

Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
Dorwin Lamkin
Corpsman, Navy, World War II.

1995

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Lamkin, Dorwin (b. 1922). Oral History Interview, 1995.

User Copy: 2 sound cassettes (ca. 80 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 80 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Transcript: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

Abstract:

Dorwin Lamkin, a Hudson, Wisconsin native and Pearl Harbor survivor, discusses his military service as a Navy medical corpsman during World War II. Lamkin comments on the enlistment process and basic training at Great Lakes Naval Training Station (Illinois). He describes the Navy's training attempts to prepare future seaman for cramped ship life including sleeping in hammocks. He tells, humorously, of hearing one man roll out of his hammock, some eight feet from ground, and land, "plop." Assigned to the USS Nevada, Lamkin defines the ship as huge, an old-timer, with thirteen hundred people aboard. First assigned as a fire control man, Lamkin tells of his transfer to the hospital corps prior to the ship's spring 1941 arrival at Pearl Harbor. He characterizes his time spent at Pearl Harbor before the attack with firing at airplane-towed targets, going out to sea, and various other training exercises. Lamkin tells of sleeping late and hearing noises he attributed to normal activities until a desk messenger stuck his head through the hatch and said, "The Japs are attacking." Remembering only his shoes, Lamkin rushed to his battle station, the after dressing station, wearing his skivvies. Lamkin describes the noises he heard and receiving wounded sailors. The ship was hit; blowing a hole into the port bow about "the size of a house." Lamkin tells of oily water coming into his station that consisted of himself, a doctor, and five wounded. A shoulder harness was lowered into the sickbay and one-by-one all seven were brought up on deck before the ship sunk. Due to chaos and confusion, Lamkin claims the ships were firing at American planes and at Honolulu itself. Remembering the four and a half weeks it took to pump out the Nevada and retrieve personal effects, Lamkin relates the subsequent history of the Nevada, claiming it is the greatest story of ship reconstruction. After witnessing the devastation at Pearl Harbor and listening to the sailors stuck in the Oklahoma pounding on the hull that first night, Lamkin feared the Navy would not recover. Transferred to the USS San Francisco, Lamkin describes it as a semi-heavy weight; one of many that filled a tremendous gap in the war effort. The San Francisco was involved in every major battle in the Pacific after 1942 and Lamkin feels that they all blended together in his mind consisting of lying off a mile or two and directing gunfire into the beach to make a way for the Marines to land. However, the Battle of Coral Sea stands out as the ship was caught in a night action maneuver and suffered devastating casualties including the death of flag officer, Admiral Daniel Scott. Lamkin remembers sailing thirteen months without touching shore, brief stops at a sandy atoll with a softball and a couple of cans of warm beer, a well-stocked ship library, gambling, making "gedunk"(ice cream out of dried milk), and his routine corpsman duties involving skin problems and food handler inspections. Lamkin was selected for the V-12 program in 1944 and found himself a student about to enter medical school at the University of Kansas when the war ended.

He recalls his assignment to a fleet hospital lab in the Philippines for about three weeks until his time was up. Following his discharge in 1946, Lamkin finished his degree at the University of Kansas while on the G.I. Bill which he describes as “opening a whole new economic sphere” as his family was “railroad people.” Concerning the use of the atomic bomb, Lamkin says, “Harry Truman should have been raised to sainthood” as he saved their lives.

Biographical Sketch:

Dorwin Lamkin was born in Hudson, Wisconsin in 1922. He served in the Navy from 1940 to 1946 in the Pacific Theater. After the war he attended and graduated from Kansas University. Lamkin lives in Shawnee Mission, Kansas.

Interviewed by Mark Van Ells, 1995
Transcribed by Karen M. Emery, WDVA staff, 1998
Transcription edited by T.J. Weinaug, 2008.

Interview

Mark: Okay. Today's date is September 21, 1995. This is Mark Van Ells, Archivist, Wisconsin Veterans Museum doing an oral history interview this morning with Mr. Dorwin Lamkin, originally from Hudson, Wisconsin, now a resident of Mission, Kansas, a veteran of the U.S. Navy in World War II. Good morning and thanks for agreeing to do an interview.

Lamkin: I'm happy to do it.

Mark: I appreciate it. I suppose we should start at the beginning as they say and have you tell me a little bit about where you were born and raised and what you were doing prior to your entry into the Navy in 1940.

