

Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
VINAL JORGENSON
Torpedoman, Navy, World War II
1999

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Jorgensen, Vinal W., (1913-2001). Oral History Interview, 1999.

User Copy: 2 sound cassette (ca. 67 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 67 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Video Recording: 1 videorecording (ca. 67 min.); ½ inch, color.

Transcript: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

Abstract:

Vinal Jorgenson, a South Wayne, Wisconsin native, discusses his Pacific-Theater World War II service with the Navy as a torpedoman aboard the Abner Read (a destroyer). He talks about boot camp at Great Lakes (Illinois), torpedo school at Newport (Rhode Island), and assignment to the Abner Read. Jorgenson details the ship armaments and how torpedoes were loaded and fired. He states the first casualty was due to appendicitis. Jorgenson describes his first mission to Attu Island (Aleutian Islands), including transporting Army troops, his role reporting targets to the gunners, having the ship damaged in an accident, and seeing sailors being buried at sea. Jorgenson describes three weeks of shore patrol in Sydney (Australia) while the ship was being repaired. He talks about seasickness and being in a typhoon. He touches on his cruiser escort at Kiska, patrolling near New Guinea, supporting the landing at Leyte, and abandoning ship after it was hit by a kamikaze Japanese plane. Jorgenson mentions spending hours in the ocean prior to rescue, survivors leave in the United States, and transfer to a maintenance unit at Barbers Point in Pearl Harbor (Hawaii). He speaks about ship reunions and settling in Janesville (Wisconsin).

Biographical Sketch:

Jorgenson (1913-2001) served aboard the USS Abner Read in the Pacific theater of World War II. After the war he returned to farming in Wisconsin.

Interviewed by James McIntosh, 1999.

Transcribed by Elizabeth Hackett, 2010.

Abstract by Susan Krueger, 2010.

Interview Transcript:

James: Up and running. This is the 16th of August, 1999, and we're interviewing Vinal Jorgenson.

Unknown: From—

James: From—we're going to find out. Where were you born, Vinal?

Vinal: Where?

James: Yes.

Vinal: I was born in Lafayette County—South Wayne.

James: South Wayne?

Vinal: May 13, 1913.

James: 1913. And when did you join the service? When did you get in the—I mean the Navy?

Vinal: It's right—it's right in one of my letters there.

James: Okay.

Vinal: I think.

James: And where did you—where did you join up?

Vinal: I joined in Chicago.

James: And where did they send you, Great Lakes?

Vinal: Great Lakes.

James: Of course. I went to Great Lakes, too.

Vinal: Pardon?

James: I went there also.

Vinal: Oh, did you?

James: Yes. And what did they—what did you learn at Great Lakes?

Vinal: We went through boot camp, which is rigid, military-type training.

James: Yes, right.

Vinal: Get up at five o'clock in the morning, go out on the grinder for about an hour before breakfast, and we'd swing our arms around, kick our legs around. You know what it's all about.

James: Yes. Then where did they send you? Well, they sent you to a corps school.

Vinal: Then I went to advanced torpedo school in Newport, Rhode Island.

James: There we go. Now it counts. I see. How long were you there?

Vinal: Eight weeks.

James: Eight weeks. And you became a torpedoman third class?

Vinal: Third class.

James: Right. What did they—they—where did they send you then?

Vinal: Then I went to—right to San Francisco, at the receiving ship at Goat Island.

James: At Goat Island.

Vinal: Goat Island.

James: Yeah.

Vinal: I stayed—

James: You picked up your first ship?

Vinal: I stayed there until my assignment came in for the Abner Read.

James: The Abner Read was your first ship. Was that your only ship?

Vinal: First and only ship.

James: Okay, that makes it easier. And so, then where did the—the Abner Read go to?

Vinal: Our first mission was Attu, and the Aleutian Islands.

James: Cold.

Vinal: Chilly.

James: Okay. (laughs) Chilly, yeah. So what do we do there?

Vinal: Well, we risked—we gave the Army information on the Japs' installations.

James: How did you obtain that information, Vinal?

Vinal: The Army's had a—had a lookout—

James: I see.

Vinal: Troops went ashore and dug it out.

James: And they send—

Vinal: They send—

James: Information back to you?

Vinal: Yeah, it's back to our ship.

James: How, by radio?

Vinal: By—I don't know—I don't know whether it's by radio or other communications. I don't remember.

James: I see. And then what did you do with that information?

Vinal: Well, we was—our first assignment was Attu. That's the last island of the Aleutian Island chain.

James: Yes.

Vinal: And we was to go to Attu. If we—if the Army needed military support, we would radio back to our ship, and they would send military support for the Army.

James: Now you were on—in—this—your ship was a destroyer?

Vinal: Destroyer.

James: Okay, do you remember how big it was?

Vinal: Well, it was a Fletcher type.

James: A Fletcher-class.

Vinal: Yeah.

James: Okay, that tells us something. And it—and what, it had six-inch guns?

Vinal: We had—we had three five-inch guns and four 40—40 mm guns.

James: Okay. Did you fire any of those?

Vinal: I was not a—I was not in the firing squad.

James: You were just on the torpedo.

Vinal: I was—I was—I was general—general station quarters—was on the bridge, manning the telephone, and was—had these F chart(?) circuits, and the torpedo circuit, and so on—

James: Right. But you had there—you were going out to sea and not on shore there. If you're out to sea, then you'd be prepared to launch some torpedoes. Is that right?

Vinal: Right.

James: Do you remember what size those torpedoes were?

Vinal: What size?

James: Yeah, did they have the long one or the short one there?

Vinal: They had the long ones.

James: Right. Okay.

Vinal: They carried—they carried—each torpedo carried—I guess you'd call it a bomb.

James: Well, yes.

Vinal: It's a ton of—ton of TNT.

James: One ton size, right. Did you ever have a chance to launch those?

Vinal: We launched them on exercise runs.

James: I see.

Vinal: But we never launched one in battle.

James: Okay. Did you—were you good at that, at your torpedo launching?

Vinal: Well, I had—I had good experience at Newport. All we needed—we needed in order to fire one—I needed the range, and the speed of the target, and we set that up on a—on a computer, like—

James: Mm-hm.

Vinal: And then—then we got over—had to wait—wait for our orders, for the captain to fire.

James: You fired by just pushing a button?

Vinal: Yeah. So we—

James: How did you get the torpedoes up into position to—to fire them? Because they were held down on the hold of the ship.

