

Coble: Now this is an LST (holding up a framed picture of a ship) they were used extensively in the Navy for invasions. The front doors would open up and we would carry tanks assault tanks and we would go up on a beach and land and turn the Marines loose. We would go out into the bay and wait until we had the chance to come back in to bring the supplies in. It was used extensively in the invasions in the South Pacific. And one old general said it was the ship that won the war. I was on that one for a while and this is an aircraft carrier (holding up a framed picture of a ship) we were going under the Golden Gate Bridge.

Interviewer: Wow that doesn't look like its going to fit underneath that bridge.

Coble: That's the reason they took it like that we had gone under the bridge but it looks like its so big it was going to run into it. But it was an illusion and I'll be telling you about that. And this (holding up another framed picture of a ship) is a large attack transport we carry several hundred Marines or soldiers. And we had the boats that would we would lift over the side and use that to go in on the beach with. And that was used an awful lot. And all three of these ships made it through the war and of course there's a story about each one.

Interviewer: Okay let's start with the general basic information. What's your full name, where you were born, branch of the service, primary unit.

Coble: Okay my name is Maurice Leon Coble I go by Leon. And I was born in a little town of Coble Tennessee about 12 miles from here on July 1, 1922. And I went to school for about through the sixth grade here and well then after that we moved around a bit it was during the depression. I went to Chattanooga and I graduated from high school in Chattanooga. And went to work for AT&T telephone telegraph as a lineman and worked for them up through the summer. And by that time they were getting ready to all us in. I ran down and got into the Navy before I had to get in the Army or Marine Core.

Interviewer: What were your parent's names and what did they do for a living especially during the depression and brothers and sisters?

Coble: I'm the only child in the family and my father Everett Coble had a grocery store down at Coble Tennessee and then our little town Coble burned down. But he also knew quite a bit about drugs and he went to work for a pharmacist selling drugs. And my mother was Jessie May McClaren and she was raised over here on Beaver Dam with a large family. And as young grandchild I stayed at each place quite a bit growing up and he continued doing that all the time I was in the service.

Interviewer: Right what are your recollections of the great depression? How did it affect your family and how did you all cope?

Coble: Well it was amazing a little bit I still look at it as a child because the latter part of 1929 everything was just great. A lot of money was being spent and that little town Coble we didn't have any electricity then. But every weekend the place got crowded we had all the saw mills running and people selling timber and each weekend they'd have a carnival of some kind almost to attract people. And Limburg

just flew over the ocean and there was a lot of celebrating over that I remember. And because we never did see an airplane we had to hear about them and then I saw the store becoming empty and I asked my dad I said what's wrong? It seemed like it was almost over night from a big crowd to like a stand still just nothing. And he said well the people are going broke we're having a depression and said the people don't have money to come in and buy groceries. And I said well when are we going back to Nashville and get a truck load of groceries? And he said I don't know because I don't have the money to go buy any. So I just sat there and watched him go broke because there wasn't anything else he could do and in the country you had to carry people on the books. So he finally we left there and moved around quite a bit we moved to Jackson Tennessee and Mobile Alabama. And I know I counted up the high schools I was in one time by the time I got out I was in 12 different schools.

Interviewer: O h my gosh.

Coble: So seeing a new school it was good and bad. You would almost get a complex because some place you'd be behind the students and other places you would be ahead of the. And it was hard and that's when you need friends real bad. And you get but on the other hand you learn how to take care of yourself quite well. So that's what I remember about the schools more than anything else.

Interviewer: Right wow I can't 12 high schools.

Coble: Yeah that was moving around.

Interviewer: Goodness were you old enough to have a job before your time in service and if so what did you do?

Coble: Yeah I mentioned that earlier when I got out of high school.

