

Interviewer: My names Rick Burr I'm here with Paul Hyatt today we're going to speak about his experiences as a WWII veteran. My Hyatt for the record go ahead and state your full name please.

Hyatt: Lewis Paul Hyatt Senior.

Interviewer: Okay and you are a veteran of the navy is that correct?

Hyatt: United States Naval reserve.

Interviewer: Okay alright we are here at his house today its December 13, 2006. And Mr. Hyatt if you don't mind we'll go ahead and start where were you born at we'll start from the very beginning.

Hyatt: I was born near Arab Alabama. September 13, 1918 that makes me 88 years old.

Interviewer: Okay alright let's see jump ahead a few years I guess. What was life like growing up there in Alabama?

Hyatt: I grew up on a farm a 380 acre farm and we grew mostly cotton and corn. And a few cattle and chickens for our own use.

Interviewer: Did you have any siblings or

Hyatt: There were seven in my family two of them died young five of us lives to full adulthood.

Interviewer: Okay did you have any elementary education growing up living on the farm there in rural Alabama?

Hyatt: Yes we I walked a mile and a quarter to school for the first three years then I rode a school bus three miles to school for the other nine years and graduates at Arab High School in 1937.

Interviewer: Okay that's right around the depression time do you remember much about the great depression or growing up.

Hyatt: Yes I remember the depression.

Interviewer: Really

Hyatt: We didn't really hurt much.

Interviewer: A lot of the farmers that I've spoke to or interviewed didn't.

Hyatt: Here's the situation we didn't have much before the depression we didn't have much after the depression and we didn't have much during the depression. We had plenty to eat we didn't have much income but we grew all we needed.

Interviewer: Do you remember having to ration anything like gas or

Hyatt: The biggest problem was near 1933 a lot of schools closed. My school closed down because they ran out of money. That was the biggest handicap that I had. The school ran on I was in the sixth grade the school ran on subscription money from the parents of the students and the teachers taught for a small amount of money.

Interviewer: Right

Hyatt: Some of us paid our tuition with a load of firewood to warm the school building. And I rode a mule to school for three miles for about four months at the end of that school year.

Interviewer: After you graduated from high school I think it's about the time that stuff is picking up over in Europe is that right?

Hyatt: Do what

Interviewer: The European Theatre the war was starting to

Hyatt: That was the talk by then.

Interviewer: Did you hear much about it stateside here?

Hyatt: No a whole lot because we didn't we didn't have radios and we didn't have electricity then.

Interviewer: Right

Hyatt: A lot of time we didn't get a daily newspaper.

Interviewer: Would you say that as American's maybe you didn't pay so much attention to it because you were so far away and

Hyatt: At that time we didn't but by 1939 and 40 we were beginning to pay a little more attention.

Interviewer: Right

Hyatt: I was in college by then.

Interviewer: Where were you going to college at?

Hyatt: I went to college at Jacksonville Alabama. At that time it was a teachers state college. Now it's Jacksonville Alabama State University.

Interviewer: You were going to be an educator is that right?

Hyatt: Well I my original idea was I would go two years and get a teaching diploma and teach all the rest of my life.

Interviewer: Didn't work out that way huh?

Hyatt: Well when I got two I decided I would go for four and when I got four I decided I would go for more.

Interviewer: Do you remember exactly where you were and what you were doing when Pearl Harbor got bombed?

Hyatt: Yeah I was living in Jacksonville where the state college was. I was trying to finish my B.S. degree I was going to finish it in May of 1942. And Aniston was about 12 miles from Jacksonville I went to Aniston that Sunday to see a movie they had a better theatre there. And on the way back I talked to some people I caught a ride with and they told me about the Pearl Harbor event.

Interviewer: Did you have any idea even where Pearl Harbor was at that time when you first heard about it?

Hyatt: No I did not.

Interviewer: A lot of people didn't a lot of people didn't.

Hyatt: It didn't mean anymore to me than a little town next door.

Interviewer: Yeah so what happened after the bombing of Pearl Harbor?

Hyatt: On Monday morning we were registering for a new quarter we were on the quarter system. And they had little radios around and they were turned on and we heard President Franklin Delano Roosevelt make his speech. That speech was an "Event that will live in Infamy."

Interviewer: Did you agree with a lot of his policies and stuff during his presidency?

Hyatt: I didn't really know what infamy meant. Well yes Franklin Delano Roosevelt was highly admired by many people.

Interviewer: Yes he was.

Hyatt: And I still think well of him.

Interviewer: Yeah definitely. Were they talking about the draft yet has that

Hyatt: Well the draft had been going already.