Vinal: Well, we chained them on—in the direction that—see if the—our target was moving out this way, at our portside, we would crank on the torpedo out, pointing it towards that. And then when we get all this information about the—the range and the speed it's going, and then we wait for the captain to say "Fire."

James: Right. Where were the torpedoes kept?

Vinal: It's kept aboard ship.

James: I know that, but not on—on the deck. They weren't on deck—all of that.

Vinal: It was on the topside all the time. We had two torpedo mounts. Each mount carried four or five torpedoes.

James: So you mean the ship only had ten torpedoes then.

Vinal: That's right.

James: On—on a mission.

Vinal: Right.

James: Okay. You just had a crane that just picked them up and snuck them over into the firing slot there?

Vinal: Yeah, and then when we was complete, fired all our torpedoes, then we would go back to San Diego to get a refill.

James: Did you have to—didn't you have to set a timer on that torpedo? Or you had to arm the torpedo there—weren't armed sitting on deck.

Vinal: It was armed—

James: Tell me about that.

Vinal: It was—I mean it was armed when we—when we fired it, when we arm them, just before we fired them.

James: Right. Where was that, that you—what knob did you have to turn, or how did you get that—make that torpedo an active torpedo? You remember that?

Vinal: It was on the torpedo itself.

James: Yes. Was it a knob—

Vinal: It was—we just—

James: Or was it a piece of paper that you had to pull off? Or how did you make that thing active?

Vinal: That's kind of a hard question right now, because—

James: Okay.

Vinal: Over fifty years, you know.

James: I understand.

Vinal: But we would arm the torpedo, and the torpedo was fired from the tube from—with five pounds of black powder.

James: That's the next—my—the next question. Did you arrange that? Did you set that up?

Vinal: That is—

James: You put the powder charge in to fire the torpedo?

Vinal: Powder charge was in the torpedo.

James: Okay.

Vinal: All we had to do then when we hit our—hit our target, and get it—get steady on the target, then we would—we'd put the command in to say fire, then we would fire. And I remember one time we had a listen on my radio, and I had my torpedo chained out, and a target was coming up this way, and skipper yelled at me. He said I'm not—I'm not going to hit my target. So [I] had the torpedo officer, he was on the bridge with us. "Yes," he said, "He's on the—he's on target." (laughs)

James: So you hit it.

Vinal: (laughs) He—you—the torpedo officer knew how far we had to lead that target in order to hit it.

James: Mm-hm.

Vinal: So that was on target.

James: Okay. What was the target?

Vinal: The target was another ship. But I—we didn't fire it but—

James: Wasn't it towing something behind it that you fired at?

Vinal: Yeah, on our exercise runs we didn't have the—we didn't have these—we had exercise head on it, in place of—in place of the—

James: In place of the—

Vinal: TNT.

James: The explosive, yeah. The TNT.

Vinal: TNT head.

James: So when it hit the dummy target, what it did—make a small noise or what?

Vinal: We would—we targeted it so it would go right underneath the target.

James: Oh!

Vinal: And then it should sink, and then we had to go and retrieve it.

James: How did you know when you hit the target?

Vinal: You could hear it.

James: You could hear as it hit the side of the ship?

Vinal: Yeah.

James: You mean when it was an explosion or a—

Vinal: If we had—if we had a—had a TNT head on it, in place of the exercise head, it would've went off, and it *psh*.

James: Just a small explosion.

Vinal: Yeah.

James: But not enough to damage their—your target.

Vinal: So—

James: Right?

Vinal: Well, it would have damaged a destroyer. Destroyer don't have much armor on it.

James: No way with that. But when you're practicing, you see, you can't use a full charge, or you'd sink it.

Vinal: No, just use the exercise head.

James: Exercise head.

Vinal: They call it. It's that—it's the same shape head, but it doesn't have the explosive on it.

James: I see. You remember how your—how you knew when you hit the target?

Vinal: Well, you could see—

James: Ah.

Vinal: You'd see it—all that's left a wake—torpedo left a wake.

James: Yes.

Vinal: If the wake was—

James: Did they run on the surface?

Vinal: So you had to go down to about fifteen feet below surface.

James: But yeah, so you—but you could still see the wake.

Vinal: Yeah, you could see the wake.

James: Yeah.

Vinal: You follow that wake, you'd see—tell whether you hit your target or not.

James: Right.

Vinal: On the exercise heads, it was not that serious. I mean we didn't worry about any explosion or nothing.

James: I understand. Now, but you never had a chance to shoot at a Japanese ship?

Vinal: No.

James: Did you have any action with the guns on your ship?

Vinal: It's—our gunner's mate was—the suicide plane that hit us, I was on the bridge at the time, and I had located it—I located the plane in the air. It was at—on the portside at about four o'clock—four o'clock in the—

James: I understand.

Vinal: Position. And I reported it to the torpedo officer, and he reported it to the captain. And that target that *sht*—the plane started to get bigger and bigger. And finally, our gunner's mate shot one wing off, and after that, the target—the Japanese—

James: Plane.

Vinal: Went into kind of a barrel roll—

James: Mm-hm.

Vinal: Where she hit us.

James: But you—even though you took the wing off, she still hit you.

Vinal: Yeah, she still hit us.

James: Hit on the port side?

Vinal: Port side.

James: On the back or the front?

Vinal: I don't know that's(?)—

James: On the stern?

Vinal: On the stern side.

James: Yeah, I suppose you were turning away from it, so that they—

Vinal: Yeah.

James: Came in right from behind.

Vinal: Yeah.

James: What damage did that do to you?

Vinal: Well, it's—it went down the after stack.

James: The stack!

Vinal: Just between two stacks.

James: Yeah, I understand.

Vinal: And it went down the after stack, and of course the engineers, and the black gang—I always called them—they were shook up.

James: Must have killed some people.

Vinal: Killed some of them.

James: Did that sink your ship?

Vinal: It didn't sink us. We lost—we lost—I was on the telephone, and I went down in the captain's area, and reported it. And the torpedo officer told

me to get out on the catwalk and see what the damage was. So I went back out on the catwalk, and after the—after the after stack, there's nothing there but water. We lost head but(?) and we lost that stern of our ship.

James: It cut you in two?

Unknown: See now, he's telling—

James: How did you—

Unknown: He's telling about another experience in Kiska. I think he's mixed up with when the ship went down. That's the story of when—when they were in Kiska, see, they lost part of the ship.

James: That's what I'm saying. What he was first saying—

Unknown: [unintelligible]

James: He would not—

Unknown: He said—he described—

James: He said it didn't sink his ship.