Interviewer: Right

Coble: In Chattanooga why the war was just getting started Pearl Harbor hadn't hit yet. But I know I looked into it I was going to Canada and join the Air Core up there and my mother wouldn't hear of it. One of the boys I played football with he wanted to go into the Marine Core and his mother allowed it and went down and signed up but my momma wouldn't sign. And incidentally he got killed he got killed on the Hornet later on so it was quite everybody was very patriotic. We hadn't seen anything like that and of course all of us couldn't wait to get in there and kill some Germans and Japs and all this was going on. And but I didn't have to wait to long they were after me and here I went. And the reason I went into the Navy I was in the National Guard in high school. We all signed under age and it was a cavalry outfit we all rode horses. And it was great because we could take our girlfriend out there on Saturday and take them for a ride. And they had some pretty gentle horses and all and most of our football team got on that just to have a lot of fun with. Well then in 41 we went on maneuvers down in Louisiana and Texas. That was the hardest thing I ever went through in my life. We got our horses captured and our kitchen captured and we didn't get captured but they were trying to put on a real display of what would happen during a war. And it was very effective so that's the kind of work I did up until I went into the service.

Interviewer: Right before Pearl Harbor how seriously did you take the threat to America from the Nazis and from the Japanese?

Coble: Oh very much so all the films they were showing why we were all young and war just sounded romantic to us it didn't sound like it would be a knock down battle. And we were myself and I speak for all of the young boys about that age we was full of vim and vigor and we just couldn't see this happening to our country. And there wasn't any trouble getting recruits everybody was going in the service.

Interviewer: Volunteering up and going for it. How did you keep up with the events of 39 through 41? I mean newspapers, radios

Coble: Thirty-nine through forty-one?

Interviewer: Yeah well before Pearl Harbor.

Coble: Well mainly at the movies.

Interviewer: Really?

Coble: Yeah they had the U.S. films news reels and they were just before every movie they would run the reel. And there would be a lot of pictures of invasions, we weren't in it at the time, but what the Germans were doing abroad. And radio there was a lot of we'd listen to different people on the radio at night because we didn't have any T.V. and we thought we were getting pretty good news. We were at the time nothing like it is now of course.

Interviewer: Yeah not by the second stuff sometimes I wish we didn't get that.

Coble: Yeah isn't that the truth.

Interviewer: Do you remember where you were and how you heard the news of the attack on Pearl Harbor?

Coble: Oh yeah I don't think any of us will ever forget. We were working on a job in South Carolina and I had gone home that weekend to see my parents. And so on Sunday afternoon I was riding my down with my father so far away where I was going to get a bus and go back to South Carolina. And it was in the evening when we were riding in the car and of course it just took the radio stations over from everything that was going on. And so sat there and he said well this will change our lives forever. And I got back to the company and in a very short time later see I was 18 a very short time later I had to register. So I saw within about six months I'd be going in and having I had ROTC in high school I was a First Lieutenant there and it gave you a little bit of back ground about the Army. And then I was on maneuvers there with the National Guard that was all Army and that was tough. I got to thinking about the Navy and the ship looked pretty good. So another boy and I after we signed up why then we got our notification to come down the following week to Atlanta Georgia. So we went on in and like I said we joined the Navy. I didn't really join the Navy I got hood winked into it. There was a big ole recruiting officer there Chief and we went up to see him and before we went to see him they had the units they

