

Interviewer: I'll get a copy and get this back to you.

Evans: You be sure and do that.

Interviewer: Oh I will I'll do it right away. Okay were you drafted or enlisted in the war?

Evans: I enlisted.

Interviewer: Oh you did what year?

Evans: I enlisted in 1942 I didn't leave home until they got a group together in January of 1943 from Erie Pennsylvania.

Interviewer: Oh is that where you're from you grew up there?

Evans: Yeah

Interviewer: Okay did you go because you knew we were going to get

Evans: We were already in the war.

Interviewer: Yeah we were already in your right I'm sorry.

Evans: I was just 17 years old at the time.

Interviewer: Did your mom have to sign for you to go in?

Evans: Yeah

Interviewer: And you said I think you told me you had brothers in the Navy.

Evans: Yeah I had two brothers in the Navy one older and one younger. Then they each had a ship and I had a ship of course. And my older brother and I it was kind of a coincidence. We trained for the amphibious together I had already been in the Coast Guard about a year when he came in. And we went to Virginia Camp Bradford Virginia and trained for the amphibs that's the ships that go into the beach the landing craft. And so later well we trained we had some time down there in Norfolk we had some fun you know and what have you. But later on of course we all went out through the canal. I got my ship at Pittsburg Pennsylvania of all places and we went down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers. And then down in New Orleans I believe it was I can't remember the shipyard now. But anyhow they put the superstructure on down there the guns and the masts and all the things you know. Then we went on out into the canal and into the Pacific we went to Hawaii then we went out into the Philippines and we were in Aniweta where they blew up after the war with the atomic bomb. And let's see we were in the Marshals and the Gilberts the Carolines and we spent quite a bit of time in Laities in the Philippines. And then we went back to Hawaii and loaded up for Ewa and Ewagama that is and we made a mock invasion on the island of Maui. And at the time we were there in Hawaii let's Mordecai was there a Mordecai? Leopard it was Leopard Islands Mordecai I believe.

Interviewer: I've heard about them.

Evans: But it isn't anymore.

Interviewer: No

Evans: But when I was in Hawaii people were using dugout canoes and living in thatched houses you know.

Interviewer: Wow

Evans: Yeah there were no the biggest thing they had in Hawaii was the Royal Hawaiian Hotel that was the biggest thing.

Interviewer: I think that's still there.

Evans: Yeah but now my daughter was over there last year she said it's fantastic you know all of the great buildings in Honolulu.

Interviewer: Would you be like stationed there out of Honolulu the Coast Guard station there and then ya'll would just go off like to Ewagema or wherever and train and then come back?

Evans: Yeah well yeah mostly that was it. There was also a place to load up you know to get more ammunition more tanks more this more that. See the kind of ship I was on the ramp would go down and the tanks and stuff would come down off the ship. And at Ewa we got hit 13 times our ship had holes in it all over. But they were above the water line so it wasn't we were able to pull off and got out a ways and then patched it up and then we came back in because the stuff that we had onboard was very necessary. And some of the guys got hurt very bad but I just thought it was kind of unusual that the Japs would pull such a dirty trick.

Interviewer: You have quite the sense of humor.

Evans: They an awful lot of people were killed there. You know Churchill said never in history had so many people lost their lives for such a small piece of land.

Interviewer: Yeah that's not a very big island.

Evans: Ewa wasn't very big but it was important. See we put up an airstrip there right away and when the guys were coming back with the B29s from bombing Tokyo if they were in trouble they could stop at Ewa rather than to go to Saipan or Tinian or Guam. And we made a point of not counting the B29s that went out in the morning because there would never be the same amount at night you know when they came back. In other words we didn't 150 or 200 or anything like that because it wasn't the same when they came back they all lost some. It seemed like they all lost some men. But I went ashore at Ewa in the black sands the volcanic sands and walked about when all hell was breaking loose. I didn't have to be there but I wanted to be part of it you know so. And the flag that flies over Ewa was from my ship and also the photographer Rosenthagh who took the picture he was from my ship too.

Interviewer: Oh really?