Unknown: All right, see, that happened.

James: It sure didn't take the second half—

Unknown: No.

James: Rear end [unintelligible].

Unknown: See, I'm—I'm clear—it took part of the ship off, up in the stern.

Vinal: The reason I saved my life, is just before that happened, we took on new recruits, and this one young boy was sleeping forward, and I was sleeping back aft. You know, it rides smooth back aft, so he said he wished he'd had a bunk back there. I said, "I'll trade with you."

James: Oh, my my my my!

Vinal: (laughs)

James: Bad choice for him.

Vinal: If I'd have known what was going to happen, I would never have never done that. Because I—

James: So he went down with the aft?

Unknown: See, I have pictures of that.

Vinal: I was—

James: Okay.

Unknown: I have pictures of that.

James: Right.

Unknown: Of losing the stern—whatever was saved.

James: Right. We just can't use them on this—

Unknown: All right. No, but I just wanted you—

James: Oh, yes.

Unknown: To know that that's—yeah, I—

Vinal: [unintelligible]

James: Okay, let's skip ahead now. The first time you were hit, your—it didn't take your—your rear end of your ship off. You were just hit, and then you survived that.

Vinal: Yeah.

James: Was this off—where was that, where was your ship when that happened? Alaska?

Vinal: That was off Attu. That was off Attu.

James: You were hit twice.

Vinal: Yeah.

James: The second time, it knocked you down.

Vinal: Yeah.

James: That both off of the Attu coast, both times?

Vinal: Second time was at Kiska.

James: Okay, Attu the first time.

Vinal: Yeah.

James: Kiska the second.

Vinal: Yeah.

James: Not far away.

Vinal: I said that they're—

James: No.

Vinal: Pretty—pretty close.

James: Pretty close. I think it's 150 miles away, I think.

Vinal: Uh-huh.

James: Anyway, after the first time this happened, did you return to this—to San Diego?

Vinal: Yeah.

James: Or San Francisco?

Vinal: Returned to—returned to San Diego.

James: And made repairs there.

Vinal: Yeah.

James: You recall how many guys got—were lost on that first time?

Vinal: I always remember the number, but the—I remember having a sea burial shortly after that.

James: We don't have to ask you [unintelligible] not the best—

Unknown: Okay, because I have—I have the numbers and all that.

James: No, it's just him telling—that's all we want.

Unknown: Okay, okay.

Vinal: Sea burial as the boys—the boys that lost their lives was—

James: Had an official burial and slipped them off the board and into the—

Vinal: They were—they were in a canvas bag.

James: Right, how many?

Vinal: Laying on the deck, and I went up on the deck, and lifted the cover up, and see how many I could identify. I didn't know too many from the black gang.

James: It's the ones who work in the—down in the bottom, with the motors.

Vinal: But any who—I knew most of the gunner's mates, and I knew most of the torpedomen.

James: Well, they're all topside folk.

Vinal: And so I noticed one of the gunner's mate was a good friend of mine. He was—he was bunked right close to my bunk. And I lost him. And they—

James: How many men did you have aboard ship? How many—what was the size of your crew?

Vinal: I think it was about 350.

James: 350.

Vinal: Yeah, and when they—after that sea burial, they put one body at a time on that—on a plank—

James: Right.

Vinal: And when they raised the plank, they—the body would slide down—

James: Right, under the—under the flag, into the water.

Vinal: That—each body had a five-inch shell in it.

James: To sink it.

Vinal: It—cause—for ballast.

James: To sink it.

Vinal: Yeah, and—

James: Did you have a chaplain onboard?

Vinal: No, we had a chaplain that came aboard that day from one of the flat tops in the area. He had to—

James: Where was the flat top?

Vinal: He was—he was in our—in our—in our group.

James: Off Alaska?

Vinal: Yeah. And he had—he had the funeral service, and the time—came time for him to be finished, he gave the seamen the sign, and they lifted the plank up, and the bodies would slide down. (laughs)

James: Right. I understand. Okay, I lost my train of(?)—

Vinal: Very touching. I cry every time I think about it.

James: Sure, I'm sure you do. Well, then the—trying to think—so then, you went back to San Diego for repairs, after that?

Vinal: Yeah.

James: How long were you there?

Vinal: We was—we weren't there too long, because they were ready for us when we got there. We radioed ahead, and we told them the damage that needed to be taken care of.

James: So—

Vinal: We was probably there about a week.

James: About a week. Then you went right back to the same spot.

Vinal: Right back to the Aleutian Islands again.

James: How many other destroyers were in your group?

Vinal: Oh, gee, I don't remember.

James: I mean, like two or three, or five or ten?

Vinal: More like five or six.

James: Five or six.

Vinal: Yeah.

James: Okay, and then there was an aircraft carrier.

Vinal: Aircraft carrier.

James: Any—any cruisers?

Vinal: It was light cruisers.

James: Light cruisers. Battleship? Probably not.

Vinal: Battleships was off on the horizon.

James: (laughs) Right. (laughs) Out of the way, yeah.

Vinal: Yeah.

James: Out of trouble. Did you—did—how close did you come to the beach in Alaska? Mile, two miles, three miles?

Vinal: I don't just—I just—beyond our—beyond our sight. We couldn't see the beach.

James: You didn't shoot any five-inchers out into—lob any of those in, inland—

Vinal: No.

James: To help the Army.

Vinal: They—the gunner's mate handled the five-inch guns.

James: Right. But did you shoot them?

Vinal: No.

- James: No, that's what I figured. Did you take any people aboard ship from the—around the beach, like soldiers who were wounded? Did you return(?) any of those off of the aircraft carrier from where the hospital was?
- Vinal: I think the aircraft carrier had all their own survivors.
- James: Yeah.
- Vinal: All the casualties.
- James: Okay, let's go to new tack here. Suppose some of you got sick and had to—you—and you had to—you had no doctor for it, did you?
- Vinal: We had just a pharmacist's mate.
- James: Right, and he decided this kid is—has appendicitis. What would you do about that?
- Vinal: We would notify the flat top, and we would transport this sailor over to the flat top. We had one boy that, on our way from—before we got to Attu, came down with appendicitis.
- James: Mm-hm.
- Vinal: At sea, and they put him on a motor whaleboat, and they—he was transferred over to the flat top, where the doctor was. And he had surgery, but he died from it.
- James: Whoops!
- Vinal: He didn't—we didn't get the—we didn't get him there on time. Appendicitis—appendix must have—must have bursted or something.
- James: That's exactly what happened, and I can guarantee it.
- Vinal: And—
- James: The diagnosis was made a little late.
- Vinal: Yeah, and—
- James: Well, that's too bad. Yeah, they didn't have the antibiotics that would combat that thing.
- Vinal: He was the first casualty we had. That was before we even hit Attu.