called CVs they were civilian workers. But they built stuff for the Army and Navy and all and so us being telephone linemen I said I've been in this National Guard maybe I can get some rank out of it maybe get to be a Sargent or a Corporal. And we were wheeling and dealing so we talked to this Chief and he was so nice he said you boys don't want that you in that old man's outfit and everything he started painting the Navy up and all the beautiful girls they had in the islands. And we said yeah we'll just join the Navy so I remember asking him I said, because I wanted to know all about it, I said if we sign up together can we stay together throughout the service? He said oh yeah no problem acted like he was writing it down and I said home port and he said what home port do you want, that's where you leave from, and I said New Orleans, no problem. Well I stayed with that boy about three days never did see him there you go. And of course the rest of it was joke I did go into the Navy then. And I went through the regular process they give you additional exams and all when you get in. And of all things I can't sing a not of anything and they found that I had exceptional tone for hearing so they gave me a test that went zing zoo zing zoo zoo if it was a zing you'd mark the sound zing if it wasn't why you'd mark false. And I didn't think it was hard at all and they came back and said what instrument do you play and I said I can't even whistle. At church they all laugh at me trying to sing tell me to shut up and I was surprised but anything to get off the boat I'd tell in a hurry. And he said oh there's piano tuners that can't sing but they have the ear for it. And I got lucky and they started giving us additional tests and then they came back and what they'd do they'd call out a bunch and send them to this unit or that unit. And so they came back and asked me if I wanted to go to school that I had scored pretty high on the test. And not that I was brilliant or anything like that what it is your IQ and all that's not right is it? But anyway they had ways of telling. And I said well what school can I go to? They said any of them you want to. And but that was just for the service and so I looked at all the schools and I saw gunner smith school. Well I liked guns I was young and I hunted a lot so I volunteered for that and they sent me to a New Port Rhode Island I was in gunner school there for three months. There you learn all about the guns how they operate and how to repair them and keep things going. Then from there I went to hydraulics school for a short time because those large guns operate on hydraulics. And oh I never used it and that was in Washington D.C. and from there went aboard ship. The rest of my time in the service was aboard ships.

Interviewer: Well drafting doesn't apply. What was your basic training like?

Coble: We it was it wasn't too tough for me because I had had enough minor military background that I kind of expected it. Having been on those maneuvers and everything but it was getting us into shape. An awful lot of exercises and running we'd run two or three or five miles day and do a tremendous amount of exercises. And then of course during all of that time they were getting everybody real good and healthy. And I was real fortunate I didn't have any bad teeth or eyes or anything so I didn't have to go through much of that. And the rest of it was just basic training more or less whipping you in shape for what you were going to get into later on.

Interviewer: What kind of unit did you go into immediately after well as soon as you got onto the ship what was your job what did you do?

Coble: Well at this gunner school again I was real fortunate the upper third of the class graduated as a Petty Officer and they would be equivalent say to a Sargent in the Army. And a Petty Officer Third Class

Gunners Mate Third Class so that meant that I was qualified to do the things that the Petty Officer should do with Navy guns that I was assigned to. So from that I was assigned to the USS Windsor and that was one of the ships there I told you had boats that they put you on and send the boat then to the land. And it was a brand new ship so we took it on what you call a shake down cruise in Chesapeake Bay and Chesapeake Bay you think your in the ocean there it's a huge huge Bay. And we had an awful lot of target practice gunnery practice and I had to tare the guns down and redo them and make sure they were all shape and greased properly and things of that nature. And on when you're aboard ship then whenever what you were, I was a gunner's mate that's all I had been called for, you were assigned a certain section of guns on the ship and that was my responsibility. And later on when we were in action if a barrel would jam up one of us would take that thing off and throw it over the side and get another one on right away. And just repeat repeat and it was difficult because most of the equipment we had was real old WWI equipment and they weren't prepared for this thing at all. And the guns we had were antiques and operated with a lot of springs and different things. And we just had to wait for the estates to catch up on this manufacture and then we slowly got replacing holds older guns and everything. So it was a fulltime job.

Interviewer: Just keeping up with all of the machinery. The guns you said were really outdated when it came time to go into battle had your ship gotten all of the upgrades and everything?

Coble: Oh no no it was later on much later we oh it must have been a year later I know we went in the dry dock in New York and that's where the ship was pulled out of the water and all. And that's where we got most of the guns replaced and we thought we were in hog heaven with these new guns they were really something. We had been shooting those ole what they called pow pow and boom boom boom and then we got this anti aircraft guns a barrel of ammunition was gone before you knew it. And also a real wonderful sight before it was all guess work we'd guess how far away the plane was and go on that. And with the new guns they had these sights that would sight through and we'd figure the gun the plane was out there at five thousand feet or something set the sight and then we'd see the little plane on there and it would show up how far to lead it. It was amazing how far you had to lead those planes to hit them because the planes were moving fast and the bullets but that got us where we could hit planes pretty fast that was within range. So we slowly oh they were repairing guns and all just continuous right up to the end of the war improving improving. And every time we got a chance to get an improved we would.