Evans: Yeah he was from my ship.

Interviewer: And so did like you keep in contact with your brothers who were in the navy or ever even see them during the war?

Evans: The funny thing is I saw my brother Ed first I think it was yeah my older brother. At Okinawa one day at Okinawa the fog was real thick and when the fog lifted I looked over there and there was my brother's ship. He was on an LST like I was it was a 620 he was on and I was the navy and I was the Coast Guard. And at a later date at the same place Okinawa my other brother came in I believe it was with an AKA army cargo attack ship Flomontihue 98. But they never saw each other but I saw both of them yeah.

Interviewer: What made you choose the Coast Guard since your brother was in the Navy?

Evans: Well I was in first.

Interviewer: Oh you went in even before your older brother?

Evans: Yeah well he had a pretty good job working in the plant there in Erie and my father had died when we were quite small. So he was sort of he was the father of the family I guess when he was very young. And I still think my mother had three of us out there in those same battles and never knew of course that all three of us were in the same battle you know. But it just turned out that way and of course we all came home you know. Nobody got wounded none of us got wounded except our spirits at times.

Interviewer: Has yours recovered?

Evans: Actually the war I went through my ship went through three typhoons and they were hell on wheels. I mean sometimes the ship would be standing almost on end you know it would go down under and then come up. And then the wave would pull out from under us and we were on the ships that have a flat bottom you know most ships have a nice but an LST is just flat. So when you came back down one of them big waves well it would just knock you out of your bunk all the time we were always picking ourselves up. And the ship it really it was pretty bad the typhoon it was pretty bad stuff. A lot of ships went down they would come up and they would come back out of it they just went right on back down you know. We lost a lot of ships.

Interviewer: How long would these typhoons ride about would they last days or?

Evans: Week about a week each one yeah.

Interviewer: Wow that's a lot.

Evans: They were pretty rough. We had a great captain he's still alive and he lives out in Seattle. And we had a reunion here about three or four years ago I think it was our 50th or 54th I don't remember anymore I think it was 53rd or something like that in St. Louis Missouri. And I was surprised how old the men were they were all kids the last time I saw them.

Interviewer: Yeah well wait a minute your captains got to be because a captain is an O6 in the Coast Guard isn't he?

Evans: Is what?

Interviewer: Your captain isn't he an O6 in the Coast Guard a Captain a Coast Guard Captain.

Evans: Is a what?

Interviewer: O6 like you know.

Evans: I don't understand.

Interviewer: Oh I'm sorry.

Evans: He was

Interviewer: I'm trying to figure out he had to be older he had to be in his 30s during WWII at least.

Evans: No I don't think he was.

Interviewer: You don't think he was that old?

Evans: I think he was probably in his late 20s he was about 10 years older than me.

Interviewer: Yeah I knew he couldn't just be a kid and be the captain.

Evans: Like I was 17 and we'll say he was 27 roughly.

Interviewer: Okay I was thinking he was older.

Evans: And really a great guy to take us through all of that stuff and bring us back in one piece.

Interviewer: Now how many people were on your ship about?

Evans: If I remember right there was 125.

Interviewer: Okay

Evans: And the ship was about 325 feet long with the 50 foot beam and our draft that's how much you've got north. Would depend like if you were going in if you're loaded of course you can't take on any water you just have to get in and then you've got to get off. And that's the hard part getting off sometimes you know like when we were being hit there. We were right by Mount I can't even pronounce it Sustowatchi we were right by it and of course the mortars were coming in off the mountain. And we tried to get off but we couldn't we kept trying and trying and finally the tide came up and then we were able to pull off you know. But if you want to you can take on a lot of water and you can bring your ship down as low as you want or take water out and come up as high as you want like that you know. And the officer was a lieutenant commander.

Interviewer: Okay

Evans: That's what our captain was a lieutenant commander.

Interviewer: Okay see I was thinking he was like a

Evans: Now on different ships they had different rank. The rank of captain of course is now is, were you in military?

Interviewer: I was in the navy for four year and then my husband is at Fort Campbell here.