James: Did you know any of your shipmates before you got aboard?

Vinal: Not before I went aboard, no.

James: Okay. Have you kept contact with any of these folk?

Vinal: I've kept contact with those that comes to the annual—

James: Annual meeting.

Vinal: Meeting. I—one guy, we call—what is his first name? Schmitt?

Unknown: You call him Schmitt.

Vinal: Marvin Schmitt.

James: Where does he live?

Vinal: He lives on the West Coast. Yeah.

Unknown: Florence(?).

Vinal: In a mobile home park.

James: Florida?

Unknown: Florida.

James: Yeah. So you write to him? Does he write to you?

Vinal: We only correspond by mail. But the only time we—

James: See him at the reunion.

Vinal: See—at the reunion.

Unknown: Christmas cards.

James: And so—

Vinal: He was—he was interviewed, first reunion we had. And this interviewer asked him if he knew anybody aboard ship that he was a personal friend of. (laughs) I had been standing right close to the area, and said, "The only one," he said, "I can think of right now is Vinal Jorgenson." (laughs)

James: Right.

Vinal: (laughs) And I said, "I'm here, Marv Schmitt."

James: (laughs) Great.

Vinal: So one time—we've been good friends ever since.

James: Your ship was hit by a Japanese kamikaze twice?

Vinal: Yeah.

James: Is that right?

Vinal: Right.

James: Is that right?

Unknown: No, just the one.

James: Just the one time.

Unknown: Mm-hm.

Vinal: Well, then—well, but—yeah, now we don't have a reason how he had—the ship was hit the first time.

Unknown: They'd been laying(?)—they were—it was patrolling in the Japanese mine. See, it was a lot of mines and that.

James: Oh, first time was a mine off Attu.

Vinal: Yeah, yeah.

Unknown: Yeah, see, that's what I said. He was kind of getting hit, too.

James: And the kamikaze was off Kiska, right?

Unknown: No, no, no, no, no, no kamikaze up there. No, it was a mine up in Kiska and that. He was only one time up there.

Vinal: First kamikaze hit us—

Unknown: One time they would have that accident. They went up twice. But one time, it was just for—I read this stuff, so I kind of know. They just went up once, to do some—I don't what it was actually. They took somebody

up there, then they came back. The next time they went up is when they hit the mine.

James: Well, but there were two accidents. What was the first—

Unknown: No, no, there was just one—one time that they—their—I think they just lost some part of the—it was just—

Vinal: We were only hit by kamikaze once.

Unknown: Yeah.

Vinal: That's when they sunk us.

Unknown: Uh-huh.

James: Uh-huh.

Unknown: That was the—

James: But you went back for repairs the first time.

Vinal: Yeah.

James: Why did you go back for repairs?

Vinal: Well, for one thing, the screws was messed up.

James: From stuff, then—and off the shore—the weeds?

Vinal: Huh?

James: Weeds? What'd you get into?

Vinal: Well, we—that time we hit that mine, when the screws got out of line and this—

Unknown: Mm-hm.

James: Okay. Then there was a mine accident and a kamikaze.

Unknown: Mm-hm. The mine accident was at Kiska, and the other was in the Pacific.

James: You said the other—

Unknown: In the Pacific. The other—the—down in the South Pacific. You know, when the kamikaze hit.

Vinal: Second time, we—

James: Oh, well, things are changing here rapidly. Okay.

Vinal: Second time we went to—had to go to repair, we were in the South Seas, and the skipper hit a sand bar.

Unknown: Mm-hm. That one.

Vinal: And it screwed up our propellers.

James: Yeah, then what?

Vinal: So we had to go—we had to go to dry dock to get that fixed, and the closest dry dock was Australia. So we sat in Australia about three weeks.

James: Okay.

Vinal: And they—

James: They let you out on the shore?

Vinal: Yeah.

James: How'd you like that?

Vinal: Good.

James: Do you remember being on shore in Australia?

Vinal: Well, we—yeah. We were—

James: Did you—did—you were at Sydney?

Vinal: Sydney, Australia.

James: Right.

Vinal: We were there—we then—the day that we didn't break liberty, we was on shore patrol duty. I had [unintelligible] another sailor, Tom Lee, and we was on shore patrol duty.

James: Mm-hm.

Vinal: And there was places that was out of bounds for the sailors. I remember one—

James: What was it?

Vinal: I remember one hotel in Sydney that was out of bounds, and we were supposed to notify those personnel that they was in trouble if they didn't leave this place. So we went in to—two of us went in to the hotel lobby, then we found out that there was a naval officer, had a—had a broad with him in his room.

James: Oh, my goodness!

Vinal: So—

James: How shocking!

Vinal: So— (laughs)

James: (laughs)

Vinal: So we had to get to tell him—said, “You're—this point is out of bounds. You'll have to leave.”

James: And?

Vinal: And I don't know. I guess he didn't leave then.

James: No, I don't meant(?) he paid much attention.

Vinal: No, so we had to—that's the only time that(?) we had with Navy personnel that we had to ask—said—

James: You were doing shore patrol duty then?

Vinal: Yeah.

James: You had to put on the bend?

Vinal: Yeah.

James: Carry a stick to hit somebody with?

Vinal: Yeah, a club.

James: A club, right.

Vinal: So—

James: You chase any boys out of the bars?

Vinal: No, we didn't have any trouble with the—no trouble with the bars. The only thing in Australia—you're not allowed to drink on the street.

James: (laughs)

Vinal: If you—if you—

James: That's a reasonable rule.

Vinal: If you had a beer, you had to drink it before you go down the street, or you could be arrested by the—by the—

James: Local police.

Vinal: Local police would arrest you.

James: Right. Did you get in any—into any trouble there?

Vinal: We had no trouble there.

James: You behaved yourself?

Vinal: Oh, yeah. I didn't drink much beer.

James: Oh.

Vinal: Their beer was probably six percent beer.

James: Yeah.

Vinal: It wouldn't take more than one beer to put you off balance.

James: (laughs) Yeah, you wouldn't be able to launch those torpedoes then.