Interviewer: What was everyday life like on a Navy ship I mean what did you all do out there in the middle of the ocean?

Coble: It's amazing what the boys can find to do. I know I learned with another guy there names Rasinjack we'd get the cook in there and get us a five gallon keg off of one of the life rafts and pack it full of fruit and yeast and then let it work off put a tube in it going over to another glass where the gas would work off of it, its like making wine. And we'd nip on that get to feeling good and all. We had to stash it because they were always looking for it and we had to hide it in different places. And but the regular work the boys played an awful lot of cards and some of the work is your so tired when you got off you wanted to stretch our for awhile. And had the on guard duty and stuff like that. So card playing

and fortunately I don't know how it came about but you'd get a group of men together and one of the boys would have a guitar and the other one would have a violin and the first thing you know you had music going. And the kids don't have it don't take much for kids to have a lot of fun. You learned to be a good poker player.

Interviewer: So the ships weren't like they are today cause I've got a friend who is in Navy intelligence and all she tells us is that she's somewhere in the Mediterranean and apparently she's on a ship that had swimming pools and bowling alleys and

Coble: Unbelievable

Interviewer: And all kinds of stuff on theirs. It wasn't like that huh?

Coble: No and we didn't have any girls with us either no.

Interviewer: No women on the ship.

Coble: Back then. So I was on that carrier for not too awful long I came to call I went in in the summer of 42. And my training and all took about three or four months by that time I was a Petty Officer and went aboard ship. And down through the canal and into the South Pacific and I saw Hawaii and that was quite a thrill. And I felt so far from home and boy I was and but that was Honolulu was my home base for the next three years. And I got hurt I got my leg broken in an accident and was in the hospital there for about two or three months. And when I got out why they put me aboard another ship and when I mentioned about the they call it the amphibious Navy why we were volunteering for it. And I thought that sounded real good to me to go in on a beach with Marines and so I was still an amphibious sailor. And they put me aboard this LST and might as well run that down pretty quick. Then I was in the Gilbert Islands invasion and when you go through an island invasion you get credit for one start a battle and most of the time we would take two or three islands and each one of them was an invasion. And so we took two islands in the Marshal groups then let's see I'm on this LST boy I had left a big big ole ship. And I felt terrible on this little ole thing flat bottom and road terrible and you could stand in the back and you could see it bend the whole ship bending up and down it was built that way to give. But they took a real beating and kept going. And I was on it for a whole slew of invasions after that we went, I may forget some of it, and we went to the island of Peleliu. And you probably never heard of it and not a whole lot about it in history but it was one of the toughest invasions and it was right on the equator. And most of those islands are mountainous but this one only had one small hill on it and the Japs were fortified in that thing. And we had a huge artillery gun we couldn't get them knocked out it took a long time to do it and I think the weather being so miserable too everybody just stayed burning up. And then other little islands around that I know I saw somewhere in the report about shooting at people. In the Navy you don't see a whole lot of it because you're either on your way in, in the regular Navy none you go into battles at sea and those things are not nice either. But there in this amphibious they call us up to another island and it had an air field on it. And had a lot of Japanese on it and they wanted us to go up to the end of the island and the Marines went in on the front part of the island and they were forcing them back. And for us to keep shooting and killing these until they shot a flair up and oh even then there's so much bad feeling and hatred and all it wasn't a good feeling because you'd see all of those

