

What is your full name and where and when you were born?

Mr. Dorris: Albert L. Dorris, Jr., Robertson County, Tennessee.

What year?

Mr. Dorris: 11/27/27.

What branch of the service did you serve in?

Mr. Dorris: US Navy.

What was the primary unit you served in?

Mr. Dorris: I was on a ship in World War II.

What were your parent's names and what were their occupations?

Mr. Dorris: My parent's names were Albert L. Dorris, Sr. and Alsa Mae. My father was a carpenter and sawmill man.

Was your mom just a housewife?

Mr. Dorris: My mom was just a housewife.

Did you have any brothers or sisters?

Mr. Dorris: Oh yeah, I had two sisters and six brothers.

So you come from a big family.

Mr. Dorris: Five brothers.

Okay.

Mr. Dorris: Well I had four half brothers; there were 12 of us.

Holy Cow! Were you able to finish out your education? Did you stay in school awhile? How long did you stay in school?

Mr. Dorris: I went to World War II when I was in high school in the 11<sup>th</sup> Grade. I came back and got my education after I got out of high school.

Do you have any recollections of the Great Depression?

Mr. Dorris: No, my father told me about it but I was not quite old enough. I was born in 1927 and that was in the 30's.

Do you remember anything about how it affected your family? Were you guys badly hit by the depression?

Mr. Dorris: My family was affected pretty much because we were very poor.

Since you were in high school at your time of service, did you have a job before you enlisted or did you just go to school?

Mr. Dorris: I worked on a farm before I went to the Navy.

Did you work on the farm for your family or did you work for somebody else?

Mr. Dorris: I had my own crop and all. I worked there and raised my own crop on the farm.

Did it pay very much?

Mr. Dorris: Not too much barely enough to live on.

Enough to live on, okay. Before Pearl Harbor how seriously did you take the threat to Americans from the Nazi's and the Japanese?

Mr. Dorris: Very seriously. My father, we got the paper through the mail and I was quite an orator in reading. I read the paper to him about all the troops in World War II before Pearl Harbor and kept up with all of the advances the troops made and everything and that impressed me then to join the Navy.

Oh ok. Did you get a chance to listen to FRD's speech the following day?

Mr. Dorris: Yes, I was at school but I got to hear it on the radio. I had an old Felco radio about like this which was a little bitty fellow. We heard it on the radio.

Okay. Did you ever guess that the war would reach America shores?

Mr. Dorris: I have to answer that no because I believe that America was so far from foreign countries that we would never be attacked.

Did you approve of the way that FDR handled his office at the beginning of the war?

Mr. Dorris: Oh yeah. I knew that we were going to win because he put the spirit in us and we didn't have a problem.

Did you actually enlist then in the Navy or were you drafted?

Mr. Dorris: I enlisted.

You chose to enlist. Did you have a preference for the branch of service or the military task that you would perform? Did you want to be in the infantry or part of the artillery?

Mr. Dorris: I wanted Navy.

You wanted Navy?

Mr. Dorris: I had two brothers that retired from the Navy as field grade officers.

Oh ok. Did you go to an induction center?

Mr. Dorris: No, I volunteered in Nashville.

Ok. Were you tested for skill and IQ levels?

Mr. Dorris: I was in straight guard before I went. I had skills before I went in the Navy.

I suppose they didn't take you with your farming skills, you went in there to do something else right?

Mr. Dorris: Well, they didn't take me as a farmer, no.

Where did you do your basic training at?

Mr. Dorris: Great Lakes, Illinois.

Were you selected for a more specialized training after that?

Mr. Dorris: Well no, I just was selected to go overseas. They put me on a ship on Pier 33 in San Francisco, California.

What was your impression of the other mates aboard?

Mr. Dorris: My who?

The other mates that were with you?

Mr. Dorris: Oh I had more fun than a barrel of monkeys.

Was this your first time away from home?

Mr. Dorris: Well, I would have to say yes on that.

That is pretty common for a lot of people. Did you get to participate on any maneuvers stateside or were they all across the sea?

Mr. Dorris: When I left San Francisco I went to Pearl Harbor and on the way from San Francisco, my President died.