Lamkin: Okay. Like a lot of kids in, I was born in 1922 in Hudson, Wisconsin. Hudson is right on the banks of the St. Croix River, just a stone-throw from Minnesota. I grew up in a small town and, oh, the population was about 1600 people, predominately a Scandinavian community. It was kind of a, it was mixed, it was a railroad town. I went to high school there, graduated in June of 1940. I had the intention of going on to school and going directly to school didn't seem particularly feasible at the time and the Navy, I got some literature saying that if you went in the Navy and went aboard ship for a year, you could sit for an examination for the Naval Academy and that prompted me to enlist.

Mark: I see. Now, you know, 1940 there was already, World War II had begun in Europe.

Lamkin: Yes.

Mark: Did you think when you decided to enlist that you might end up in a war somewhere?

Lamkin: No, no. Furthest thing from my mind.

Mark: I see. So, if you would describe your entry into the military. You had to go to a recruiter somewhere and you had to go off and get inducted, off to basic training. If you would, just walk me through those steps.

Lamkin: Yeah. I went to St. Paul. Went to the post office building in St. Paul—now that's 18 miles from Hudson—and there was examined by a chief boatswains mate who was on recruiting duty and by a young doctor who they had on a contract for examination and he was must exhaustive. They were being very, very critical about who they would let in. I, being of Norwegian heritage, I had some parts of my body that were thicker than others and he didn't know

whether the thickened panicula in my leg was going to exclude me or not. For awhile I had some panic about that but in any event it turns out he was being super cautious. I went from, I took an examination, I took a general qualification, GCT I believe they call it, and the boatswain mate told me to do as well on this as I could and thank God I did because that score on that followed me my entire career in the Navy and made a lot of things possible that wouldn't have been otherwise. I went from St. Paul, a few days later I went home and they called me and they said, "Come over. We've got a ticket for you." I went on a train and went to Great Lakes Naval Training Station. I'm 18 years old, 19 years old, 18, and the furthest away from home I'd ever been was 40 miles. So going to Chicago and Great Lakes Naval Training Station I stood around with my mouth open wondering about a whole lot of things I was seeing. I wouldn't say that I was a naive country boy just off the grass, but I sure was not a world traveler.

Mark: Yeah. You were amazed at some of the other enlistees? Or did you get into town? What were some of the things that amazed you?

Lamkin: I was amazed at the size of it.

Mark: Of Chicago.

Lamkin: And the size of Great Lakes Naval Training Station.

Mark: I see.

Lamkin: And the size and the number of people there, and the organization, and the mess hall, and—I was just flabbergasted by it all.

Mark: Do you think you were alone in that? Do you think there were others?

Lamkin: Oh, no. Everybody I ran into, oh, there were some, pardon the choice of words, there were some smart asses from New Jersey and so forth that nothing in the world was a surprise to them, but for the most part these recruits were from Illinois and Wisconsin and Minnesota and Michigan. They were all pretty much in awe.

Mark: I went to basic training myself although it was 40 years later. So I have some distinct recollections of that and I want to go into some of the training that you did. One of the things I remember was a lot of four-letter words and all that sort of screaming and yelling. Was that your experience? Sort of military discipline.

Lamkin: No. There wasn't a lot of screaming and yelling. As a matter of fact, it was pretty quiet and orderly. We had an Irish chief boatswain mate as a company commander and he was required to take his meals with us to be sure that we

were savages being trained to have some degree of civility. I remember him saying that we had to learn to live together in pretty crowded quarters because that's the way the Navy was. So they spent some time, but I was appalled by the language of some of the people because it hadn't been my real exposure. But as far as general noise, no it wasn't like what I've come to understand is the Marine training or, no.

Mark: And what sort of training did you do? How long did it last? What did it consist of in terms of classroom and marching?

Lamkin: We were there for two months and it was military drill, classes on Naval form, code, semaphores, rules of the road, Naval discipline, rocks and shoals they called it, what misdeeds were punishable by so what and so forth; a general indoctrination. We marched quite a bit and tied some knots and slept in hammocks. I remember, one of the predominant memories I have is that in that quiet dormitory at night, 2:00, 3:00 in the morning you'd hear plop! Some guy fell out of a hammock that was tied eight feet off the ground. It seems funny now but I'm sure, it took a little while for him to learn how to sleep in that hammock, you know. It wasn't a double-wide bed.

Mark: Did you have any weapons training at all? Did you learn how to fire a gun? Or did you know how to already?

Lamkin: No, no. We didn't have any rifle, we carried rifles that were those old World War I rifles I guess.

Mark: The old Springfields?