Japanese kids running. They looked about the size of dogs jumping around and trying to get to another island. And of course we were using heavy guns and you could see them folding up and all. But those things you try to kick out of your mind as soon as you can. And we took an island by the name of En Gloria that was close to Peleliu and then I guess one of the next things we got into was Saipan. And that's a huge island and other islands with it what we were trying to do was take back some of the islands that the Japanese had taken over getting our foot hold. Then we would bypass other islands we were just leap frogging through the South Pacific. And Saipan island is a huge mountainous island and these experiences that's I'm telling you about now you really don't talk about them too much because they bring back so many tough old memories. But at then end of the air field on Saipan it was real mountainous so the island was taken for our B29 planes they had just came out. And I saw the first one came down I couldn't imagine it I said look at the size of that airplane. And so it landed there but during the invasion we were taking a lot of Marines there and the gasoline and ammunition for them and we were there on the Southern Beach by the airport. And we hear this screaming and all and all of a sudden and we could tell it coming down and we looked up and these Japanese or native women with their children they were coming off this bluff and they was hitting the rocks and everything down below. And we tried so hard to get them to stop but they had been told that we were going to rape them and torture them and everything. And you see that kind of stuff and it just makes you so mad you can't see not a whole lot you could do about it. But I know there were so many bodies in there that we used what we call a mine sweeper and throwing ropes out and dragging them into the beach. So that's something you probably won't hear about too much are those kinds of things. Then you started taking all these prisoners and all and standing guard duty on that and it's kind of funny because we looked like mountains up to those little Japs. And we'd dig them out of those caves and everything and they'd you could see lice running around on them. And they thought it was real disgrace to be caught in their uniform and they'd usually take the uniform off and make a diaper. And they'd be wearing diapers and we'd get them and shave their heads and then we had these guns with that kind of stuff we were spraying them and we were true gentlemen with them. And that's the only place we did it was Saipan because we took so many prisoners. Oh then after that it was repetitious those invasions you get where it gets to be work. You'd go in and actually you'd be all tight and everything until the guns started going off and then you'd just fall into it and do it like you would a normal job practically. And it's amazing what you can get used to doing those things and doing that way. It's certainly awfully bad too when they come up to the ship and have these boys shot up real bad. And we couldn't take them aboard our ship we didn't have any doctor we'd have to send them somewhere else. But that's all part of the war business and then after Saipan we went to around Guam I guess the next one was the Philippines Latte and the Philippines and we got in there and sailed through the Philippine islands are just huge. One mountain high after another and we went in there pretty early in the day and we got hit pretty hard from the beach. And then after that was over with well the ones of us that had survived 30 some of us we all got shipped back to the states to be reset to duty and given another ship. So that's where I met pretty Miss Fay I came home and I had 30 days and six days of traveling time. And those big ole transports brought us back you just stand in line and eat twice a day oatmeal and crowded nurses and sick people and it was a huge ship but it was just shoulder to shoulder. And we got all of these last games started so I won about \$1800 and bought her an engagement ring with that. So that was some on the happy times and then when I went back they assigned me to an aircraft carrier. And that was real

strict discipline the commander was a graduate of Indianapolis and we went right by the book on everything. But it was great if we wanted ice cream we'd go right up to the ship store and buy us an ice cream. And on that LST we ate k-rations all the time. So I felt like I had already gone to heaven when I got aboard there. It was awfully cold hard work and the carrier was what we called a baby carrier. It wasn't a made over carrier it was built for carrier carried a small number of planes and they were to do sub patrol. Because you can see subs in the water so much better from the air and then when you set these torpedoes ash cans as we called them depth charges to go off at a certain depth. And they'd drop it and the ship they had already done that before I got on they had been given credit for killing 12 subs. And then I guess one of the most interesting parts my part in the Navy is how things can change times and all and we were up in the North Atlantic when the war with Germany was over. Oh we were just it was the happiest day of our life and it was three days after that we were notified that the German subs would come up and put up a black flag and signal their position and an allied ship would go in and take them in. And I'm in an outfit magazine and a magazine is where you carry ammunition that had gotten messed up and I hear this terrific explosion and I knew it was one of our ships. And I said the war is over and so I got top side just as soon as I could and this destroyer the carrier would go along like this and you'd have destroyers around it two on each side one in the back. And the destroyer here on the right side was just reaching in the water a Japanese sub had hit it and blown it in half. And you can't live in that water up there just a few minutes and your frozen and so our planes they were dropping these bombs and we're yelling and it was like watching a football game and seeing this many of the boys in the water and they were getting blown all to pieces. And that sub got the announcement said its coming up and everybody was standing with guns and everything and it came up it looked like something out of a movie. The bow it just shot right up out of the water and down it went and settled in the water. And these Germans started coming off of it and we had small boats over there by then and they picked up 32 of them I think and brought them onboard the carrier. And as I say this is right at the end of the war and they looked so little to us. Most of them were blonde blue eyed they were the true German and they nasty little ole group too cocky and we were just hoping that they would get out of line so we could blow their heads off. We had these Thompson sub machine guns and each crew of us I couldn't talk any German but we had a boy that could and he never did any talking you see he listened to those kids and he laughed telling us different things they were talking about. But we brought them back to Boston and they went on as a prisoner of war and later of course returned. But a few years ago one of men was over in Germany and he ran across this guy one of the guys that was recued Ernest Winters and we were the ship was having a reunion up in Philadelphia. And says we're trying to get him and his wife to come to the reunion and says come it will really be a surprise to you. So I told Fay, usually I don't make those reunions; I said this one we've got to see. We went up there and of course the night we had big banquet and he got up and he spoke a few words in English and there was a German interpreter there and the first thing he wanted to do was to thank all of the American sailors that was there that saved his life. He said I wouldn't be here today if you men handled it any different. And they couldn't believe that Germany was they had been out for three months they were going in for supplies and they had been given bad information. And that Germany was winning the war and everything and they tried to get our carrier before they went in and so I have pictures of them and all and there was three of us that guarded them. And we sat there at a table and talked over old time and here we are hugging each other and he is a Christina Lutheran belongs to a Lutheran church and so me being a deacon down here at the ole