Evans: Well a captain in the army is a lot different than a captain in the navy.

Interviewer: Yeah a lot different.

Evans: Yeah

Interviewer: And I was thinking it would be like a naval captain was the captain on your ships so I was thinking well he had to be fairly older.

Evans: Yeah but they didn't go by E6 or E7 we were of course he was an officer. We had about one of our officers died recently of cancer but as far as I know all of them the officers are still alive. And of course all of them are in their 80s and quite a few of the crew died too.

Interviewer: Is that the last time you saw him in St. Louis?

Evans: Yeah but previous to that quite a few had died previous to that. That was in 97 I was down in St, Louis.

Interviewer: Okay what was your job on the ship?

Evans: I was in the black egg down in the engine room. I trained get this I trained in Philadelphia for steam and they took me after my graduation they sent me and put me on a diesel ship. Well I have about enough mechanical knowledge as a turnip. Really I don't know how I got there but I had no mechanical knowledge at all. If they told me to do something I would do it the best that I could but I had no idea what I was doing. We used to tear the engines down and put them back together and I still didn't know what we had done you know. If someone told me that today if they told me to do that today I couldn't do any of that stuff. I was well during the time of battle or time of they call it general quarters I was on a 20 millimeter cannon in a gun tub a forward gun tub. And we had lots of guns but we could not shoot broadside in the Philippine Islands we ran into trouble down there but there was nothing we could do there were Jap ships all over creation but they were being knocked out by our destroyers or battlewagons and our cruisers. But we were just strictly our guns were for antiaircraft now there were some planes but nothing compared to oh say Okinawa. Okinawa sometimes they'd send 1,000 of them komokozzies over at the same time they'd send 1,000 of them. And of course they all they had to do is just point we used to shoot them out of the sky because they went up like puff balls.

Interviewer: Yeah well

Evans: We also shot down some American planes. Now you talk about now they cry about it and we since the beginning of time there has always been mistakes. They call it friendly fire now.

Interviewer: Friendly fire that's right.

Evans: Usually some act of stupidity causes it. The air plane pilots were you know great guys. But they were told not to come from the island out onto the bay. They were to come from any direction but don't come from the island because we couldn't see them quick enough and as soon as they came we shot them down you know. We shot five American planes in the first 48 hours Okinawa.

Interviewer: Because you couldn't tell just looking up.

Evans: There were three of them I know managed to walk away from their planes. But when you shot a Jap plane it went you know just like a rotten tomato you know a puff ball or something. They were made out of bamboo or something crazy I don't know. But they didn't last long I'll tell you. See the armada ships at Okinawa was our last battle of the war of WWII. But we I suppose I don't know how many ships were three thousands and thousands thousands and thousands. And each ship would carry a certain amount of anti-aircraft you know. And when all of them would open up at one time you know there wasn't much hope up there for the but some of them got through and they hit some of our ships. In fact one LST was hit by a komokozies one of our LSTs.

Interviewer: Wow did it sink the LST?

Evans: No the only one that got hurt was the dumb Jap that came flying down. He lost everything he had the silly nut. But anyway it did set the ship on fire but it didn't do any of course it had to go back to the states but the war was over practically you know.

Interviewer: Well good. Well did you take like while you were out on the Pacific did the Japanese ships shoot I assume they did at the LSTs?

Evans: Did they what?

Interviewer: Did they shoot at the LSTs the Japanese ships like when you were crossing to go to Okinawa or?

Evans: Well they had submarines all around. But we were in a convoy well you can read about it in the paper there my silly act of

Interviewer: You have to tell that too.

Evans: I turned the wrong valve and the ship it was the main valve to the fuel for the engine I turned it by mistake. Well you can't hear very well when you've got two 12 cylinder engines roaring. And so the motor man Curry my boss there at the time was hollering at me and I didn't want to act dumb or anything even though I was. So I went back and grabbed the first valve I saw and turned off the main engines. Turned off everything in the ship lost the convoy and we were out of the convoy then with Jap submarines swarming all over for about 30 minutes I think it was. No a little longer than that about 30 let's see in 30 minutes they found out the trouble anyway. All of the officers and anybody that knew a nut from a bolt was down there trying to figure out what happened you know. I kind of suspected that I was to blame for it but I didn't want to say too much you know.