Interviewer: Okay

Hyatt: Peacetime draft

Interviewer: Okay

Hyatt: I had registered for the draft in 1938 or 39 and in 1940 I had to send in my introductory papers. In 1940 I had to take my physical exam. I took that at Fort McClellan which is near Jacksonville Alabama. And every time I got a report back they calcified me as A1. But I didn't think much about it.

Interviewer: That's a good thing isn't it?

Hyatt: But about the first of April I got another notation form the United States draft board come here Uncle Sam needs you. That was a sign they used to have out Uncle Sam needs you. And I was to go on April the 12th.

Interviewer: You were still in school at that time?

Hyatt: I was in school at that time. I went to the draft board and told them I only lack six weeks having my degree couldn't they give me a short deferment. They said no no no we need you now. So I went on to the Navy.

Interviewer: Did you pick the Navy or did they assign you to the Navy?

Hyatt: No I went to the Navy. I was supposed to be drafted on Wednesday into the Army. But I had already been in contact with the Navy recruiting office in Birmingham.

Interviewer: Okay

Hyatt: Which was 70 miles from my home and I had no transportation on my own. That was on Saturday I went to the draft board at Guntersville that was the county seat for my county Marshall County Alabama. So on Sunday I went to Birmingham caught a ride with one of my townsmen went to Birmingham. Monday morning I went to the Naval recruiting office they already had a lot of my records. And I said the draft board at Guntersville said they want to send me off on Wednesday. The Navy recruiter said oh they don't know what they're talking about said we'll send you off today. I said well I need to go back to Jacksonville and get my clothes and my books and I'll be here Tuesday morning. Well Tuesday afternoon at 4 o'clock I was on the plane to Florida.

Interviewer: Is that where you

Hyatt: I first went to Pensacola U.S. Naval Hospital in Florida.

Interviewer: Okay

Hyatt: I was a third class pharmacist mate in the hospital core.

Interviewer: Now did you test prior to being drafted? Did you have an idea what you were going to be doing?

Hyatt: No

Interviewer: Once you left or where there scores that determined that you were going to work in a hospital down in Pensacola?

Hyatt: That was a surprise to me.

Interviewer: Not a bad little surprise.

Hyatt: I had one little advantage in life once in a while you'll get a little break and if you get one you better take it. I had a, my oldest sister lived next door to the doctor that worked at the Birmingham Naval recruiting office. And she told him that I was coming in and so he looked over my records and said you're just what we need. So that was the fourth pay grade pharmacists made third class in place of starting as an apprentice seaman I moved up to third class petty officer to start with and missed boot camp.

Interviewer: How much do you remember how much you made going in?

Hyatt: I think it was 5 a month.

Interviewer: How in comparison what would you have went in as if you had started at the very bottom as an apprentice seaman?

Hyatt: About 30.

Interviewer: Okay you doubled your income with that break didn't you?

Hyatt: See for many years the beginning for the Navy and Army was \$21. But I think it had moved up to 30 by 1942.

Interviewer: Okay was there any thought that you might be going to the European Theatre how did you

Hyatt: I had no idea where I would go.

Interviewer: Really okay what happened when you got to the hospital then down in Pensacola?

Hyatt: Well we stayed there for two weeks with no uniforms.

Interviewer: What kind of stuff did they have you do?

Hyatt: Sit in the library and read write letters they didn't have any uniforms for us. Finally they put us on duty and they had a nurse instruct us a little in the hospital procedure. And I stayed there from April to September and then they took a whole bunch of us all the way to Key West for the opening of our new hospital.

Interviewer: Oh okay

Hyatt: When I got down there it wasn't ready. So they put us doing little work in a clinic they had there we'd work an hour or two a day. Then some days we'd go out and do some work on the hospital grounds we raked the grounds we cleaned the floors we cleaned the windows whatever. And then finally we opened officially.

Interviewer: Did you dispense medication and stuff as a pharmacy tech there?

Hyatt: We did about everything the nurses did.

Interviewer: Oh really

Hyatt: We worked in hospital wards I worked in surgery. I had my fingers in a whole lot of incisions.

Interviewer: And that's with little to no training is that correct?

Hyatt: Pretty much

Interviewer: That's a scary thought.

Hyatt: You've heard of learning on the job?

Interviewer: I have

Hyatt: Let me tell you one experience I had. We didn't have enough instruments because we were new and everything was in shortage and so when we had a full schedule of surgery maybe lots of appendectomies lots of hernias lots of whatever. They would work from eight in the morning to four or five in the evening and they needed what they did they'd use these instruments throw them in a dirty pot take and boil them up and use them again. And they needed somebody in between to work from a sterile table to the active table based at the surgery. And I was the intermediate I started at four I mean at eight in the morning I worked all day long without a drink of water without any food without going to the restroom. It was eight hours without stopping I stayed scrubbed up sterile.