Baptist church we really had some good conversations. I know he said isn't the Lord wonderful here we are as old men now see we're hitting 80 and here we are as old men and so proud to see each other where we would have killed each other at the drop of a hat there when we were so young. So I don't know maybe you might like that story.

Interviewer: That's really interesting that you got to meet one of the people.

Coble: Yeah 40 years 50 years later.

Interviewer: Not many people get that chance.

Coble: So anyway that was the thumb nail sketch and the war was over and I had so many points you get so much points for sea duty and battles your in and everything. And I had way over the number that was required so I got out just as soon as the war was over they got me a replacement. And back to Miss Fay and there in Detroit and she didn't want to leave Detroit too much so I went on the police force then and stayed until I retired and came down here. So you've got a big story there of the Navy.

Interviewer: There you go that's the Navy better. Well I do want to ask you this because this is a question I have found the answers that I've had so far have been interesting. We're you impressed with the qualities of your enemies the leadership, bravery, ability to withstand the hardships, weapons tactics skills were you impressed by any of it at the time?

Coble: Not so much where the war was for me because there at sea you can't tell much about it. And we shot so many of the planes down towards the end of the war we weren't seeing many planes and when we'd go in on these islands what impressed me more than anything else even does today in this modern world you still cannot win a war without sending men in. Because those islands there they would be the prettiest thing you ever saw in your life just as green as they could be well they would bomb them extensively for a week or so before we'd go in on the invasion. And honey when went in to the invasion you didn't see anything green all the trees had been blown away rocks piled up where the bombs were hitting and all. And had to dig them out of those caves one cave at a time and we had to get those out with flame throwers. And that's real messy I wasn't on there or anything I could see the boys that were. No I wasn't impressed in them as far as being superior I saw that we were the superior force in every battle that I was in. I was intrigued about the how obedient the Japanese was to their commanders and all. They would do exactly what they were told if they were told to jump off of a cliff they'd just off of the cliff. And but no I can't think of anything outside of that.

Interviewer: So it was more of just doing a job.

Coble: Yeah

Interviewer: Yeah well I always like to end these interviews on a happier note. So do tell me what is your fondest memory the funniest thing just something that never fails to get a smile out of you about the time you were in the service.