Lamkin: Yeah. But as far as going to a firing range and firing, no, we didn't do that.

Mark: And so this lasted two months, you said?

Lamkin: Yes, two months.

Mark: And where'd you go from there?

Lamkin: Well, when I got out of Naval training, I went to a battleship in Seattle, Washington.

Mark: Which one was that?

Lamkin: The USS Nevada, BB-36.

Mark: And what did you think of the ship?

Lamkin: Oh, God.

Mark: I mean, were you bugged by this as well?

Lamkin: Oh, my God. The Nevada was in dry-dock being fitted, or the hull was scraped or being something, so the first shot I got of the Nevada was in dry-dock where you could see the ship all the way down to the keel. And, you know, there's more ship under water than there is above water and when you figure that the masts on that thing were 85 feet tall, it was absolutely humongous. I remember that sight to this day. When I was assigned to a division, a deck division, and the next day they told me that I was going to go over the side and scrape the hull, I had visions of myself falling 400 feet to the bottom of that.

Mark: Now, this is not an Iowa class battleship.

Lamkin: Uh-uh. This is an old-timer. This goes back to ...

Mark: This is the Teddy Roosevelt-type of battleship.

Lamkin: Right, right. This is one that was, oh, cripes ...

Mark: I forget myself. I can't think of the name. I know there's a particular class of battleship that is. I just can't think of it.

Lamkin: The Oklahoma, the California, the Tennessee, the West Virginia, Pennsylvania—these were all this type of tripod mast, or cage mast, battleships that go back to, they were kept pretty much updated but I think they predated World War I.

Mark: Yeah. After you got with the ship, how long was it until you got out to sea and resumed your general duties? Did you stay in Seattle long?

Lamkin: No. I got there in January and they finished up what they were doing and we went to sea in February. February we went down, the Nevada's home port was Long Beach, California, and we went to Long Beach and we were there for three or four weeks and then we departed for Hawaii—for Oahu, for Pearl Harbor. I don't remember that, I think we were about eight, nine days en route because there were training exercises and maneuvers that we went through on the way.

Mark: Now, this ship has how many people on it?

Lamkin: Thirteen hundred.

Mark: Thirteen hundred people.

Lamkin: Thirteen hundred people. And that had been, it originally was fitted out for 1100 and now they're starting to increase the numbers of aboard ship thinking that possibly there's going to be some problems.

Mark: And did you get a sense of, of the people on the ship, did you get a sense of what sort of backgrounds they came from?

Lamkin: Yes. It was like everybody you met seemed to be something different. I met Southerners for the very first time. People from Arkansas, and Mississippi, Texas, Alabama, Georgia and I was intrigued by these people 'cause I had never been, my exposure to know anybody that came from that part of the country. I was surprised at the number of professional Navy people that were from the South. That is, people who had 12, 15 years in the service and had made a career out of it.

Mark: Yeah. And these people of these different backgrounds, did they get along?

Lamkin: Uh hum, uh hum.

Mark: Intercultural problems or anything?

Lamkin: Uh-uh.

Mark: Everything just sort of seemed to flow smoothly.

Lamkin: You know, they had 40 or 50 people sleeping in a space about the size of possibly of your office. Fifteen deep and 20 wide. It's pretty important that people get along together. There were several obstreperous characters but generally they were handled by the boatswains mates; they were the disciplinarians comparable to a sergeant in the Army I guess. There was remarkably little conflict but almost all of these people were 19, 18, 19, 20 years old so remarkably pliable.

Mark: Yeah. Now, on this ship, where was your duty station exactly?

Lamkin: Well, when I first went aboard I was assigned to the 5th Division which is a deck division. Deck division was responsible for firing the starboard side of the secondary battery. These are guns, 5 inch, 51 secondary armament. Because of by GTC score I was assigned as a fire control man and stand up on top of the cage mast to run a dummy gun director. That is, you know, every foot you go up the mast you can see further to the horizon and this was a vantage point. I was assigned that because I could figure out the trigonometry of the angles involved. I drilled in that responsibility for awhile. I suddenly decided that the deck force was not particularly my, where I wanted as a career.

Mark: Why was that?

Lamkin: Well, I'd always had an inkling to get involved in medical matters so I went down and talked to Dr. Goodbody, the senior medical officer, and told him that I would like to transfer from the deck division into the hospital corps if he'd have me. They decided that my attitude was alright and I put in for a transfer and division officer okayed it and I went, then I became a member of the H Division as they called, the Hospital Corps.

Mark: Hospital Division. Now, was this before Pearl Harbor?