Interviewer: Now how long were you down there at the new hospital in Key West?

Hyatt: I was there from September 42 till about September 43.

Interviewer: Were you getting a lot of the injured soldiers from Europe coming through there?

Hyatt: There was ships would come in and they'd bring somebody that was hurt or that needed an appendectomy or hernia or they needed a circumcision. And then after a time the hospital was there it was what you called a public hospital it closed and we got all kinds of patients' civilians as well as military.

Interviewer: Oh okay

Hyatt: And we stayed pretty busy. I didn't work in that surgery but about two or three months and I moved to the admissions department. And I worked in admissions we got all kind of patients when they first got there.

Interviewer: How was the hospital set up percentage wise how many would you say were actually in the Navy or in the military verses civilians?

Hyatt: Well I would say that only maybe 10 or 15 percent were civilians.

Interviewer: Okay so the majority of it was military then?

Hyatt: Yeah it was still military.

Interviewer: Were a lot of the Navy guys and military guys there wanting to be involved in what was going on overseas and Europe at this point?

Hyatt: They didn't say much about it.

Interviewer: Really

Hyatt: It was just sort of routine by then.

Interviewer: Okay and okay so after Key West how did you end up leaving there?

Hyatt: There was a program I tried to get in the Navy earlier it was called the V7 program. In which as soon as you graduated the four years in college you could go to a training school called a mid-shipman school after 120 days there if you came out well you would be commissioned in the Navy as an inson that's equal to a second lieutenant in the Army. Then there was a program evolved after you had been in the Navy for a year you could apply for V7 if you didn't have the B.S. degree. And since I lacked only six weeks having my B.S. degree I applied under that new program and was accepted.

Interviewer: Okay

Hyatt: And then in September 1943 I left Key West and went to Notre Dame University in Notre Dame Indiana and worked on that mid-shipman program for 120 days.

Interviewer: Was that specialized training was that a tough school?

Hyatt: Well it was pretty tough.

Interviewer: Was it?

Hyatt: There were 1,200 of us and in the mornings from 8 until 12 we worked on brain work book work. You had three or four or five courses we had courses in navigation we had courses in gunnery we had courses in identification of enemy and friendly ships and planes. We had seamanship and we had to work pretty hard. Then all afternoon we'd go in the field and train. We would march and we would march and we would march and we would do pushups and pull-ups and we'd stain muscles and we ended up with pulled muscles. And that went on for about six weeks and then they eased up on us little and at night we would have training movies in other words we worked from 8 till 12 and 12 until 6 and then we'd eat and then we'd go to our rooms for a little while and then we'd go to a training movie. At Notre Dame we didn't use their educational part we just used the dormitories and the gymnasium and their feed lines food liens cafeteria. They could feed 1,200 people in 20 minutes. I think they had 12 serving lines.

Interviewer: Wow

Hyatt: And the cold weather came in we knew about that. If you know Notre Dame is you know Indiana its right close to Lake Michigan and that wind gets cold off that lake coming right out of Canada.

Interviewer: My dad was actually stationed there with the active duty army and was in charge of the ROTC program at Notre Dame for a few years.

Hyatt: We were pretty busy sometimes we would train in their gymnasiums and would use their swimming pool and we used their classrooms but we didn't use their instructors. We had the Navy instructors.

Interviewer: Right were they similar to drill sergeants in your face?

Hyatt: They were mostly all retired professors.

Interviewer: Right

Hyatt: They were given a commission.

Interviewer: Yeah

Hyatt: And they some of them we old retired Naval Officers. They were not ordinarily what would be active duty. They had what we called a battalion commander we had about eight or ten of those. They were young people who had just graduated and stayed on they were keeping some of them on for the field work. But the instructors were mainly old retirees.

Interviewer: Okay so you graduated from there okay from Notre Dame you finished your school there?

Hyatt: Yeah I let me get my book and I'll tell you. At Notre Dame in my class the last 120 days out of 1,200 of us and some of them flunked out as we went along.

Interviewer: Right

Hyatt: They eliminated those that didn't for one reason or another couldn't make grade.

Interviewer: Right

Hyatt: So we were down to maybe 1,100 when we got through. And out of that 1,100 I rated number 281 with a 3.37 average out of a 4 point rating. I sort of brag about that now that I've got older I don't have many things to brag about. But we worked pretty hard. I had one advantage there nearly everybody that was there was fresh out of college. They were only 20, 21 years old maybe some of them a little older. I was about 24 or 25 and I had already been in the Navy nearly two years and that gave me a little advantage. I knew sort of what to expect and sort of what to do.

