. I was discharged in Boston. So that was it.

RON: So did you go home to your parents. Take time off?

JOHN: I had a buddy of mine that had been home from the Army about six months and he is dead today and he drained his father dry. So his father asked me if I could get him to go to work. I was home a week and I went to work just to get him to work. And that is what we done. I wen back to work.

RON: And then you met your wife and had children.

JOHN: Yes we have three. My son is 45, my daughter 42 going to be 43 and I have a younger one that is going to be 40 in December.

RON: Are you a grandfather yet?

JOHN: No. Wait a minute what am I talking about. Yeah I am a grandfather. When you said grandfather I thought you said greatgrandfather. No. Yeah I am a grandfather. We have four of them. In fact my grandson, the oldest one, is married. He was in the Navy and his wife was in the Navy and they just got married and they are living in North Carolina right now.

RON: So you are going to be a great grandfather soon.

JOHN: Don't start no trouble now.

RON: Tell me a little about Captain Olson. What kind of guy was he?

JOHN: He is the sharpest Navy man that I was with. He had 18 years as a quartermaster. I liked him. He saved me a couple of times.

RON: What about Captain French?

JOHN: French was an officer but French was not a career man but he done his job like everybody else.

RON: He was younger than Olson wasn't he.

JOHN: I don't know. I think they were about the same tell you the truth. But Olson had a chance to go do some land duty or something and I haven't followed him anymore. I don't know.

RON: If you could sum up your experiences on the 534 in words and experience how would you describe it?

JOHN: Well there was good and there was bad aboard ship and sometimes you felt it wasn't worth it. Sometimes you decided heh forget this let's go home. But then something would make you mad and you were ready to go again. That's it.

RON: Have you kept in touch with anyone over the years.

JOHN: Yes, I did. One of them was our ship fitter. Him and I were pretty close aboard ship. And although he died about 15 years ago. I think cancer. William T. Dale.

RON: Did everybody know everybody on the ship at some level?

JOHN: Yeah of course we knew each other but you know when you get the black gang which is the engineers, you get them down below they didn't all of the deck force and vise a versus. I was luckier because I dealt with both. I was on a small boat and I used to get a lot of the engineers come up. We had to have an engineer on a small boat and a deck man so I go along pretty good and being in radar I was like a jack of all trades and a master of none. But it got me around with everybody.

RON: So obviously different divisions hung around with each other?

JOHN: Right.

RON: Who were the group of people you hung around with?

JOHN: Mostly the deck force because I was like a section leader. In fact I was in charge of the bow. And all our guys you go on liberty you always had half of your gang go and so I would go along with them.

RON: What was your favorite port?

JOHN: No real place. They are all about the same. I was in Plymouth, I was in North Hampton, South Hampton.

RON: You had no other places?

JOHN: Oh yeah but not in France. We didn't go anywhere in France. We hit France and turned around and came right back. We were mostly always in England.

RON: All of your shore leave was in England?

JOHN: Yup that was it. Yes I did London. I did five days in London. In fact the boatsman mate was there with me. Symanzski . We went out there.

RON: What did you do?

JOHN: Learned how to eat fish and chips and pickled herring. I loved that pickled herring.

RON: Tell us what awards or medals you have.

JOHN: As far as I know, European, American Theatre, Asiatic Pacific, Purple Heart and Victory Medal I think. I didn't get the purple heart at the time they were passing them out when I got hurt they ran out and they said they were going order it and I shipped out and I never got it. But I was

thinking of writing and finding out what I rate according to my discharge and see if I can get them.

Continued on another tape.

No that was a corpsman.

RON: Could you tell us a little about the International Dateline crossing.

JOHN: Well when you are going toward the equator what is it Cancer I guess the International Dateline and we have a ceremony. Everybody that never passed it had to go through this ritual. And they done quite a few things. You went through a line of people and they had paddles and they would give you a beating and give you haircuts. King Neptune took over the ship. What was good about it was our skipper was a dragonback so he had been through it already. So he could still maintain the ship. But King Neptune was the one running the whole deal.

RON: Did he get dressed up?

JOHN: Oh yeah. We even had a guy on the bow with coke-cola bottles taped together looking out over the seas. Different little things that they did. We had a canvas that they put down. You put water in it and you walked this plank and you swear you were overboard. When you hit the water you come swimming but you come to find out you are still aboard the ship. They blind fold you when they drop you in and they hit you with paddles and cut your hair, greased you up. In fact I have a couple of pictures with some of the guys all greased up.

RON: And after you became a dragonback. That was the term? So you are a dragonback?



JOHN: Now. Yup. Dragonback or Backdragon something like that.

RON: Was it an unpleasant experience?

JOHN: No it was just joking. Just joking around. A couple of boys got hurt. Hit an arm or an elbow or something like that but I was around taking pictures like a jerk. Didn't realize that the line kept getting longer and when I went through buddy everybody was out front. They took whacks at me buddy whoo. So I learned. Forget the pictures. Go through and then take pictures.

RON: What was the funniest experience you ever had.

JOHN: The funniest experience? I don't know.

RON: Nothing special?

JOHN: It was fun for me to know that I was on a big ship when I first saw it. But then I realized it was a floating bathtub.

RON: A floating coffin.

JOHN: Well I didn't want to use that term but you're right it came close.

RON: Now you know this guy Symanzski don't you? Tell me about him.