Vinal: I remember—I remember one escapade we had. We was in a restaurant, having dinner, and I asked the waitress, I said, "Could I have a napkin?" (laughs) And she sort of laughed, and [I] said, "Why don't you tell me, what's so funny, so I can laugh, too?" Well, she said, "Napkin is a baby's diaper."

- James: Oh, I see. That's the British term. Yeah, that's right.
- Vinal: She said, "That's for babies."
- James: (laughs) Babies, yes. (laughs)
- Vinal: So I didn't—I learned that.
- James: Right. (laughs)
- Vinal: But we had a good time in Sydney.
- James: I'll bet you did. Everybody I've talked to, went to Sydney, likes it.
- Vinal: Yeah.
- James: Beautiful city. **[End of Tape One, Side One]**
- Vinal: People—
- James: Did you see any USO people there? Any entertainers? United States entertaining group, you know—USO?
- Vinal: We met some Army men—Army men, that was stationed near Sydney. In fact, the first time I was on shore patrol, I was paired up with a—with a soldier.
- James: That's right. I forgot they did that. They paired both services, so—take care of boat troubles.
- Vinal: So—
- James: Same thing.
- Vinal: Man, I had a good time in Sydney.
- Unknown: Tell us—tell—you told about the flowers. You always talked about delivering flowers.
- Vinal: Every Sunday—every Sunday, must have been a ritual in Sydney, Australia, that the ladies would have flowers made, to go to the—they'd go to the cemetery. So I asked them, I said, "What's going—what's going on today?" She said, "They always go on Sunday to the cemetery." So it's just nothing special for them, it's just special for us.

James: So after a couple weeks, they untangled the screw of the ship, and they put you out to sea again.

Vinal: Yeah.

James: So tell me about the kamikaze again.

Vinal: Well, we went back to Hollandia.

James: Hollandia. Wow, you're in New Guinea now.

Vinal: Yeah, off of Guinea.

James: Yep.

Vinal: And then we was patrolling back and forth. And skipper ran into a sandbar, chewed us up again. We got hit on our way to Sydney. We got hit again for—cripple ourselves into Sydney a second time. We didn't quite make it into Sydney. We had to be towed in.

James: Oh, my, my! The captain had a real problem driving that thing.

Vinal: Yeah.

James: (laughs)

Vinal: (hissing) Backend would be chick(?) away up and down like that.

James: Well, if the screw isn't turning, you aren't going very far.

Vinal: Yeah, so—

James: A lot of Wisconsin boys were in the 32nd Division at—in Hollandia.

Vinal: Yeah.

James: A lot of Wisconsin men were there.

Vinal: Yeah, so—and we got back to Sydney, and then back to Hollandia. And we got away with—to join the formation that was going back to Aleutian Islands.

James: Okay.

Vinal: So we went back the second time. And that's when we got hit at Kiska.

Unknown: I don't—I don't—I don't think so. I think they went to the—see, they carried that—joined the formation when they took MacArthur back.

Vinal: Yeah, we was—we was—

James: Your—he wasn't aboard your ship, was he?

Vinal: But he was—

James: MacArthur?

Vinal: We just escorted—he was aboard the USS Nashville, a light cruiser.

James: Well, I was going to say I didn't think a destroyer would be big enough for him.

Vinal: No.

Unknown: No.

Vinal: So we had to escort the cruiser back to Philippines.

James: Right. Main purpose of the destroyer is to protect the bigger ships from submarines. That's why they had them on the flanks of the big ships.

Vinal: The only—

James: A few of the aircraft carriers today are protected by a destroyer.

Vinal: The only passengers we had—one time from Pearl Harbor, when we—first time we left for the South Seas, we had three or four black soldiers as passengers. They was—and they got so seasick, that the—they even looked white. (laughs)

James: (laughs)

Unknown: They were on R and R, weren't they?

Vinal: Yeah, spent most of the time hanging over—hanging over the side.

James: Yeah, we all did that.

Vinal: Yeah.

James: Right.

Vinal: I never got seasick in my life.

James: You never did?

Vinal: Never did.

James: Oh, you're lucky. Boy!

Vinal: I know that one boy that wanted my bunk, he got seasick all the time. And I never got seasick. I don't know why. I could ride those waves—see, the destroyer was light.

James: Right.

Vinal: She had a lot of pitch, and she had a lot of roll.

James: (laughs) That's right. You needed—everybody said you needed three hands to be on a destroyer—

Vinal: (laughs) Yeah.

James: One to hang on with and two to do your work.

Vinal: Yeah. Yeah. I got used to it.

James: Boy, [unintelligible].

Vinal: Never bothered me.

James: Pitch and roll constantly—

Vinal: Yeah.

James: Even in calm water.

Vinal: We hit a typhoon one night.

James: Oh, tell me about that.

Vinal: And skipper was a real good skipper.

James: This the one that ran into the sandbars twice, you mean?

Vinal: Yeah, yeah.

James: Oh.

Vinal: He—order—he said, “In order to survive these typhoons, you got to head right into them. You can’t let the tide hit like—you can’t let the tide through—hit you on the side.”

James: Oh, I’m sure.

Vinal: So he head right into the typhoon. And he said, “Everything on the topside has to be latched down, or we lose it.” Well, we—the next morning, you have to go get—weather cleared—we was out of the typhoon—we lost our smokescreen generators, and we lost everything else on the topside.

James: That wasn’t latched down.

Vinal: Wasn’t latched down good enough.

James: Didn’t lose any sailors?

Vinal: Huh?

James: Didn’t lose any sailors?

Vinal: No, no.

James: Perfect storm, you’d think.

Unknown: I never heard of that one. I didn’t know about that. I—this was trying(?)

James: And the other side was—that ship was turned and be upside down.

Vinal: So when we hit those waves, they’d be coming at you—they’d be high as a dairy barn.

James: Four stories high?

Vinal: Coming at—coming at you, so the skipper would try to steer his ship right straight into it. So we would—

James: There’s always a risk they’re too high, though, and they just—

Vinal: Yeah.

James: They just keep on going straight into the base of that wave that—

Vinal: So we—

James: Prop them up.

Vinal: We'd be going like this all the way, all every night, all night long, up the wave(?).

James: You just strap yourself into the bunk.

Vinal: I didn't—I didn't stay in my bunk.

James: What—it was someone—what did you do?

Vinal: I stayed upside, on topside, and then we had a little torpedo shack.

James: Did you tie yourself down?

Vinal: No.

James: How'd you—you dog that door down, so it didn't pop open?