Interviewer: No I wouldn't either if I was there.

Evans: It wasn't one of my most proudest moments but they found out what it was and turned it on and everything went fine. Took three and a half hours to get back into the convoy you know. And during this time of course ole Tokyo Rose was spouting off about she knew we were coming and she told us what was happening back home they were having wives, I wasn't even married, but the wives were having great fun back in the states. And here we are coming up there and we're all going to get killed she said you know of course.

Interviewer: Did you guys take her seriously or was it kind of a joke?

Evans: No we didn't take her seriously. But I'll tell you who we did take seriously that used to drive us nuts and every time at chow time every evening. We called him washing machine Charlie some little Jap plane I don't know where he came from but it was a rickety thing and he'd come flying over us every at chow time you know. He had it figured out somehow or another by the time we dropped our trays and got our guns he was long gone you know. He'd come by quite regular give us a good jolt you know washing machine Charlie we called him. Yeah he really had an old plane must have got it from WWI I guess.

Interviewer: Did ya'll get a lot of radio on the ship?

Evans: A lot of what?

Interviewer: Radio on the ship did you get to listen to stuff from back home?

Evans: Not too much no everything was filtered pretty much you know.

Interviewer: Yeah

Evans: Yeah and of course our radio was sealed for communication.

Interviewer: Okay

Evans: That radio but we would hear some of the other stuff coming over. Of course I gave Tokyo Rose a lot of credit she played a lot of good American songs for us. It was supposed to make us you know very despondent but we just enjoyed it you know.

Interviewer: Well good. I always wondered about it because you read about it but you don't really know if you guys were getting upset.

Evans: Yeah lying on the deck crying no we didn't do that. We knew she was but I never could understand those people like Axis Sally and Tokyo Rose. Coming from America why would they I mean couldn't they see the difference between America and where they come from and the way things were you know.

Interviewer: I know

Evans: It's just like the stuff that's going on now you know it's a mess over there. I watch the news pretty close you know.

Interviewer: Well somebody had I did an interview earlier in the week and he comparing the caves in Afghanistan like the Japanese would hide out in a cave on Okinawa and the different islands.

Evans: Yeah they were great at that. We called them rice rats rice rats. They would go down in the hole yeah but if you want to see some pretty tough pictures of WWII go down here to the VA have you been down here?

Interviewer: No sir.

Evans: You ought to take a trip down there and see that and see the pictures on the wall down there. They'd be glad to walk with you

Interviewer: Yeah I'd be glad to.

Evans: Its right down here you know where

Interviewer: Yeah I know where it is.

Evans: Where Montgomery Wards used to be. You go down there and take a look you'll be absolutely astounded some of the pictures like we'll say of Okinawa and stuff like that.

Interviewer: Yeah do you remember where you were when you heard President Roosevelt died?

Evans: I was out there somewhere that's all I know it was Okinawa I think I think it was Okinawa. No it was you know it's a funny thing you talk about oh all of these 18 year olds ought to be able to vote. Bull crap I don't agree with that at all they out of 125 men I don't think 10 of them knew who the vice-president was.

Interviewer: Yeah

Evans: Nobody knew who was going to be our next president or who was immediately our president Harry Truman. Well one thing Roosevelt had about three different vice-presidents in different terms you know so that would confuse you too. But we were just young and I don't think anyone under 21 should be voting because they haven't got their stuff straight upstairs at all when they're only 18 years old you know. I think it's kind of funny how the bleeding hearts wanted the 18 year olds to vote because they were old enough to do this and old enough to do that you know at 18. But when they put a sob story in about the poor little darling was only 18 or 19 you know he better he went around killing everybody in the psych you know. And the poor little darling was only 18 or 19 years old you know but they were playing both sides of the drum if you ask me.

Interviewer: you were just 17 and went to WWII that's hard to believe 17.