Lamkin: Yeah, yeah. As a matter of fact, this may have been in July, August of '41, prior to Pearl Harbor.

Mark: Now, you went to Hawaii in the spring of '41. And did you stay there through the whole year? Or did you go out to sea?

Lamkin: Yeah, yeah. We went out to sea. We went particularly out to Lahaina Roads which was where the Naval gunnery range was and we fired at airplane-towed targets with the aircraft battery on the top deck and then we fired at rafts with targets with the secondary battery. They had training exercises of various natures and then a couple of times while at sea we had, we all went to our battle stations because they had picked up some echoes or some strange sounds in the adjacent waters.

Mark: And this, apparently at least, was not a drill.

Lamkin: Apparently not. No. The guy who was my division officer on the Nevada is now, lives here in Mission, Kansas, the same as I do, and we're good friends because we're both Pearl Harbor survivors. But it was a curious re-meeting.

Mark: It is a small world sometimes isn't it.

Lamkin: Yeah, really.

Mark: Gee, I just had a question. I lost it. Oh, yeah, I remember what it was now. As you're training, as you get these sort of drills and these alerts, did you start to realize that perhaps you might end up in a war?

Lamkin: Yes. By now, with the frequency of the drills, the frequency of sort of a feeling of, well, like we went to battle stations when we were out firing off Lahaina and there was a report of a submarine. Who's submarine? Well, the Japs. Well, what the hell would the Japs be doing here? And then it gradually was, gradually there was a sort of a background hum that was building then. Something's going on.

Mark: So, the actual attack on Pearl Harbor, I suppose we're at that point right now.

Lamkin: Yes.

Mark: Why don't you tell me a little bit about where you were in the days before the attack. Leading up to the actual attack.

Lamkin: In the time prior to the attack, I had, my duty station was in the sickbay. That was a sort of a duty thing where you worked from 8:00 in the morning until 5:00 at night and then we rotated with other people as to whether you had a watch from say 8:00 to midnight, or midnight to 4:00 in the morning. So that rotated on a regular basis. We were all divided up into four watches. Mostly the war consisted of taking care of the day-to-day ills and symptoms of a crew of 1300 men. And mostly it wasn't severe because these were young, healthy kids. We had a guy aboard ship that was a proctologist by profession.

Mark: He was the ship's doctor?

Lamkin: Yeah. And if anybody came in with hemorrhoids or pilonidal cysts or anything in that area, you knew Dr. Zobell was going to keep his hand in so we'd get a lot, we did a lot of rectal surgery with hemorrhoids and so forth. But it was, you know, all well intentioned. The morning that the attack occurred, I'd been up the night before, I had the watch, and some signal man came back aboard about 2:30 or 3:00 with a big gash in his head. He'd got in an argument with a Marine over a girl of questionable character in Honolulu so we were up suturing this guy's head up about 3:30 in the morning. So I went back to my "sack" as they called it and as a consequence I had late bunk, I didn't have to be up at 7:00 or 6:30. I slept in. And I heard this noise. We were in port to have our annual material inspections of the voids, that is the blister vents on the outside of the ship were open for inspection and I thought it was ship fitters working on Sunday morning. So I muttered and incredibly foul epithet and just about that time some kid, messenger of the deck, stuck his head through the hatch and said, "The Japs are attacking." The pharmacists mate closest to the door through a pillow or something at him and said, "Get the hell out of here. Leave us alone." About that time the general quarters alarm went on—and it's an ominous, ominous bell. It must be the same sound that the gates of hell have 'cause it goes bong!, bong!, bong! Well then we knew it was—about this time the crump, crump, crump of the bomb—so I headed for my battle station which was on the after part of the ship, the chief's quarters. My dressing station, my battle station was with the senior medical officer in what they call the after battle dressing station. So I headed back there. I didn't run but I passed a couple of guys that were. All I remembered to take was my shoes. I got back there. I was standing around in my skivvies and Dr. Goodbody said, "You're going to have to get some kind of clothes on." so I took some clothes out of a locker that was open. And, you know, in the Navy that's absolutely forbidden. You never, ever go in anybody