Interviewer: Yeah

Hyatt: And as I say if you've got a little advantage you better use it.

Interviewer: Exactly so after you graduated from there were you guys assigned?

Hyatt: You filled out a form near the end of it making our special request as to what kind of active duty.

Interviewer: Right

Hyatt: And I made two request I would like to be stationed either on the largest amphibious craft as a gunnery officer or in the gunnery officer on a battleship. The biggest amphibious ship and the biggest battleship. And my part of my wish was granted I was stationed on an LST which is the largest of the amphibious landing craft. LST stands for landing ship tank. And that was something that we hauled a lot tanks.

Interviewer: I've got a question for you Mr. Hyatt. Did you keep in contact with your family back in Alabama during all of this school stuff?

Hyatt: Oh yes

Interviewer: How did they feel about you taking the position you had at the hospital in Key West?

Hyatt: They thought it was a dumb move.

Interviewer: Okay I didn't want to say that but I figured that's probably what they were thinking.

Hyatt: You had an easy job down there and you were far away from the guns and all of a sudden here you are right in front of them.

Interviewer: Yeah did you were a lot of people wanting to do that? Did you feel that you wanted to be involved in?

Hyatt: I thought since I was given a real privilege there to be in that. Here's the thing about being in the hospital core though as a pharmacist mate. Some of those were sent on what was called the Fleet Marines. The U.S. Naval pharmacist mates were sent out with the active Marines and went on really the first line.

Interviewer: Really?

Hyatt: Some of my friends ended up in the Marine Core and that wasn't where I wanted to be. And a lot of people said I would have been real scared being out there on the water. To me that was better than being out there on the front line.

Interviewer: Yeah I guess that depends on how you look at it and where you're at too.

Hyatt: If you have a choice as to where you're going to be I'd rather be on water taking my chances than to be out there on the front line with the Marines taking my chances.

Interviewer: Yeah okay so you finished school and you get assigned to the LST.

Hyatt: That's right.

Interviewer: And did were you sent somewhere for training on that also?

Hyatt: Let me back up a little while I was in Key West Florida working in the Naval Hospital. We got a chance to apply for promotion so I got promoted from third class petty officer pharmacist mate third class to second class petty officer pharmacist mate second class. A little raise in pay but when I got to

Notre Dame my pay I think it got up to 85 a month. At Notre Dame our pay was 75 a month until we graduated.

Interviewer: Right and then it went up to 85?

Hyatt: Well it went to I don't remember exactly it might have been 125 or something.

Interviewer: Wow

Hyatt: And then later on I got promoted from Inson up to Lieutenants JG Lieutenant Junior Grade. They sent us I had enough leave after I left Key West before I went to Norte Dame and after Notre Dame I had a 15 day leave.

Interviewer: Did you go back to Alabama?

Hyatt: I went back to Alabama and then I was ordered to report to Bradford training base Camp Bradford in Virginia.

Interviewer: Okay

Hyatt: It's close to the coast. There was a Little Creek training camp that was for smaller amphibious craft and Camp Bradford was for LSTs. I don't know how many we had there I would say 200 or more. And we trained every day because of our specialty. And some of us were assigned as gunnery officers they assigned us by whole crew when we got there. We had a crew of about 120 men we had an officer crew of about 8 and in the officer crew we had a captain and executive officer, the communications officer, a supply officer, a engineer and maybe one or two more. An officer that was in charge of the deck I've forgotten what his title was.

Interviewer: And of course the gunnery officer correct?

Hyatt: Once I was gunnery officer and while I was there at that station I took my whole crew which was about 125 I took my whole crew to another base all day long to shoot antiaircraft guns at a moving target. The plane would drag a big flag across and we were to shoot at the flag all day long. And the LST at that time had 19 guns some of those guns were 40 millimeter antiaircraft guns and 12 of them were 20 millimeter antiaircraft guns. The 40 millimeter guns they called Vofers and the 20 millimeters were called oil liken. They were both invented by Sweden I believe Norway or Sweden or Denmark some of those Norwegian countries. Countries that were in the side with the United States and Brittan they contributed their best plans to build guns for the allied use.

Interviewer: What was this when you were in Virginia training on the LSTs?

Hyatt: That was in January 1942.

Interviewer: Okay alright

Hyatt: We trained there I believe from January to April I guess and they considered at one stage we spent a weekend on an active LST in that Chesapeake Bay. We went for a weekend to Baltimore

Maryland I remember that very well. And I took a short trip down to Washington D.C. and I took a stop over Washington D.C. on my first trip to Virginia like in January.