Coble: Oh me you asked the wrong guy that because there are so many things that because I'm that way I get tickled pretty easy. I know a lot of times why some of the guys would really be filled up or something and I'd be laughing. I'd see humor where some people wouldn't. I don't know I can't think about anything in particular with the enemy don't know why I thought of this. Down in those islands birds would come aboard ship every now and then. And they just weren't afraid of us they hadn't been around people or anything and you could practically walk up and pet them. And but different sizes and all and we had one that looked like a big ole pelican it wasn't a pelican but he would straddle around and we'd feed him stuff. And he got on the barrel of our three inch gun and one day we got in there and got him smashing some planes were coming in and he'd been on there when they were just practicing but they weren't shooting. And anyway we had to shoot at this plane and we saw a few feathers floating and we never saw our bird again. I don't know why I thought about that but I got so tickled over it. And another night I was going aboard ship and this is back in the states we had all been out been in the bar and we'd gotten high and this guy gave me a bottle of liquor to take back aboard. So I thought I was fooling the officer and everything and I saluted the officer and called him he said what have you got there under your blouse? And I said I've got a cake and he said alright said take it down below and we'll drink it later. He knew what I had owe there's many funny things like that. Another we had a guy that was he had been left footed any where in the world where he had been and he was a brilliant guy he was an engineer and he was an officer. And on that LST you'd see him pop up here and there he was always looking and into something and he could tell you all about astronomy at night seeing the and down in islands you've got different sky than you do below the equator. He'd point out all of these bodies and talk about them and we got into another island there Palau and we couldn't get on the end of the island because they had all these booby traps and tank traps. And we kept hitting those and their bad so we got a detail about eight of us and we had to get this ammunition ashore and all. And we're standing on the edge of this barge and he turned around and he should have turned all the way around but it was dark and he said alright now men forward. And he didn't even act like he was in a war like he was back in college doing something, And so he took a step and it took us about 15 minutes for us to dig him out all of this ammunition he had on and down in the water he went. We had to dive in time after time we finally got him out and he never said anything about it or anything nothing we were down we were shooting dice we had a little place back in the back on that little LST and there's a big vent above it. And we'd open this thing up and we'd go down there to get some air and so we got this card game going and right in the middle of this card game it was a noise and here's our lieutenant he fell right through there. He got up cleared his throat somebody ought to do something about that and away he went. I've often wondered about him I hope he made it he was genuine honest about everything matter of fact. But smart of was he smart so he won't have any more answers like that what was funny.

Interviewer: Probably not.

Coble: And the other things that we oh we pulled all kind of pranks on new guys. We'd be out in the middle of the Atlantic or the Pacific and maybe it was the guy's first time out we'd just picked him up. And we'd say well tonight from 12 until 1 you've got the anchor watch you know what I mean by anchor watch. And we'd go up on the bow of the ship where they pull the anchor and they'd say these planes they know were going to be through here the routes and all and you see planes they come down and

they leave mail in these big blown up balloons. And said we'll be watching for them about like big paste board box and when you see it you've got to notify the captain. We ask our ship to pick the mail up but anyway a big long story and to get somebody up there we had a long pole with a gaff hook on the end of it and that's the way we were supposed to get it. And here looking over the side trying to find the mail Bowie.

Interviewer: That sounds about like a sniff hunt.

Coble: Yeah and all those kind of things. Boys are going to have a good time no matter where they are, it doesn't make a difference.

Interviewer: You all sound like you had a fantastic time.

Coble: I did overall I enjoyed it. It was a hard time a lot of it and the I don't know how long a guy could go through that. I was in counting the individual invasions and all probably seven or eight and towards the end you start getting worried about yourself. The psychiatrists say its normal and because you've seen a lot of your buddies get killed or wounded and that's bad. And then you start wondering when it's going to be your time. We got caught in a terrific explosion in the Philippines they kept it quiet all during the war because they didn't want the Japs to know about it. We was getting ready to go on a invasion and six of our ships blew up and I've got a tape of that and our ship was right in the middle of it. How we got out of it I'll never know the Lord took us out I guess. And all of this starts building up on you and when you've been through those things their good in the service you go before the psychiatrist so when I was talking to him I said that's beginning to get on my mind pretty much. I said because I've been in this thing almost from the beginning and a lot of the guys are not here that was. And he said well look at it this way the man is on his first invasion his chances and your chances if you've been on seven are exactly the same going in he said each one of them is a new day. So it kind of gives you a different out look, and are you about threw with this?