Vinal: Door was bolted down.

James: Yeah.

Vinal: I mean—

James: Because otherwise, before—and open, and out you go.

Vinal: We had tools and shelves in the torpedo shack, and they was all over the floor—

James: Sure.

Vinal: The next day, and next morning. The next morning we hit clear weather, and the sea was just as glassy and smooth as could be.

James: Did you lose any torpedoes?

Vinal: No, no.

James: They were latched down pretty good.

Vinal: Yeah. They were all in the—they were all—torpedoes were all in the torpedo mount, and the torpedo mount was bolted down to the deck. So we didn't—we didn't worry about that.

James: [unintelligible]

Vinal: We could have lost some depth charges.

[Woman interrupts interview]

Vinal: So after we got back to Sydney, we kind of found—seas was real quiet. It's kind of fun to be at sea at that time.

James: Yeah.

Vinal: We was through that terrible storm. But it—some reason or another, it—storm didn't scare me. I had so much confidence in the skipper. He'd done a marvelous job.

James: Now let's move in to that kamikaze attack.

Vinal: That is—

James: It struck you in the—behind the second stack, right?

Vinal: Yeah.

James: And took off the aft of the ship. Is that what you said?

Vinal: Well—

James: Just the fantail? How much?

Vinal: Up to—up to the—we lost everything from the fantail up to the first firewall.

James: First firewall—I'm not familiar enough with the destroyer to know where that is exactly. Is that—is that about a fourth of the ship?

Unknown: Vinal, now this is when the kamikaze hit you.

James: Right, that's what we're talking about.

Unknown: Yeah, I think it's, you know, when that ship—when that airplane came down, how—you know, when it hit you, it didn't take long. And you were—what happened?

Vinal: Well, it—if it dropped a bomb right down the after stack—

James: The after stack, right.

Vinal: And black gang was hauled up topside to the fire assist.

James: Yeah.

Vinal: And then some of them was—

James: That knocked out your engines.

Vinal: Knock out the engine.

James: Oh, sure.

Vinal: And so they—it just said(?)—very exciting—

James: And then did it start to sink?

Vinal: What?

James: Did you start to sink?

Vinal: No, we didn't start the sinking then, rather than right away.

James: Okay.

Vinal: We had—we had a—the after torpedo mount had a glass shield on it. And this one seaman, John Carr, was sitting on the glass shield, and it caught fire right away. So the fire came up between the tubes, and he was sitting on a—on a seat over the torpedoes. And he was burned real bad. He's setting—seating(?) on deck down below that. And I thought he looked like his sleeve was turned inside out, hanging out.

James: That was his skin.

Vinal: This is how his skin was—yes, but he died from the burns that—

James: Yeah.

Vinal: We lost him.

James: So then what were you doing to protect—save the ship here?

Vinal: Well, the—I know we didn't seem to have any trouble about saving the ship. Then we had trouble navigating. We couldn't—

James: Well, if it took off the back part of your ship, you didn't have any screws left.

Vinal: No.

James: So how did you make—

Vinal: [unintelligible]

James: Even(?) forward motion, you see?

Vinal: We didn't lose the back part of our ship at that time.

Unknown: Vinal—

Vinal: We lost—

Unknown: Remember yesterday, you told me how you took his shoes off?

Vinal: No, that is—that's when we hit that underwater mine—

Unknown: No—

Vinal: It's when we lost the ship.

Unknown: [unintelligible] the truth, no.

Vinal: We didn't—when the kamikaze hit us, we didn't lose any part of our ship.

Unknown: It went down, Vinal, in just a few minutes, didn't it?

Vinal: Says the skipper—

Unknown: 28 minutes.

Vinal: Skipper said, "Abandon ship!" And we was—

Unknown: Uh-huh.

Vinal: Everybody's scared, and they abandon ship, and then he said, "Oh, don't abandon ship. That was just a drill." And so he said, about a few minutes later, "Now, this is not a drill. Abandon ship!" So I and a little steward(?) from Oklahoma—we went over—dropped over the side together, each had a lifejacket around us. And I had field shoes on, so I took the shoe—field shoes off and set them on the deck. I—they had one of those [unintelligible], so I took those off. And then we got away from the ship—sinking ship. And I looked back, and the—and the bow's down—going down, and the bow is straight up in the air, going down, like that.

James: 28 minutes?

Vinal: Huh?

James: 28 minutes?

Vinal: About that.

James: How many got off the ship?

Vinal: Well, it's that time, I think the—

Unknown: It's like a lot of them didn't have big [unintelligible].

Vinal: We lost quite a few men. We lost most of ours—the black gang.

Unknown: Twenty men, it says.

Vinal: And men that worked below decks.

James: How many got out?

Unknown: Twenty men—no, twenty men were killed.

James: That's all?

Unknown: They won't—according to that newsletter I was looking at today.

James: But you didn't have any boats out by this time, did you?

Vinal: No.

James: 28 minutes, you don't have any time to put boats out.

Vinal: No.

Unknown: Lifejackets, wasn't—

James: This—yeah, you all had lifejackets?

Vinal: One of the neighboring destroyers—

James: Right.

Vinal: Had motor whaleboats out.

James: Oh, whaleboats out.

Vinal: They came over—they came over and started to pick up our survivors.

James: So most of the boys got off.

Vinal: Yeah, as I understood like steward(?), we didn't need to be picked up. We—there was an injured destroyer on the horizon, so we said to—“Let's—let's paddle our way over to that destroyer.” And we got over to the destroyer about four hours later. They threw a line out to us, and we grabbed that line, and they pulled us aboard.

Unknown: Why can't you tell us eight hours they were out on the water that go(?) into the night?

James: Oh—

Vinal: So—

Unknown: Because he hit [unintelligible].

James: Yeah, how long were in the water now, Vinal?

Vinal: From about twelve o'clock until—

James: About noon until—

Vinal: No, I forget just what—we got picked up probably about six o'clock.

Unknown: So it's evening, he says.

James: So at least six or eight hours, then.

Vinal: Yeah. And then we was—they pulled us aboard ship.

James: Was it cold?

Vinal: Warm.

James: Warm water.

Vinal: That's right.

James: Any sharks around?

Vinal: Sharks—we saw sharks—we saw sharks slithering alongside our ship after we got picked up. We was lucky.

James: Good.

Unknown: We can't hear it straight [unintelligible].

Vinal: We weren't drawing any blood. If we'd been drawing blood, we'd been gone. Blood attracts—so they was—we was cold for a second.