Oh.

Mr. Dorris: You just asked me who he was.

Yeah.

Mr. Dorris: President Roosevelt.

Yeah. That is an odd time to happen. Now did they stop everything or did you guys continue?

Mr. Dorris: No, I was on the ship arriving at Hawaii from San Francisco. I saw the Arizona and the other ships that were in the harbor there. Of course we departed to sea; set off about a day after I was there.

Okay. How good do you think your training was for the task ahead of you? Did you feel pretty prepared or no?

Mr. Dorris: We were pretty well-prepared but I wouldn't say I had enough training. I was on a 3 inch 38 that I had to train at sea on. I only had a little training on minor weapons; small weapons. They didn't train me until I got to sea. I learned a lot to shoot at the Japs on that 3 inch 38.

How good were the living conditions where you were at?

Mr. Dorris: The living conditions on the ship was most of my service time because I sailed sometimes for six months without even seeing land or anything. I was in a convoy with the 38<sup>th</sup> task force, 3<sup>rd</sup> fleet, in the South Pacific.

How long was your actual trip from San Francisco?

Mr. Dorris: From where we had our destination to Guam was 18 days; the island of Guam. They had just taken the island and we anchored there.

Oh ok. I got you. How many soldiers were on board your ship? Do you remember?

Mr. Dorris: We didn't have soldiers, we had sailors and stevedores.

I'm sorry, okay. What is a stevedore?

Mr. Dorris: A stevedore handles cargo, supplies, and everything.

Were you able to make any contact with civilians being on the ship or no? Did you guys get to send letters home or anything like that?

Mr. Dorris: No, we got a \_\_\_\_\_, they call in on Guam. We weren't able to make contact with very few civilians it was all of our people.

Did you get to see combat soon after arriving or was there a prolonged training period?

Mr. Dorris: Combat was mostly at sea. We had to sail in the South Pacific with the submarine attacks and everything on our ship and our fleet. The USS Franklin was hit in my convoy. We never got hit because they escorted us when the Pittsburg cruiser got hit. It shot the bow off of it. They escorted us. We had 3500 tons of supplies.

So you guys were carrying all sorts of supplies over then?

Mr. Dorris: We carried 3500 tons from Melbourne, Australia, Guam and \_\_\_\_\_ on the Caroline Islands where we would anchor and reload. We had to provision the ships on the way.

So did you guys dump all 3500 lbs of supplies off at Guam and go back and get more or did you make different stops?

Mr. Dorris: No, no we would give it units to each ship that came alongside of us. We were the first that was undertaken to supply ships by tying up alongside of us. We had some accidents but we got the job done. The Indiana battlewagon hit us in the side one time and we had to go and dry dock for 14 days. We were with the Iowa, Indiana, South Dakota, North Carolina, Washington, San Diego cruiser. South

Dakota was good; they had the medical dispensary with all the doctors and everything. We had a gunner's mate that got hit and we had to supply him with a boom over across to the ship. I never will forget that old boy, he was something else. He came through all right. His leg was hit and it was just a compound fracture. We couldn't handle him. We only had small dispensary supplies.

Being a sailor did you get any promotions during your time?

Mr. Dorris: Yeah, I got the 3<sup>rd</sup> class petty officer.

Did you feel that promotions were received by those who deserved them?

Mr. Dorris: Uh, question?

Yeah, do you think that they were deserving of them, the ones that were promoted?

Mr. Dorris: I didn't really get into all like that. I heard people talk about that, but I am sure there was some that didn't deserve the promotions that they got; not on my ship that I knew of.

Were the officers and the NCO's in your unit recent recruits or were there still some pre-war affiliates there?

Mr. Dorris: Possibly so but I wouldn't be able to answer that correctly.

Were you impressed with the qualities of the enemies, like leadership, tenacity, and bravery, stuff like that? Did you think that they were good fighters and well-prepared?

Mr. Dorris: I think anything that we undertook; we always came out on top. I don't think I had any problem there at all.

Did you come to respect the average enemy soldier or would you use other words to describe your feelings of the enemy soldiers?

