

Interviewer: Can you give us your full name and what year you were born?

Fazar: My name is Lewis Fazar I was born October 18, 1918.

Interviewer: Can you tell us what branch of service you were in?

Fazar: I was in the navy the U.S. Naval Construction Battalion CBs.

Interviewer: Going back a little bit before the war do you have any recollection of the great depression?

Fazar: Certainly

Interviewer: Could you share a couple with us?

Fazar: Nineteen twenty nine.

Interviewer: Yes sir

Fazar: Of course I was only 11 years old at that time. Yeah right didn't know too much there but I heard about it.

Interviewer: You have anything that sticks out that you remember your parents talking about or saw?

Fazar: Well both my parents came over here from Europe. My dad came in 1898 and my mother came in 1901 from Hungaria. I'm a first generation Hungarian. So if they talked about it I didn't understand it too much you know.

Interviewer: Yes sir; were you old enough to have a job before your time in service?

Fazar: Did I have a job?

Interviewer: Before you went in service.

Fazar: Oh yeah.

Interviewer: What was it?

Fazar: Well I came up and lived in Panama in 1942 and in January 21, 1943 I joined the navy. I worked in Panama for about a year Panama Canal area.

Interviewer: Oh so you helped with construction on it?

Fazar: Yeah

Interviewer: You don't remember what that job paid do you what the wages were?

Fazar: Yeah I do being a government employee you remember those things. It 1620 a year one thousand six hundred and twenty a year. That was a lot of money in those days.

Man in the background: A lot of money then.

Fazar: Yeah a lot of money right

Interviewer: Before Pearl Harbor do you think the average American understood the threat of Nazi Germany and Japanese pose to the U.S.?

Fazar: I don't think so but incidentally when Pearl Harbor was bombed I was working in Washington D.C. and the Japanese Embassy was two doors down from where I lived. And that morning they were out back burning a bunch of papers but nobody knew what they were doing.

Interviewer: Huh did you get a chance to hear FDR's speech the day after Pearl Harbor?

Fazar: I apparently did but don't remember.

Interviewer: Did you approve of the way FDR handled the early part of the war?

Fazar: Oh yeah yeah

Interviewer: Were you drafted or did you enlist?

Fazar: I enlisted.

Interviewer: Once you enlisted did you go to an induction center?

Fazar: Yeah an induction center I was a seaman first class.

Interviewer: After the induction center where did they ship you or send you to?

Fazar: Well I you gonna ask me where I was promoted along the way?

Interviewer: Yeah I just want to know first.

Fazar: Well you know in the navy you never know when that comes and I came out a yeoman second class. I did administration work administrative work.

Interviewer: Okay where did you do your basic training at?

Fazar: Well I'd have to say Camp Perry Virginia.

Interviewer: What were the what was your impression of your fellow recruits during your basic training?

Fazar: They were raring to go. I'll tell you a comical thing though.

Interviewer: Okay

Fazar: I got in a battalion see we had a battalion that was composed of a headquarters company, company A, B, C, and D. And we're all construction people most of them are anyway and each company

had their own group of classified workers like that. But anyway what was I gonna say here? Okay go ahead with the next one.

Interviewer: Okay how were the living conditions in your basic training how were the living conditions there?

Fazar: How was that again?

Interviewer: Your living conditions at your basic training the barracks and stuff were they pretty

Fazar: They were excellent. We lived in barracks and they were immaculate then you kept things clean you were in trouble if you didn't.

Interviewer: So where did you go to after your basic training?

Fazar: Well I was put in the battalion first I was put in the 66th construction battalion and then split that up into another battalion. Then I was put in the 68th battalion and from there we went overseas?

Interviewer: Do you remember which port you shipped out of?

Fazar: Yeah we shipped out of the port at Seattle Washington.

Interviewer: And where did you go from that port?

Fazar: Well went up to the Aleutian Islands all the way out to the island of Alitalia the further most island out in the ocean. We weren't too far from the mainland of Japan roughly 200 miles.