else's locker. But I did. Then we started having all sorts of problems. We received four or five wounded sailors from topside in the battle dressing station. I could hear the main drive, I could hear the shaft alley of our turbines going whomp, whomp, whomp, whomp, whomp, whomp ... and I couldn't imagine what the hell we were doing. Well, during this time they had diverted auxiliary steam into the main turbines and the chief boatswain had left the hawser attached to the rear deck at back of the bow of the Nevada out in the stream and now he flew her into lunge and we're heading down the channel on auxiliary steam power. That's what I was hearing, that's what we were hearing. As we headed down the channel, of course, we wanted to get to sea to maneuver. That was their intention. To get to their normal element and the minute we got out in the channel they concentrated all of the Japanese aircraft on us because they would have loved to have sunk us right in the channel. We took a big aerial torpedo in the port bow and it blew a hole in the port bow about the size of a house and we started taking water, oily water and so forth. Remember our voids are open, we have a very limited water-tight integrity. Water started to flow into the after battle dressing station where I was and Dr. Goodbody said, "We've got to get out of here." and we couldn't get the hatch open through the armor deck. There were seven or eight of us in that area, five wounded and two medical personnel, and we were certain that this was the end. I remember saying to Dr. Goodbody, "Well, I've enjoyed working with you." and he said, "Me too." That was the extent of our surrender to the circumstances. They got, there was a manhole through the armor deck—we were beneath the armor deck. They got this manhole finally open and they had a rig, a shoulder harness sort of thing that they lowered down in the sickbay and we got the wounded patients out and we got out ourselves. Then when this, after this then I went up on the bow, the front end of the ship to take care of the wounded personnel. When we started to sink by the bow the captain of the harbor saw our condition and he sent four harbor tugs over to push us and they pushed us over on the starboard side of the harbor, going out, and there we sank. We sank in what they call a "Murphy reef." It's sort of a, it's a coral atoll that's been eroded by wave action and the depth of that reef was just about the same depth as our main deck so at high tide we were just barely out of the water. Then there was all sort of confusion and chaos and we were firing at our own planes and our secondary battery, five inch, were firing guns at airplanes. Bob Rowlands, my old division officer and I have laughed about this 100 times. They said that the Japs bombed Honolulu. Bullshit; that was our armor piercing shells out there, on the secondary battery that was bombing downtown Honolulu as we were shooting armor-piercing shells out of those five inchers. Whatever. There was a lot of confusion. We, particularly as night started to fall. Everybody was absolutely certain that these slant-eyed bastards would invade and everybody was on the razor edge in anticipation. But they didn't.

Mark: Yeah. The actual attack lasted how long in recollection? Or could you tell?

Lamkin: Fifty-five to, I don't know. It's like saying, "When did the pain quit?" I don't know. I've read it was 11:30 or 12:00 or something like that. But we were all in a state of mindless confusion for, oh, I think somebody brought some food aboard the ship about 6:30 or 7:00 and realized we were hungry.

Mark: So, the aftermath. How did you get reorganized, re-outfitted?

Lamkin: We were close enough to the beach. As a matter of fact, we were within, oh, I'll say 50 feet of the beach so we're sitting in there in the water and the fires are out. The deck force built a gangway over to the beach. So we, the Marine detachment had tents and they moved over there in this cane field and we moved a hospital tent over there so the sickbay was over there. And they used that cane field as their, to satisfy their sanitary needs. And anybody who went in the cane field was supposed to clap their hands when they came out and shout something or other. "Don't shoot. I'm not a Jap." or something. But somebody that went into the cane field after dark really had to go. It was nothing to take ... well, so then they fabricated a patch, like a great big Band-Aid, they fabricated a patch and floated it over and attached it to the bow of the Nevada and then they started pumping her out. And then everybody who could put their hand in a bucket got a rag and cleaner and as the ship got pumped out we followed in down cleaning up oil and crap and throwing out all of our personal effects that had been submerged. It takes us about, this took about four-and-a-half weeks.

Mark: Yeah, I'll bet it did. Now, was that ship ever sea-worthy again?

Lamkin: Yes. My gosh, yes. The greatest story of ship reconstruction—they towed that Nevada back to the States. They had about 200, 300 people aboard—everybody else got sent to different places—but they towed her back to the States, they put her in dry dock up in Bremerton and they completely rebuilt that ship, they worked night and day, seven days a week, and in nine months that ship—completely refitted—went to sea to fire shots at the invasion of the Aleutian Islands. And you know, of course, Nevada's role in Normandy.

Mark: No, I'm afraid I don't.

Lamkin: Oh, my gosh.

Mark: I'm an Air Force guy.