Evans: Yeah a lot of guys did some were younger than that you know they lied and got in 16 years old a lot of them.

Interviewer: A big growing up experience.

Evans: Yeah like that movie with what's his name Rick he was only 12 when he joined you know that movie Rick Schroeder.

Interviewer: Oh Rick Schroeder.

Evans: You remember that.

Interviewer: Yeah I know what you're talking about what's the name?

Evans: He looked old for his age but he was only 12 years old when he went in you know.

Interviewer: When you left Okinawa did your ship go back to Hawaii or did ya'll go to Japan after the war ended?

Evans: No my brother both of them were in after me so they had time to put in and both of them either went to China or Japan you know. We had so much time in and had done so much they just let us come back this way then and let me tell you this. We pulled out of Guam and one of the screws of the ship fell off because we had made 77 beaching's and the coral just tore the H out of the screws. One of the screws fell off so here we are in another convoy and by the way one of the guys we took into Ewagema came back with us from Okinawa which is pretty rare. One the same ship you know the guy he said I can't believe it he said I can't believe it. But anyway so we had to be towed and every day a different ship would throw the cable out and it was their turn to pull the old 792 that was the number of my ship 792. And it took us I think if I'm not mistaken it took us 40 days and 40 nights to get from Guam to San Diego. Now we did pull into Hawaii we were there maybe a week you know and when we were there all the men got off there were 600 marines and soldiers on there. They all got off and got on an aircraft carrier and about three days later they were in the states they were so glad to get off of our ship you know. They were living in tents on the main deck and everything little nook and cranny the whole convoy was like that you know.

Interviewer: Yeah there's a little difference in a carrier and I've never been on an LST I've only seen them but.

Evans: You're like a peanut compared.

Interviewer: Yeah a carrier at least today carriers are really nice.

Evans: Yeah have you been on them?

Interviewer: I've been on the Indie and the Ike and the Enterprise.

Evans: Yeah well at the end of the war after the war was over my younger brother got on the BE. What was that the BE I forgot what it was?

Interviewer: The BE are you talking about the Eisenhower?

Evans: Oh no.

Interviewer: No it wouldn't have been the Eisenhower yet.

Evans: I can't think of the name of it. They call it the BE.

Interviewer: I don't know.

Evans: I was in New York and he pulled into New York because I had been discharged he pulled in he came off of the ship and he looked down and there was two \$20 bills laying on the deck there on the dock there. We had a heck of a good time there that night. That was a lot of money back then in them days you know a lot of money.

Interviewer: Forty dollars that's still a good find. And so what did you do after you got out after your discharge you went back home to Erie?

Evans: No I went to New York City I went to school up there. Well I finished my high school I also went to hair dressing school and then I spent the rest of my adult life either working for some big company or working for myself.

Interviewer: Okay did the GI bill pay for your school?

Evans: Yeah

Interviewer: Okay

Evans: The GI bill helped an awful lot of people it was a good thing. But I don't believe they should give it to everybody indiscriminately you know just because they were in the service between the wars or something like that.

Interviewer: No

Evans: There isn't a distinction between a battle hardened veteran and an in between war veteran well I'll eat my hat. You have no concept of what it is until you've been there you know.

Interviewer: I'm sure that's true. Yeah I can guarantee my navy was nothing like your brothers were I'd be willing to bet money on that.

Evans: Yeah

Interviewer: I had it pretty easy.

Evans: Yeah but you enjoyed it huh?

Interviewer: Yeah I did it wasn't for me I wasn't cut out for the navy. I probably got more out of it than they got out of me.

Evans: I was in the army in the Korean War.

Interviewers: You were?

Evans: Well let me tell you this then we can shut it off.

Interviewer: Okay whenever you're ready.

Evans: For a single man the navy is the best by far or being a sailor you know a swaby I was in the Coast Guard of course. But for a married man I believe the army is the best because you can use they have post and you can have you wife with you or close by and like my wife was in Colorado Springs and I was in Camp Carson. And that's just what I believe yeah and if anybody wants to know I did next to nothing but we won the war anyway.

Interviewer: I'm cutting it off on that.