Interviewer: And once you arrived on that island did you do more training or what did you do when you got on that island?

Fazar: Well we went there to build the island up. We put hospitals up built hospitals put a big runway in put up prefabricated hangers put up food storage tanks. Aircraft fuel hospitals built roads built piers did all kinds of construction work.

Interviewer: What did you feel that your training stateside prepared you for what you had to do once you arrived on the island?

Fazar: See people in our outfit were all experienced construction workers.

Interviewer: So your civilian job really prepared you for it.

Fazar: Right they knew how to handle things you know. They didn't have anybody there teaching them they already knew.

Interviewer: The equipment they gave you to do your job with did you feel it performed well?

Fazar: Oh yes yeah when we went aboard ship all of our construction equipment was onboard ship bulldozers and tractors and you name it even our housing was in the hull of the ship quanza huts. We had to assemble those before we could have a place to sleep.

Interviewer: You had to build it all then didn't you? How long did it take you from your voyage from Seattle to the Aleutian Islands?

Fazar: To get where?

Interviewer: When you shipped out of Seattle how long did it take you?

Fazar: To get where we wanted to go?

Interviewer: Yes sir

Fazar: Well I'll tell you you're taking me back a long time 1943 it took about a day and a half to go from Seattle to Dutch Harbor we fooled around quite a bit rough ocean. And went to the island of Kodiak and we stayed out there on the day out there for about a week before we shipped up to Alto. In fact the Japanese were on an island up in the Aleutian Islands up there I think it was Adak I'm not sure. Adak we went around that at night it was Japanese base for the I mean a submarine base for the Japanese and we sneaked around there at night.

Interviewer: How were the living conditions on the ship?

Fazar: Oh perfect of course there were a lot of seasick fellows on there. When you're riding in rough water you're gonna get sick whether you're tough or not.

Interviewer: I can imagine. While you were on the while you were doing construction did you have very much free time?

Fazar: How's that again?

Interviewer: Did you have very much free time when you were once you arrived on the island?

Fazar: Yeah a lot of free time yeah.

Interviewer: What did you do for entertainment?

Fazar: Well on the island you don't do much of anything play horseshoes, play ping pong, gamble, play cards.

Interviewer: Did you receive much mail on the island?

Fazar: Well in those days you know we wrote to about everybody and everything was censored you couldn't say well I couldn't say hey I was up there at Alto if you did they would cross it out. We had people who worked in the postal service there they would censor all the mail going out.

Interviewer: Did they censor what came in too? Once you completed building up the base on the island where did you go from there?

Fazar: From that island?

Interviewer: Yes sir

Fazar: We came back to the states we were out on that island for I think about 27 months something like that it was a long time. We were getting rather homesick.

Interviewer: I can imagine. You said you were promoted during your service time.

Fazar: Yeah I went from the 68th battalion into the 9th U.S. Naval Construction Regiment. The regiment controlled most of the CB battalions on the island. What they took me to regiment for was my recording ability. The colonel in charge wanted somebody to record meetings and I could write shorthand I was about the only guy around that could write shorthand. They took me and I did that.

Interviewer: For the most part did you say the people who got promotions were justified?

Fazar: Oh yeah yeah

Interviewer: Did you

Fazar: Let me say one thing about that.

Interviewer: Yes sir

Fazar: Anywhere you work you're gonna have people who get promotions that are not justified but they know somebody important and they give them the job. But the majority of the guys knew what they were doing. In fact you even had the V12 program up there where guys could take test you know to qualify to go to school in the states to become officers' naval officers.

Interviewer: Can you take us through what a typical day would be like when you were on the island?

Fazar: Well for me?