Lamkin: Oh, I see. Okay. Well, that ship went back, my old deck officer, who was a gunnery officer, got recalled to the ship. They sailed through the canal zone and they went over and they anchored off of Omaha Beach and they would train those 14 inch main battery guns, they trained them all to starboard and they'd march those shells, those 1300 to 1800 pound shells, they'd march them up the beach and made an alley for that invasion. And the force of that

broadside would make that huge ship jump 500—500 that sounds too—well, make it jump so sideways in the water, they'd have to readjust the sights.

Mark: No, I didn't know that. That's interesting.

Lamkin: Yeah, it had a glorious climax and then eventually they took it down to, oh, where did they have the A-bomb test down in ...

Mark: Bikini?

Lamkin: Yeah, Bikini. Sits on the bottom of Bikini now.

Mark: Interesting. I'm surprised I haven't ever heard that before. Now, you were transferred to another ship then? You didn't stay with the Nevada.

Lamkin: Yeah, yeah. They sent me back to the States, went to corps school, and then I went and got some lab training, then I went aboard the San Francisco.

Mark: What kind of ship was that?

Lamkin: It's a heavy cruiser. When all the battleships got put out of commission then the duties of protection and bombardment fell from the battleships onto the heavy cruiser. That's the next ...

Mark: Next level down?

Lamkin: Yeah. Next level of not heavy-weights but not welter-weights either, but semi-heavy-weight. So they filled a tremendous gap. And the history of the cruisers in World War II, the Naval history, is really something because they were involved in so many difference places. You know about the Indianapolis I suppose.

Mark: Yeah.

Lamkin: And the Chicago, and all of the, my God, you know when I went aboard the San Francisco and we got back out in the Pacific we sailed one time for 13 months without touching shore. Thirteen months. You know, that's a long time.

Mark: I can imagine.

Lamkin: We refueled at sea, we re-provisioned at sea and surprisingly there wasn't much pissing and moaning about it because we had a chaplain, Dean Francis Hare, who kept the crew informed about what was going on and the urgency of us being out there, that we weren't just there to make the captain turn into admiral. Every once in awhile they'd put us ashore at some sandy atoll and

they'd give us a softball and a couple cans of warm beer and they called that "rest and recreation."

Mark: I suppose it's dry land though.

Lamkin: Yeah. Sandy beaches that had, if they had a bay that you could drop anchor in and swing on the hook for awhile and lay sufficiently out of the sea lanes that were dangerous at all. One day one of the Marines that had been put ashore was brought back in a semi-comatose condition and Dr. Goodbody said to me, "Dorwin," he said, "smell that Marine will you?" I smelled him and he said, "What do you think?" I said, "He's drunk, doctor." He said, "How the hell can he get drunk on two cans of beer?" Well, the Marines had pooled all their two cans of beer, everybody put a buck in the pot and they drew a number and the guy that drew the lucky number got 6, 8, 10, 12, 15 cans of beer, whichever was in the pot; enough to make one of them dead drunk. They said, well, two beers isn't worth shooting at. Dr. Goodbody thought that this ought to be entered in the log that this was a unique accomplishment.

Mark: A great story anyway. So, when you got hooked up with the San Francisco, that was on the west coast somewhere I would imagine.

Lamkin: In San Francisco.

Mark: In San Francisco. Well, what do you know.

Lamkin: Yeah. It had been up in Vallejo, it had been up at Mare Island at Vallejo in the Navy yard up there.

Mark: And where'd you go and what did you do after that?

Lamkin: Well, we went ...

Mark: You went to the Aleutians if I'm not mistaken.

Lamkin: Yes. We went to, well, first off we went to, oh, Truk, Kwajalein, Iwo Jima, Coral Sea, Okinawa, Attu, Kiska, Adak. I would say that the San Francisco, fulfilling it's role as heavy-weight on these invasions, was represented in every major battle in the Pacific after 1942.

Mark: Yeah, it sounds like it. If you would, describe what the ship did in combat, exactly, and were there any campaigns in your mind that stick out, or do they all kind of blend together?

Lamkin: Well, with the exception of the night action in Coral Sea, they all pretty much blend together because we're fulfilling the role of battleships now, we are laying off a mile or two and directing gunfire into the beach to make the way

for Marines who are going to land or are going to invade this piece of coral property. In the Coral Sea we got involved in a night action with Japanese forces and we were attempting to execute a classic maneuver called "crossing the T" and we got caught on the back side of it and we suffered the same magnitude of casualties that we had on the Nevada on Pearl Harbor on December 7.

Mark: Was this naval gunfire or was it aerial?

Lamkin: Naval gunfire.

Mark: Naval gunfire.