Interviewer: Okay now once you finished there in Virginia did your 125 man crew get assigned to another port or how did that work were you guys stationed there?

Hyatt: We were assigned to a ship.

Interviewer: And the ship was the port was there in Virginia?

Hyatt: It was being built.

Interviewer: Oh they were being built okay.

Hyatt: Yeah in Boston.

Interviewer: Gotcha

Hyatt: So after we trained there in Camp Bradford in Virginia for about three months we went as a crew to Boston and when we got there our ship wasn't ready. So they put us in a hotel and we was there for another month or more. We would go over to the Boston Navy Yard and look at our ship being built. One day I spent a half a day on the old Iron Sides the old USS Constitution that was just across the dock. So I can say I served active duty on the old Iron Ship. People say oh you don't look that old.

Interviewer: Were you guys anticipating being sent over to Europe?

Hyatt: Do what?

Interviewer: Were you guys anticipating being sent over to Europe?

Hyatt: At that stage I don't think we knew where we were going.

Interviewer: Really so it was up in the air still.

Hyatt: We had a captain and a crew and I don't remember for sure when we learned we were going to the Pacific. I guess it was anticipated all of the time because they were building up for the invasion of the Philippines.

Interviewer: Right

Hyatt: That was one of the next things lined up.

Interviewer: Okay

Hyatt: But one odd thing about our ship they brought us right into the dock in New York and they put another ship on top of our ship. It was a LCT a smaller amphibious craft only used in transportation with harbor it didn't go to sea. So we had a little crew added onto us temporarily a little captain and about four or five man crew to operate that little LCT that we had upon our main deck. And we hauled that

thing all the way from New York to Pearl Islands in the Pacific. After we got our ship in May of 1943 it was by then we went out no I guess it was 44 by then May 1944. We went out on what you call a shake down and that means you go out and train so more with other ships there in the Chesapeake Bay. We had one problem there we were asked to practice towing another ship. See the LST had an anchor on the rear on the rear end and then it had an anchor on the bawl the front end. The one on the bawl was mainly to anchor with the one on the rear was steady the ship. When you ran it up to the beach you steadied it so it wouldn't wobble back and forth and also it helped you go right into the beach just right. So we were supposed to drop our rear anchor cable and the other ship would pick it up and we would tow them because once in a while a ship breaks down and some other ship has to tow into harbor. Well something went wrong and they didn't pick up our cable in time and it gout under our ship and got wrapped around the screw wrapped around the propeller and what a mess you can't imagine. That steel cable was about two inches in diameter and very strong and very stiff. We got it loose and we limped on into the harbor there at Newport News Virginia and they put us in dry dock and they put us in a new propeller and cable. And while they were there our crew had to scrap the bottom of our ship and have it repainted because when a ship sits in water anywhere sea animals begin to grow on it.

Interviewer: Yeah

Hyatt: I've forgotten what you call them. But they retire the move of the ship. So we started out then with a newly painted ship and repainted while they were on our ship. And after a few more weeks we were assigned to I guess we went on into New York and got that LCT and stayed there about a week or two. Then we were assigned to a convoy to go to

Interviewer: To the Pacific. Do you remember how many ships were in the convoy?

Hyatt: I would say about 50 I believe.

Interviewer: Really that must have been

Hyatt: You couldn't see both ends of the convoy.

Interviewer: That must have been quite a sight then huh?

Hyatt: And we had escorts and we had and we headed first to Cuba spent a night there. Then we went over to Panama spend a night there on the Atlantic side and then went on went through the canal. It took one day to go through the canal.

Interviewer: All of the ships the whole convoy or

Hyatt: I don't know I think they were assigned to different areas I think we didn't have the whole convoy with us after.

Interviewer: Did you interact did you get off the ship like when you stayed the night in Cuba in stuff.

Hyatt: Oh yeah we could go to town.

Interviewer: How was the interaction with the Cubans and the different nationals when you went to these places?

Hyatt: Well they had their activities they had their beer joints and they had their saloons.

Interviewer: Did they cater to the military did they cater to you guys I mean

Hyatt: Yeah they catered to us. I bought me a hat fitting to the hot weather in the Pacific I think I paid a dollar for it. I wore that it was a juggler type paper hat that I wore all over the Pacific. On the way back I brought it but somewhere I laid it down and forgot it going across and left it. It took a whole day to go through the Panama Canal and that was really a sight to me because I didn't realize what you do. Really you don't go through a canal all the way you go up some rocks to a high lake, Lake Gatun, that may not be the way to pronounce it. And you go up there for 28 miles or so and then you go back down to the Pacific. And here's an oddity the Pacific end of the Panama Canal is east of the Atlantic end now how could that be? Well the canal goes due east and west.