James: Okay, now. Try to think now, how many Japanese planes attacked your group?

Vinal: It was—

James: I mean, roughly.

Vinal: One kamikaze—I only saw one plane.

James: Oh, one plane.

Vinal: Yeah.

James: Oh, okay.

Vinal: And I saw him sitting in his cockpit. He was getting close enough, I could see him.

James: Just before he hit your ship?

Vinal: Boy, before he hit our ship, and it shook us. Boy, it shook me off by speed. I was on the bridge, and I was—

James: Sure.

Vinal: And I lost my telephone. I picked it off the deck. Everybody was going helter-skelter. They always do(?).

James: The captain get off the ship? Did the captain get off the ship?

Vinal: Yeah, yeah.

James: What was the captain's rank?

Vinal: He was captain.

James: Four-striper?

Vinal: Yeah.

James: Yeah. What was your rank then?

Vinal: Probably—

James: Torpedoman first?

Vinal: Torpedo second.

James: Second, okay.

Vinal: So then we got back—we left through Australia, and we got back to the States. And then I made first at the States.

James: Ah.

Unknown: There must have been more airplanes, because they came back and strafed them in the water, because he tells about getting away from—he said, “We knew enough not to stay in the group.” You know, they say, you know, “Don’t—”

Vinal: Yeah, so you told us and—

Unknown: It’s just—

James: Unless they were keeping sharks away, then it’s a good [unintelligible].

Vinal: They say, if you ever get—if you ever get—that is—get in the water, you don’t—don’t bunch up. Stand it(?) as much as you can.

James: Okay.

Vinal: So I remembered—(laughs)

James: Uh-huh. Did you see any more Japanese planes?

Vinal: Not any more, but—

James: You just saw one Japanese plane?

Unknown: No, see, you—

Vinal: Well, there was—there—

Unknown: Tell us about—they told about coming back and strafing a [unintelligible].

James: Forgot about—

Vinal: There was a—there was a few—

James: Talk about parking—that might happen. Maybe it didn't.

Vinal: I think there was another follow-up plane that hit that—it seems the bullets flash in the water.

Unknown: Uh-huh.

James: When did that happen?

Vinal: That was—that was when we was in the water.

Unknown: After they knew they were strafed.

James: Oh, there was another plane.

Unknown: So there was more than one.

James: So you saw more than one plane, then.

Vinal: Only one plane hit us.

James: How many planes did you see?

Vinal: I didn't see this one that left bullet splashes in the water, because I was busy—

James: Okay, I give up. (laughs)

Unknown: Yeah.

Vinal: I was busy paddling myself towards—to over on the horizon. It's quite a few miles from the—from where we were to the horizon. It takes quite a while to get over there. You didn't look back or nothing.

James: There's nothing to see.

Vinal: I looked back to see that—see a ship go straight down. The bow was straight in the air, stern was already gone, which was straight down like

that. I looked back and saw that we were far enough away, we didn't—we didn't notice any section from—

James: You paddled away from that.

Vinal: Yeah, it was far enough away. That was first of November in '44.

James: November 1st, 1944, that happened?

Vinal: Yeah.

James: And then they took you—and then they—you got back on the destroyer, and then where did you go?

Vinal: Well, we—all of us—all of us that survived got twenty days leave.

James: Did any other ships go down when your—when yours went down?

Vinal: Oh, yes. They knocked off almost five destroyers that same day.

James: Do you remember where you—where you were at that time?

Vinal: We was right in the middle of—

James: I mean, where was your ship stationed? Was it—was it off Alaska, or was it in New Guinea or what?

Vinal: Off of New Guinea. It was all through—we got stuck off of Leyte Harbor, just off of the Philippines.

James: This is the Battle of the Philippine—Battle of the Philippine Sea we're talking about here.

Vinal: Yeah.

James: Right.

Vinal: So we—that's where we—that's where we lost it.

James: Right.

Vinal: Then we got—then they transferred the survivors after we all surfaced. They transferred us to a troop ship, and we got aboard the troop ship, and then they wormed(?) us past the—all—everybody had to disembark and make room for Australian war brides. So I didn't listen to them, I just stayed aboard ship.

- James: What was—
- Unknown: The war brides were coming home, but they had—they took the war brides off and put both men on. And then a lot of confusion—
- Vinal: War brides had priority back to the States over us.
- Unknown: [unintelligible] Australia, see. They were brought back to Australia. And the ship that brought them back was the one now that's in—it's kind of a museum, like—it's in—is it Newport—
- James: Where is he(?)
- Unknown: It's in San Francisco, was it—where did we see that ship that you came back on, that's now—it's kind of like it—but you know, memorial ship that brought them back.
- James: Yeah, but I don't know where it is.
- Unknown: It—
- Vinal: It was the sister ship to the Queen Mary.
- Unknown: It was in frist(?), yeah.
- James: Oh, well then we know where it is.
- Unknown: Yeah.
- James: It's in Long Beach.
- Unknown: Yeah, it's—
- Female voice: That's it. We've been through it.
- Unknown: Yeah, that's one. And he tell—shows places where they were—and been there.
- Vinal: So it took us fourteen days, sailing from that point to reach San Diego.
- Unknown: Vinal—
- Vinal: When we got to San Diego, we were all taken care of. The only clothes I had was what I had on my back. I didn't have any changes or nothing. So someone went to small stores—drew(?) small stores, and then we was

interviewed by a captain aboard(?)—Stateside captain. And he told me, he said, “You go back—” **[break in recording]** “you go back now, and pick up your ticket, because you—we’re going to send you back to the States.” So I said—I don’t know, somewhere louder(?), I said—I can’t remember how this went, but I was supposed to go someplace in the area. Think I might—I think—

James: They didn’t want to put you on another ship.

Vinal: Yeah. So I said, “I’m going to stay here until I—until we go.”

James: Well, you deserved six months off. You go down with your ship, you get six months off.

Unknown: [unintelligible] they had to put him in the hospital for recouping and a—some—going just by a normal kind of a rest place. You know, you then—you know, when you get back from [unintelligible]—all this shock and stuff, they want him to—send him to—

Vinal: They wanted to send me to—that was up at Attu—

Unknown: That was back in the States.

Vinal: They wanted to send me to the hospital—

Unknown: Yeah, to—

Vinal: “But I don’t want to go to the hospital,” I said.

Unknown: And you didn’t want to.

Vinal: I said—

James: Okay.