Lamkin: Yeah, from battleships and cruisers. The Akagi, the names of the Japanese ships leave me. We had, the flag, the admiral, Admiral Daniel Scott was aboard the, he was the flag officer, and he was aboard the San Francisco and he was killed in that night action. That was so much confusion that my memories of it are very inaccurate. I am very muddled.

Mark: Yeah. So, after the Coral Sea you had to go get patched up again I would imagine.

Lamkin: Yes.

Mark: Did you have to go back to Hawaii?

Lamkin: Yes. Went back to Pearl and they put her in dry dock. Most of the damage was to the super structure. We'd never been in danger of sinking. Most of the harm that had been done could have been repaired. And our armament was remarkably good shape. It was the personnel who, see the cruiser was not as heavily armored topside as the battleship was.

Mark: Yeah. And so it's more vulnerable too.

Lamkin: Yes. Personnel are more vulnerable.

Mark: Yeah. And so as you mentioned the other campaigns sort of all blend together, huh?

Lamkin: Yeah. I can sit down and say that, well, yeah, we were at Kwajalein, we were at Iwo, we were at Truk, we participated. But rather than be an exchange of naval gunfire, these campaigns are all designed to pave the way for Rangers and Marines and Army people that are going to invade by ground.

Mark: Right. I was going to ask if you got any fire from on shore.

- Lamkin: Yeah. But usually it was short, ineffective, and if they thought there was any danger to our guns, they didn't say our people but they said our guns, why they moved further out to get outside the range because our primary assignment was to prepare a beach, disarm a beach or to neutralize certain positions.
- Mark: Uh huh. So, in terms of casualties in your work as a medic or corpsman, these other campaigns didn't come near the sort of scope of Pearl Harbor and Coral Sea.
- Lamkin: No. Coral Sea was the same magnitude but you've probably heard of "iron bottom sound" but the rest of the adventures, the rest of the circumstances were, well, I wouldn't say ho-hum but they were, they didn't cause any of the problems we had at Pearl or at the Coral Sea.
- Mark: Yeah. So, in your day-to-day duties during '43, '44, and into '45, what sort of things were you doing? Just basic shipboard medical care?
- Lamkin: Yeah. We were in the tropical, well, you know near the equator or in the tropical area and the skin problems that we had among sailors was—we were kept busy doing Dobell solution and Burrows solution and skin soaks and silver nitrate irrigations and taking care of the routine problems. And we had to inspect food handlers on a regular basis. And also there was spare time.
- Mark: Yeah. And what did you do during that?
- Lamkin: I read. I've been a reader all my life and we had a pretty good library on the San Francisco and I believe I read that sucker from A-Z. We had textbooks that I didn't do much reading but ... some people did handicraft, some people played cards, there wasn't a lot of gambling going on because there wasn't a lot of cash. They didn't have paydays when we were at sea 'cause there was
- Mark: Yeah, where are you going to spend it?
- Lamkin: Yeah, you know. Cigarettes, a flat 50 of cigarettes was a dime. Other than that. They had a "gedunk" stand they called it.
- Mark: What's that?
- Lamkin: Uh, soda. They made ice cream out of "clem"—"clem" is dried milk—and I discovered later that "clem" was named after Clem, Iowa where they developed it. But they made ice cream out of dry milk solids and in the Navy that was called the gedunk. You couldn't spend a lot of money at the gedunk stand so they didn't pay. And when they did pay they paid in even money. They paid in \$2 bills. They never kept any \$10s, or \$20s, or \$50s. The paymaster just kept \$2 bills.

Mark: Oh. That's an awful long time to be at sea.

Lamkin: Yes, it is.

Mark: Were there discipline problems or psychological or emotional problems or anything like that?

Lamkin: Remarkably few.

Mark: Remarkably few, yeah.

Lamkin: Remarkably few.

Mark: Like some guys getting in fights, something like that.

Lamkin: Yeah, there would be that. But you know that that was usually dealt with at the division level and didn't surface as something that was obvious ship-wise.

Mark: So as a medical corpsman you didn't see that sort of thing.

Lamkin: Oh, people would show up every once in awhile they "fell down the ladder."

Mark: Quote, unquote?

Lamkin: Yeah, right. And almost always the bruises that they had were about the head and neck, you know. Dr. Goodbody said a time or two, he said, "It's always funny how they fall down on their head. They never fall on their back or their rear or on the leg. It's always on the head." But this never got to a point where it was a matter of any

Mark: Major concern.

Lamkin: major concern, no. Again, now, we're talking about 18, 19 year old, 20 year old kids, highly motivated, aware of the danger, wanting to, you know, these are all, well ...