Interviewer: Right

Hyatt: Did you realize that?

Interviewer: I did not realize that.

Hyatt: The Pacific end of the canal is east of the Atlantic end. It's due to the way that land in the area there crooks. In other words you start over here and you go east and it took us most of a whole day at least from eight until four. And then we went up to San Diego and stayed there a good while. We had some trouble there our captain had not been a nice man. He had cussed the crew and he had threatened the crew and he had done various things and when we got there some of the crew went over and talked to the Chaplain see there was a naval base there. The Chaplain talked to the commander of that base he said I believe we better investigate this. So our captain got a summary court marshal and got kicked off of our ship.

Interviewer: Oh wow

Hyatt: I don't think he wanted to go to the pacific I think he wanted to be kicked off. He was a good ship operator but I don't think he had what he wanted I don't think he wanted to go where the great danger was. So and we had to keep him on until we went up to San Pedro up near Las Angeles then we went on up to San Francisco and when we got there we got a new captain. And he was a good man and he didn't mind going where the action was he was a good navigator a good ship handler and stayed with us for the whole war.

Interviewer: So from San Francisco did you start heading west?

Hyatt: The convoy I believe only three or four ships we went from San Francisco to Pearl Harbor and we saw the ships in the water there that had been sunk by the Japanese. By accident President Roosevelt was there.

Interviewer: Really

Hyatt: He wasn't there to meet us but he was there. And I didn't have time to go see him either. The traffic was terrify they were out to see the president he was there having a conference with the military

leaders. There was a little bit of conflict as to who was going to be in command of the big operations in the Pacific.

Interviewer: Now has the European have the Germans surrendered yet at this point?

Hyatt: Yes let's see not at that point I don't believe.

Interviewer: Not yet?

Hyatt: Let's see that was July yeah I guess the European operation was over with then.

Interviewer: Okay

Hyatt: I think didn't it end in April or May?

Interviewer: Yeah May of 45.

Hyatt: Well this was in July and you see there was a conflict. McArthur wanted to be in command of the whole thing.

Interviewer: Right

Hyatt: He had been there before and he told the Phillipinos I shall return. And he wanted to be in command of all of it but the navy didn't like that idea. So they put in their claim that they ought to be in command of at least part of it so the command was devised. Northern Pacific would be under the command of Admiral Chester Nimitz and his headquarters would be there in Honolulu for a while then later he was moved to Siapan. I went to his headquarters one time I didn't go to see him but I went with my communications officer. We picked up official papers every time we went where there was a naval base. We picked up new maps and charts and we picked up communications from the navy. And so Nimitz was put in command of the northern pacific and McArthur was put in command of the south pacific. And we served under one a while then we served under the other a while depending on where the operations were. So we took on a new army group and we went out and trained we trained we'd go down to some of the other Hawaiian Islands and train. And we that for about two weeks and one thing I did while I was there I had a niece and her husband there working in the civil service. One Sunday morning I walked in their house for breakfast at an apartment where they were living. Then after we did that after we trained these people we'd take them to the island and then we'd pick them up. We'd take them like an invasion and then we'd pick them up. We did that for about two weeks and then we took that crew and maybe some more added and we joined a convoy and we went and we went and we went. I think it was 20 something days we didn't see land.

Interviewer: Wow

Hyatt: We ended up at a small port in New Guiney. And there we trained a little more that's a thing they did a whole lot of in WWII. They trained and they trained and they trained and to give you a little review I guess you know this already. On those island invasions they would bomb the islands with airplanes for a month or two. Every time they would return from some other place they would drop a few bombs. And then they would come on with armored ships the old battleships the old cruisers the old destroyers that were not quite good enough for the attack fleet they would come in and they would bombard for

two or three days or longer. They thought they had knocked out everything and then they would send in the invasion troops.

Interviewer: Right

Hyatt: Now my ship usually didn't go in with the first wave. One time we did but we didn't go all the way in we went pretty close and dropped our amphibious tanks. That was what we hauled on our first operation amphibious tanks you could drop those off a half a mile or so off of land and they could go in on their own. They were amtracks they called them they had an airplane motor in them. They were not very reliable but they did the job sometime. But after we trained there in New Guinea we joined the battle fleet. And we went to New Paul Islands they were a little bit famous a year or two ago on that program what is that program where they go on an island?

Interviewer: Survivor

Hyatt: What?