JOHN: He came aboard. He went to school and he came aboard as I think he came aboard as a seaman first class and they rated him coxswain. Then they made him boat 2nd. And that is when I got rated coxswain but he was a few years older than us. Lets see about 7 or 8 years older than us. A big

Pollack. Everybody did what he said naturally. He was a pretty good guy. He was out of Massachusetts and he got along with most of the guys. He just done his duty. We had a chief boats and then we had him and he was second in command of the deck boss and of course he took his orders from the chief and of course he took his orders from the officers too so he was kind of between the deck force and the officers and everybody. If there was hell to be got he got it. If something went wrong he was responsible. You know. He was the one that took it on the shoulders.

RON: That is a lot of responsibility.

JOHN: Yeah he did.

RON: So he had to protect everybody else on one level and answer for any problems.

JOHN: That is true.

RON: Was there ever any dissension amongst the whole crew?

JOHN: Yes once in a while.

RON: What would cause that?

JOHN: I don't know. We had a guy I am not going to mention any names, but we had a guy that saw one of our deck force men walking down to see a movie. He put his foot out, the first guy carrying a bench went a little too fast and it took the bench out of his hand as he was going down this ladder and he put his foot out to catch it and he didn't. He kicked it. He got five days bread and water for that. It caused a lot of resentment aboard ship. They finally rated him and transferred the man. This bothered me

something terrible. To think that somebody would want another man to get five days bread and water for what. For nothing. He didn't try to kick the bench. He tried to save it. But.

RON: Did you have a brig on board?

JOHN: Yes sir. He served five days bread and water.

RON: In the Brig? Did it go on his record.

JOHN: I wouldn't know that. I imagine it did.

RON: But basically the crew was a cohesive team.

JOHN: Yeah they got along.

RON: There were moments like any group together in close quarters.

JOHN: That's right. That's exactly right. The close quarters is what done it.

RON: The end of the war when it was announced that the war was over, where were you, what were you doing and how did you feel.

JOHN: The end of the war. Damn happy about it. No question about it. So of the ships started firing, Firing up in the air and you could see all the flares going up. It looked like 4th of July. We figured heh in no time we will be home. Well it took a couple of months.

RON: Did you worry about getting hit by some of the shells they were firing?

JOHN: No. They were firing them out to see. It was a controlled fire. It was nothing to worry about.

RON: It was just a little celebration.

JOHN: We were just happy.

RON: Were the Japanese still on Okinawa.

JOHN: Yeah you wouldn't believe it we had one in the Yanabaru, in that area that tried to give up. For a week and a half he had been trying to give up. Finally I had charge of some. Well they call them gooks, Okinowans, and I asked one of the guys heh what is that guy doing? He said you don't know who that is. I said no who is it? He said he is Japanese. I said what. He said that is a Jap. I said what the heck is he doing. He said he wants to give up. I looked and I said what the heck. He was eating out of our garbage cans. So I went over to this officer that I was working for. I volunteered for work is what I done. Just crazy doing nothing. And I went over to the officer and I told him and he said no kidding. I said yeah there is a Jap out there. So they sent an intepreter out there to talk to him and he was a Jap trying to give up. Then they put three men on him with carbines and started feeding him. The guy was happy to eat. So he said he would go into the cave. He knew where there were some men. He would bring them back out. So they sent a big squad with him to go get them. And they all gave up and came down. I guess they were out of food so they fed them and everything.

RON: No one tried to come down and kill anybody?

JOHN: They used to come in trying to get food. That was all. I was on duty one time and I heard some rumbling in the leaves and I hollered halt and they

wouldn't stop. I shot them. In the morning there was a mue? You don't understand English I said stop. Another time I killed some chickens. They wouldn't stop so we nailed them too. That happens. What are you going to do. But towards the end of the war there was hardly anything going on. We were trying to survive that's all.

LINDA: When you went to the field hospital they gave you the last rites?

JOHN: Yeah they gave me the last rites. I told the chaplain I am not ready, it isn't my turn, I can't go nowhere. He gave me a cigarette too. That's why in the picture you will see the cigarette pack on my chest. He lit a cigarette for me and then he told me you he said you catholic and I said well yeah he said bless yourself. Well I couldn't my arm was strapped up and he said listen the Lord isn't going to care if you bless yourself left handed so I did. So that was the whole thing in a nutshell. He made the whole thing seem funny you know. So that is life in the big city.

LINDA: Did you really think that your injuries were bad enough that you were going to die.

JOHN: Oh no. The kept checking me in the hospital. They kept feeling my pulse. The doctor comes over and says how are you doing. I said look you better go look for somebody else I ain't checking out yet. And he said to the nurse - watch him. And he told me he had blood to give me. He said I have blood there if you need it so don't worry about it. I said I am not worried. Not worried one bit. But every two minutes he would come back to check my pulse. But I was fighting like a scared rabbit believe me and I didn't use the blood and it is a good thing I didn't. It was type A blood and I am Type A RH negative. It would have killed me. So whoever was responsible if they wanted it, it was theirs.

LINDA: Watch out for those blood transfusions.

RON: Do you feel any animosity about not getting the purple heart?

JOHN: Not really.

RON: Did they give you a certificate or anything?

JOHN: Oh yeah. It is in my record. I could get it anytime I want it.

RON: Do you have your medals in a safe?

JOHN: No I have them in a draw.

RON: Give them to your kids someday.

JOHN: At the time I thought they meant something but those medals were the dime used to buy you a cup of coffee. Now it don't even touch it. But that is life in the big city.