Mr. Dorris: I don't know about that one. In the first place, the question is vague don't you think? Repeat that question.

Did you come to respect the average enemy soldier or would you use other words to describe your feelings of them?

Mr. Dorris: Hmm, I told you it was a tricky one. I respect the articles of war and that would be my enemy soldier.

That's well said and I can respect your answer. What about the civilians and the refugees? When you told us you didn't have much contact with them, the few that maybe you did come across, do you remember how they reacted to you as an American soldier or sailor?

Mr. Dorris: We had to pick up some survivors. At one time a B-29 crashed between Okinawa and Japan and we had to pick up the survivors. We got three of them and we shot star shells all night, that is phosphorus shells over the sea, to light the sea up so the B-29s could find them. They could go down low and skim the sea and see the survivors and of course we had to pick them up. We had pretty good relations there. Another time just before the end of the war, before the surrender, we had the Duke of York that came over from England to help us. We were going to invade Japan. They came alongside of us

and a bunch of them came aboard our ship. We entertained them; we had a ball with them. I never will forget how they bragged on their stuff. The British are good soldiers, I mean they are. We got along with the sailors and everything but they brag a lot.

Did you get to meet the Duke of York?

Mr. Dorris: Oh yeah, the Duke of York. The Duke of York is a battlewagon. It's their biggest ship, the Duke of York. They sunk the Bismarck, the British did. They sunk the big German battlewagon. The British done it mostly with aircraft carriers and around the clock bombing with their Air Force.

Did you have many friends or fellow soldiers or sailors that you knew that was wounded or killed during the World War II?

Mr. Dorris: No, I didn't have very many casualties aboard my ship in World War II.

Do you feel that you ever had a sense of the big picture? Did you ever know the strategy involved in beating the other powers?

Mr. Dorris: That is another question. What do you think that question means?

I guess when they say, do you have a sense of the big picture? Did you feel like you knew what was going on between everybody that you pretty much could forecast what was going to happen?

Mr. Dorris: Well, in a way I would, but in a way I wouldn't, no. That would be a yes and no answer.

Did you get to get involved in any of the famous landings?

Mr. Dorris: No.

Do you have any final comments or thoughts you would like to give?

Mr. Dorris: I would have to say that I was proud to serve my country in World War II because I knew my enemy. I knew who I was fighting. I knew I had a common enemy and we had to defeat that enemy or we would not have the freedoms that we now enjoy in this great country. That is about all I got to say.

This is just an afterthought. Were you scared?

Mr. Dorris: Oh yes, I was even scared when we had a typhoon. You know what; I will tell you a story on that one. I can tell sea stories all day. We had this typhoon that happened just off of Okinawa. We had 170 mile an hour winds that hit our fleet, convoy. We lost five ships in the convoy. I was on gun watch at 12 midnight. I got me a 23 thread line, that is a plow line; did you ever plow a mule?

Unfortunately I never have but I will take your word on it.

Mr. Dorris: I took that thing with me. We had to walk a line 3/8 line all the way to the gun mount because I was on #1 gun. It was on the front end, they called it the bow of the ship. I had to get up there to get on the gun mount. I got up there and strapped myself to the gun, the big old 3-inch 38. I stayed there and of course I had my earphones and everything for radio. I radioed the bridge; the wind had got so high that the ship was taking 45 degree rolls. That is just about capsized. My ship was 25,000 tons. It was real heavy. We had 23 units that we hadn't issued to the Iowa battlewagon. They would have taken everything we had, but they cut loose from us. I radioed the bridge and told them that I was going to secure because I

couldn't see any reason for me standing there with my binoculars looking at these ships. I would look straight up with my binoculars and I would see a running light on the ship. I would look straight down and I would see a running light on the ship. That is how the waves were. They were 100 feet high. Why wouldn't I have been a little scared? I prayed. Well that is not the only time because I knew Jesus and I knew he would bring me back.

Sometimes when you are stuck in a dilemma that big, that is all you can do is pray because that is about the only thing that is going to save you.

Mr. Dorris: That's it. You just don't know, when a crisis comes down to the nitty gritty, everything changes.

Yes it does.