Interviewer: Survivor

Hyatt: Survivor was there yeah. We invaded the island called Angular. The other island was Peleliu Angular and Peleliu. And we had that invasion forced with the amtracks and we couldn't even anchor there because the water was too deep and we couldn't even land because the beaches were too steep. And so we had to lay off and keep our engines going for a day or two and then after one day Angular was secured. And so we took a military force off of Angular and took it over to Peleliu. And that may have lasted another day or two but it didn't last very long. And then after a day or two we went back to New Guinea I believe it was Highlandia that we went in and out of. See New Guinea had been concurred early in 42.

Interviewer: Right

Hyatt: And this was getting into 44. Then after a time the usual procedure was after you had made an invasion then you brought an occupying force and you brought material and you brought fuel and you brought new trucks and you brought food. Sometimes on the LST we hauled what you called boat cargo boxes and boxes of food. And our crew liked that because they could find a case of peaches every once in a while. A case of peaches tasted pretty good. I'm sure they were not supposed to do that but they were hungry for canned peaches. And it took a long time to load it because they'd bring it in by truck load take a long time to unload it. And then we took several trips up to Angular and Peleliu bringing up I guess you would say the occupation forces.

Interviewer: Right

Hyatt: And then we started training again. Guess where we were going to go next. The Philippine Islands that was a big deal.

Interviewer: Yeah I bet

Hyatt: And that picture you have there is my ship on the first day when we landed on Laity Island.

Interviewer: I'm going to show this to the camera here (holding the picture in front of the camera).

Hyatt: On Laity Island in the Philippine Islands in Laity Gulf that partly surrounds it.

Interviewer: And that's your ship there right?

Hyatt: We got there a few hours before McArthur did and he walked in on the same beach that we landed on. And on the night of that what's that date?

Interviewer: It says October 24th of 44.

Hyatt: October 24, 1944 on that night was the famous battle for Laity Gulf the Battle of Laity Gulf. And the Japanese had sent a decoy fleet up to the north east of the Philippines and Admiral Halzie with the attack fleet had gone up there to meet it. And they thought they had us in a bade spot down there in Laity Gulf but Admiral Oldendolph was in command of the bombardment fleet which consisted of all old battleships old WWI battleships and old cruisers and some of the old aircraft carriers and old destroyers and they went out and met the Japanese fleet in the Battle of Laity Gulf. I think that might be the time in which John F Kennedy has his BT109 episode. I believe it was either then or soon after. But his famous event took place in which a navy ship I know the BT109 and sunk it I guess and Kennedy helped save his crew. Many of you may have seen the mural of the BT109. Then we stayed there about two days and then we went back to New Guiney to get another load that was our procedure. After the landing we would go back and get occupation forces and then we would take on another army detachment and start training them. And we made other landings in the Philippines I left my ship for a period of about three months I had a stomach ulcer and while we were in a slack time I went over to the island where we were and talked to the doctor and he examined me and he couldn't determine how bad my ulcer was. So he determined that I should go to a naval hospital and so I went ship by ship stop by stop down to New Caledonia. And that was the closest naval hospital it was sort of an interesting experience. New Caledonia had belonged to the French and it had a population of black people and they were very black and they were great people. New Caledonia had not many industries but it did have nickel mining. Mining of nickel and it had the tourist trade and had some animals a little wild deer became tame and came in our hospital every day for a little while. We had a USO troop that came in two or three different USO troops that came in there. You've heard of the USO troops and I stayed there until January 1945 and ship by ship I went back and caught my ship back in the Philippine Islands back in Laity Gulf. During that time I spent about two weeks on Samar Island and the camp was in a cemetery. I slept in a tent in a cemetery for about two weeks. One interesting episode there was every Sunday there would be a cock fighting rooster fighting. The natives and the army and the navy participated in cock fighting. And as you know there is a lot of money changes hands in cock fighting. That's the fastest sport you will ever imagine you put two cocks in a ring two roosters trained for fighting they have steel gabs on their legs and they hit about two licks and one of them is dead and the other isn't And there's an old Pilipino there sitting on the ground with a bag and he puts the dead one in the bag and he takes it home and eats it. I didn't bet any money but it was a smaller yard with a fence around it and people stood and looked over each other's shoulders as a crowd of people watching the cock fighting. Just like they used to have it here in Tennessee and Alabama there are certain breeds of roosters that are bred for cock fighting.

Interviewer: Right what was the bombing wasn't too long after that was it the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki?

Hyatt: Well there was another big operation.

Interviewer: Oh before then?

Hyatt: Okinawa

Interviewer: Oh okay you were over in Okinawa too.