Interviewer: Yes sir

Fazar: Yeah I would get up in the morning and I might have KP duty or something like that or I might be on a cleaning detail and you had to do that before you could go to breakfast. Go to breakfast then after you eat you went to your job. And in the regiment I would work about eight hours and go back to my barracks. But when I was in a battalion sometimes I'd work from say six o'clock in the morning until midnight it all would depend on what you had to do. You didn't mind that because you had nowhere to go anyway you know glad to be doing something.

Interviewer: Yeah keep your mind occupied.

Fazar: Right you surely couldn't go over that hill because you couldn't get off that island and swim back to the states so you had to stay there. Right buddy

Man in the background: Right

Interviewer: Did you ever have any contact with civilians or refugees?

Fazar: Well I'm glad you asked that question because when we lived on the island of Alto the army had just had a big battle with the Japanese up there. And the army knocked them off they didn't get them all some of them run back to the hills and they had foxholes dug. So we were out one day looking for souvenirs and looked and saw some matting laying around we took the rifle and kicked it up and there was some Japanese in that foxhole. But you know what there was quite a few of them did that and they didn't have any food up on the island of Alto the weather was so inclement you had to wear heavy clothing. We always wore a helmet, boots with packs in them pretty cold up there. It wasn't as cold as say Dutch Harbor New York surrounded by water there. It forms the land up so you don't have coat than you do up in Dutch Harbor but anyway these Japanese would sneak into our chow line. Right in line get fed sit down next to somebody they wouldn't say nothing and eat. They did that for about a whole month before somebody got wise to one of them and said something he wouldn't respond you know. Said hey take your hat off Jap. So we went out and surrounded the edge about 15 of them put them behind a wire barrier you know. But we didn't kill them like they killed our guys.

Interviewer: So would you say you came to respect the average enemy soldier or would you summarize your feelings in another way?

Fazar: Well I never had any personal contact with them I wouldn't really know you know I can't say properly.

Interviewer: Oh I just wasn't sure if you heard you know when people coming in.

Fazar: I'll tell you one thing I don't think our service members were as rough on them as they were on us like over in Pearl Harbor and those places islands down in the South Pacific.

Interviewer: Would you think would you say the medical treatment that most like the wounded soldiers got was top notch?

Fazar: I would say so yeah.

Interviewer: If you knew of anybody that was wounded.

Fazar: Well see on the island we built hospitals up there. The army was up there too and they had the hospitals good doctors' good dentists.

Interviewer: Would you say that the average soldier had an idea what the big picture was like what the strategy was to defeat the Japanese?

Fazar: I would say so yeah. You got all kinds of training you know training on rifle range you'd go out and heavy artillery and all the type of deal. Yeah they got briefed pretty dog gone good.

Interviewer: So when you shipped back to the states did you go back to Seattle is that what port the ship

Fazar: Yeah that was our embarkation point and that's where we went back in. And then got on another ship and went down along the western part of the states and went into Port Hueneme California that was a big naval supply depot. And they had a nice dock there and everything a lot of CB embarked from there.

Interviewer: And where did you go from there?

Fazar: Well I got married out there.

Interviewer: So did you stay out there awhile?

Fazar: Yeah I lived out in California awhile. I liked it I lived in California before I came here.

Interviewer: I want to make one last correlation I want to get your thoughts on. Would you say for somebody of who you know wasn't alive in Pearl Harbor that the September 11th tragedy was how would you compare it to Pearl Harbor?

Fazar: Well I'll say both were really bad. I don't know how I can put a time on this you know from one to ten I'd say they're both about a ten.

Interviewer: Alright well I appreciate

Fazar: The difference there though 9/11 those people didn't have a chance where in Pearl Harbor you could run and hid or jump in a fox hole or you know. But the guys on ship at Pearl Harbor didn't have a chance they were anchored out there and they swooped down and caught them early in the morning you know.

Interviewer: You have any recollections that stick out that we haven't spoken about?

Fazar: How's that again?

Interviewer: Any recollections that stick out that we haven't spoke about about your time in service?

Fazar: No

Interviewer: Okay