Interviewer: Yeah now we're done with this part.

Coble: I'll end up telling you

Interviewer: You want me to turn this off?

Coble: No I think you will like this. After the Philippines and we were going to get new ships we had to go through what you call the survival board and answer questions. And they do that to weed out the guys that are getting in bad shape especially and that's the worst thing in the world. Of all of the things I saw it was bad I've seen an arm float by with a tattoo on it you know where the boys were hit and blown all apart and those kinds of things and guts in the water. So they try to get you trimmed down to the point where your chances are just good and they are. So the morning that we were supposed to go down they took half of the crew and one guy came back I remember his name Healey and he was a little Irish boy from Philadelphia. And he was good fighter and we'd have prize fights and all enough to be professional so he was getting in pretty bad shape and he came back and I said what did you get he said guns I got shorted in Philadelphia. I said you mean their shipping you he said yes sir. I said how did you

do it? He said I fooled him he said when you go in there they will give you an exam and it's got 20 questions in it. And he said I answered those questions just the opposite of what I thought they wanted. And he said if you fail so many of them they call you back in said they called me back in and said my hands were sweating real bad and all and the psychiatrist talked to me for a good while and said well son you've done your share. And he picked my file up and he stamped on it shore duty. I said you've got to be kidding no; I said I'm going to get me some shore duty. So I went in there and I'll never forget as long as I live the first question that was on this now you've got to imagine a guy that's been through about three years of that been all over the Pacific and Atlantic. And of all the darn questions would you prefer if you had your choice would you prefer to be a professional motorcycle rider or a florist? Work on that so I marked florist don't even know one flower from another. On down and I got through and boy a red flag went up he came in there and said gunners mate Coble I said yes sir he said in here. I went in to see the head knocker and he's sitting there looking at my papers. He was a man in his 40s and a good psychiatrist I think they are terrific. He knew just exactly how to question me he knew how to loosen me up how to get me tight. And so when he got through with me he said look guns get on back out there and enjoy yourself says you've got a long way to go yet. And he stamped sea duty on my file. I said how can I go back to sea the shape I'm in?

Interviewer: You've still got your whits about you what are you talking about?

Coble: During the interview I took a match box and I tore it up in little pieces while he was talking to me and I kept myself nervous all the time. He said you put in one of the biggest shows I ever saw in my life he said I really enjoyed it. Said like we were back at school and I said well how about Healey I said he's got permanent shore duty and he was just talking about it. He said the boys really got problems said he thought he was fooling me but he said he's ready to crack. Said he just doesn't need it anymore and that's what was so bad about it because I know when we came back from the South Pacific on this big ship they had hospital cases on there nurses with them and all. And there was a little bit of action one day just with they shot at a few planes and those boys that had had nervous breakdowns they would just go all to pieces. And it's so frightful to watch them and I know aboard ship one night we were under this high altitude bombing and great big Italian boy jumped up and started swinging a broom and it took about six of us to hold him down to get him in a straight jacket. And come out here and fight and so that's what they call the fatigue of it but after so long it would eat into the minds of some of the boys and some of it was really server. You see some of those kids that are up there screaming and all you know their like babies just wanting to get back in their momma's hip. That disturbed me a lot I sure didn't like to see that. But on the good side on my birthday I will be 80 years old and I can still laugh about it now so God has been good to me.

Interviewer: That lieutenant that fell through the roof. That just so seems like something that would happen to me.

Coble: Well he was the type guy you just wouldn't see anywhere else. And he'd just drop in out of the blue sky you asks him what he was doing and he'd say... you never did know what he said.

Interviewer: He might have not known what he was doing.

Coble: But when he stepped over the side of that barge he better be glad we was there because his momma would have got a letter on him, he was dead.

Interviewer: You had to get down there and fish him out that was good. Well Mr. Coble thank you so much for doing this.

Coble: I hope it's alright.

Interviewer: It will be wonderful and I will make you a copy of this tape.