Hyatt: See the total plan was to take these islands closer to Japan so we could send in bombers and if they got in trouble they could land back half way or someplace. And we needed that was the reason we took Ewagema we were not in that operation but we stopped there one night after it was over. And the idea was fighter planes could go up to Ewagema and act as a help to the bombers as they went in. And then the bombers could land back on Ewagema if the field was big enough if they were crippled up and the fighter planes could come back and land. And then Okinawa could get us close enough so we could really bombard and invade Japan. And we went in there and that was not an easy operation. We went in on Easter Sunday 1945 and we didn't go into Okinawa proper we went into Parmaretta Islands which are a bunch of islands west of Okinawa and there they established amphibious naval aircraft. You had the VP1 and the BPM that were good size airplanes that could fly over the water and they could land in the water and they could drop bombs or they could observe submarines and other craft which would be reported. We couldn't get to the island there so they had pontoons in which for at least for 100 yards or more the trucks could go to the ship and load up and go back on the pontoons. I'm not sure how far I believe it was 100 yards or more. We stayed there about three or four days and then we went over to Okinawa. And our job over there was to go along side of battleships and cruisers and take the empty ammunition cans off haul them over to a transport ship in the harbor around Okinawa so they could be taken back home and reprocessed. We did that for 25 days and during that time we were at the general quarters which is gun crews getting ready most of the night and most of the day we loaded and unloaded ammunition cans for 25 days. And the Okinawa operation didn't go well it went 50 something days I believe before it was secure. And then finally we had a load of ammunition cans and they said go from here go to Saipan. And go to Iwashema there was a little Island Iwashema we tied up there and we unloaded those ammunition cans there and I sort of think they might still be there. And pretty soon after that I'm not sure how long after that the B29 dropped the bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. And then pretty soon after that the Japanese gave up but we went on through we made four trips to Japan. And our job there was to take up occupation crews we took air force we took army we took marine core. We went to let me see Wakayoma that was our first one we went later to Nagoya and we went to Sessiebo and we went to one of those twice I don't remember exactly which one. But we would take a crew out and unload them and we'd go back to the Philippines or someplace and get another crew. We bombed Japan pretty thoroughly back then and as you know McArthur was in command and he did a real good job there. He didn't do so good in Korea later and Truman had to fire him but he did a good job he understood the Japanese and he understood his carrying on a lot of social organization. He got control of the what's their leader called?

Interviewer: I'm not sure.

Hyatt: Anyway he was the religious and political leader. Tajo was the Prime Minister.

Interviewer: Right yeah I'm not sure.

Hyatt: Whatever the Japanese leader was he got control of him and he had control over the people. Now if the Japanese had been like the Iraqis are now we would have had lots of trouble. But they didn't

give them any trouble that I knew of. I took one walk into Japan I didn't feel real comfortable that was only a few days after the operation when it got near sundown I went back to my ship.

Interviewer: That was probably a good idea.

Hyatt: I just wasn't going to chance it to strolling around I guess it was safe enough but I didn't see any need to. But we continued on with that kind of work and then we went to Kenyan. Kenyan is famous if you know it as a place where the B29s flew from dropping the atomic bomb. We stayed there 30 days and by that time the navy was beginning to release a lot of people. And to get released you had to have so many points you got points for how many years and months you had been in.

Interviewer: How much action you saw.

Hyatt: How long you had been overseas. How many dependents you had and our captain went and our engineer was promoted to captain. The engineer went I was promoted to captain and when I got promoted to captain we went to Guam and I left my ship and I came home and I got back to San I came home from Rome all the way to San Francisco on the aircraft carrier that was being used to transport troops. There were no planes over there and I then from San Francisco I caught a train to New Orleans and then I was mustard out in late January 1945.

Interviewer: And you got out of you were out of the military at that point?

Hyatt: Late January 1946.

Interviewer: Okay Mr. Hyatt actually we've got only about 30 seconds left on this tape before it ends. Is there anything you want to finish with as far as your experiences and stuff over there? I just didn't want to run out of tape here and not let you end.

Hyatt: I thought I was doing what I should and I think that it was a good experience but I wouldn't want to go through it again.

Interviewer: Yeah I completely understand. And it's funny you say that because a lot of the interviews

Hyatt: And that war we had a clear objective and as I sort of jokingly tell my friends now the main thing we did individually is we got back home.

Interviewer: Absolutely

Hyatt: A lot of people didn't and I feel sorry for them. At that time we did what we had planned to do and the results turned out very well for a number of years.

Interviewer: Well I'd like to thank you very much for your time.

Hyatt: I don't know whether it was worth it.

Interviewer: It was definitely worth something.

Tape ended