Unknown: All he could handle a—you know, they had [unintelligible]—

Vinal: I said to—

Unknown: Give you a chance to go there for something.

Vinal: “Thirty days at home will take care of me,” I said, “more than they can over at the hospital.”

James: So after thirty days at home, what did you do?

Vinal: I had to get sent back—I had to return to San Francisco.

James: And then?

Vinal: To the receiving ship in San Francisco.

James: And for what?

Vinal: To pick up our assignment again.

James: And what was your next assignment?

Vinal: I didn't have a choice. They assigned me to another destroyer.

James: Ah, a second destroyer—a second ship. What was the name of that ship?

Vinal: I didn't even go aboard that ship.

James: Oh.

Vinal: It was kind of like a receiving ship.

James: Oh, that kind.

Vinal: And until then, I—

James: Well, then you stayed in San Francisco until you got out of service?

Vinal: No, I got—I got reassigned to Pearl Harbor—Barbers Point.

James: Been there.

Vinal: It's a naval station off Pearl Harbor. I got assigned there. I must have stayed there about six to eight months.

James: What was your duty there?

Vinal: Overhaul torpedoes. They had exercise torpedoes that they retrieved, that we had to take the engine apart, clean them up good, put them back together.

James: So you were there until you were discharged?

Vinal: Yeah. So I was there for six to eight months, I guess. And we'd get—we'd get liberty, but we didn't have anything really even(?) close to where we had—so I would—I got—

James: They certainly gave you new clothes—a new uniform.

Vinal: Yeah. So I one day took to Pearl Harbor, and I didn't like—didn't like it. I didn't like walking the streets—with dungarees.

James: Yeah.

Vinal: So I went back—went back to Barbers Point.

Unknown: Can we stop for just a little bit, so this man lays down?

[Break in Interview]

James: Okay, here we go again. Now, when you were returning home from the far—from the South Pacific, you got aboard a ship that was supposed to carry some war brides, and you—they took them off and put you guys on. Is that the way it happened?

Vinal: Yeah. Well, we was—I went back on another destroyer. I went back to the South Seas on another destroyer.

James: No, when you were going back to the United States, you were on a troop ship.

Vinal: Yeah, yeah.

James: But there were some Australian war brides that you kicked off the ship. What about that?

Vinal: They left—they had—they had to leave at—to the city right north of Sydney, Australia—what was the name of the—

James: Sydney?

Vinal: No, it was—

James: Melbourne?

Vinal: Wasn't Sydney.

James: Oh. Melbourne?

Vinal: I don't remember what the name of the city was.

James: Oh.

Vinal: They had to leave there. And you should hear a lot of the bitching.

Unknown: Brisbane, wasn't it?

James: Brisbane? Was it Brisbane, Australia?

Vinal: Yeah.

James: I don't know.

Vinal: Brisbane.

James: Okay.

Unknown: I thought so. [unintelligible]

Vinal: So then—

James: How did they talk those women off the ship?

Vinal: How did they get—I don't think—

James: Right.

Vinal: Ordered them off.

James: I know, but I would think they'd be screaming.

Vinal: They were screaming, crying.

James: Crying?

Vinal: Some was even married to an Australian sailor.

Unknown: Yes, they were not impressed(?).

Vinal: There's a lot of fussing going around, but then, after we left the island, got out to sea, they quieted down.

Unknown: They didn't get on.

Vinal: What else could they do?

James: See, I'm confused now—now then we got really tied up here.

Unknown: Yeah.

James: Okay. When you got back out, did you ever join any veterans groups?

Vinal: Any what?

James: Veterans organizations?

Vinal: The first veterans organization I think I joined was the—was the American Legion.

James: American Legion, you joined that?

Vinal: Yeah.

James: Did you—

Vinal: And then, after a while, I joined the VFW.

James: The VFW.

Vinal: Yeah, and I still—I still have membership in both of them.

James: I see. Uh-huh. Did you use the G.I. Bill? You take advantage of that G.I. Bill? You go to school?

Vinal: I don't think so.

Unknown: Yes, you did.

Vinal: Did I?

Unknown: Yes, you did.

James: Where did he go to school?

Unknown: He went to some short courses.

James: Where?

Unknown: He took short courses in Monroe on—up in Monroe—in Monroe.

James: He took some courses in school down in Monroe?

Unknown: He went to—

Vinal: Yes, I did. I kind of forgot about that.

Unknown: Stevens Point Farming State(?)—and then took some short courses that—

James: You went back to work on the farm when you got out of the service?

Vinal: Yeah.

James: That was quite different than being on the ocean, wasn't it?

Vinal: Very much different.

James: (laughs)

Vinal: It's—I—one thing only—all the trouble we ran into at sea, it never scared me. That's—it's hard.

James: Scared me, just talking to you.

Vinal: Huh?

James: It scares me, just talking to you.

Vinal: (laughs)

James: That sounds scary to me.

Vinal: You know, it's—I never—

James: Looking at an airplane pilot's eyes is—that's pretty close.

Vinal: I never—I never got scared.

James: (laughs)

Vinal: Because—

James: Okay—

Vinal: That was—

[End of Tape One, Side Two]

Vinal: That was my home. The destroyer was my home.

James: Right.

Vinal: And when she went down, I said—I said, “There she goes.”

James: Did the boys all separate after they came back to the United States? You never saw any of them again?

Vinal: Yeah, first time I saw them was at our first reunion.

James: You remember how many from that ship came to that first reunion?

Vinal: Was quite a few. They—there were getting—

James: You know, twenty or thirty or—

Vinal: I would—fifty.

James: Fifty out of 300, that’s pretty good. Yeah.

Vinal: But each year, it’s—the number’s shrinking. Course—

James: Sure (laughs).

Vinal: But of course, now we count the wives of the sailors, too, now.

James: Sure.

Vinal: So that makes it different. I didn’t go—the first reunion we went to was New Orleans. And the second reunion was—don’t remember—

Unknown: We went to San Francisco—or we went to Bremerton.

Vinal: Went to Bremerton, and we went to Newport, Rhode Island. We went to—

James: That’s nice. Well, you had a terrific experience. You’re lucky to have survived that.

Vinal: I was lucky. I was born under a lucky star. I had a lot of chances I could have cashed in, but I survived. I’m thankful for that.

James: Exactly. Okay, all right.

Vinal: So I said I would—I would give anything for the experience I had. But I wouldn’t want to go through it again.

James: That’s right.

Unknown: Now, what—was this like—

[End of interview]