Mark: It was purposeful.

Lamkin: Yeah, right. This wasn't just drills. They were doing what they were supposed to be doing.

Mark: Now, you mentioned getting off at some atoll and having a couple of beers. Did you get to go to any other more exotic or larger

Lamkin: Yeah, we went to some exotic places. Went to New Zealand.

Mark: How much time did you get to spend there?

Lamkin: Well, we were there a total of three weeks.

Mark: That's a good vacation.

Lamkin: Yeah, it was. Half the ship got off one week and half got off the next week and then the last part of it was, that was marvelous. Everybody just the New Zealanders welcomed us with open arms. Their men were all off fighting in ANZAC (Australia and New Zealand Army Corps) corps and we were regarded as, I suppose you'd say, heroes. And the women were very warm and they didn't have a lot of hang-ups that Midwestern Lutheran girls did. And they had different ways, you know. I remember going to their equivalent of a USO and the girl I was dancing with told me to "go jazz her sister; she was all knocked up" and to me, well, a Midwestern kid, that meant something entirely different. What she meant was "I'm tired. Go dance with my sister."

Mark: I see.

Lamkin: I had, but she invited me to their home. Her father was the director of the zoo and museum in Auckland and I had dinner in their home and I have warm memories of that.

Mark: Yeah, it sounds nice. Now, as far as the Navy, now you were in before Pearl Harbor and then, of course, you served long after that. I'm wondering if you noticed any sort of changes in the Navy as the war effort increased. The Navy must have gotten larger, it must have gotten a new influx of people. Did it change at all? Or did stay pretty much the same as you had known it before Pearl Harbor?

Lamkin: Well, I have to reflect back on it because I was involved in that and, you know, sometimes when you're in the bathtub it's hard to tell how deep the water is. As I've reflected and as we, being a member of the Pearl Harbor Association, we get back together on a regular basis. We have dinner every 60 days here locally. And we talk about some of these things and we we've said many times how surprised we were by the orderly way in which this expansion was handled. There were, it was controlled in part by the fact that there were, they didn't have 1000 ships available tomorrow. The ships that they were going to use came in piecemeal and, therefore, the filling of them and the training of them happened at a pretty gradual rate.

Mark: Right.

Lamkin: But there was, rarely do you hear any complaints about quality of it diminishing. Sometimes the food situation got a little grim. We used to joke

about it. All the flour we had got nits in it, flour nits. And people who just came aboard ship, they wouldn't eat it. People that had been there a short time would pick the nits out. People who had been there a long time just never paid any attention to it, regarded it as extra protein.

Mark: Yeah.

Lamkin: But those things are understandable and nobody really made a big thing about it.

Mark: Now, what about the quality of personnel. Did you get the impression that the Navy was recruiting or drafting quality people or were they starting to scrape the bottom of the barrel?

Lamkin: No, no, on the contrary, on the contrary.

Mark: They remained quite high.

Lamkin: The quality of the people that we got as a result of this patriotic movement was, the quality and the training was substantially higher than, substantially higher. We got a better educated group of people, highly motivated group of people, people who knew that when this thing was over they were going to be out and go home. Their attitude was real good.

Mark: Yeah, a lot of good people. Now, there are some who say that President Roosevelt took a shine to the Navy. Is this something that you noticed?

Lamkin: Yeah.

Mark: 'Cause he was the Secretary of the Navy or something in World War I.

Lamkin: Yeah. I've heard it said 100 times that FDR was a Navy man. And while I didn't see any direct rewards as a result of that, there was a common feeling that we weren't going to be put in any harms way because of budget because FDR was a Navy man.

Mark: Yeah.

Lamkin: One of the things that they talked about was that FDR knew ahead of time that Pearl was going to happen. A lot of people at that time said, "No, no. Roosevelt is a Navy man. He wouldn't have put the fleet in that kind of jeopardy." And I sort of buy that. At least it's an argument I've put to bed that I don't have to, I think they knew that the Philippines were going to be invaded. They'd had no idea that it was going to be, get extend all the way to the battleships.

Mark: Yeah, yeah. A long reach at the time. Quite an operation.

Lamkin: Yeah, really.

Mark: Now, in terms of the Japanese, did you get a sense of their fighting capabilities and their—I mean, you were on ship. You perhaps didn't get a handle on this as much as a ground soldier on the islands somewhere. But were you surprised at how long it took the war in the Pacific to take?

Lamkin: Yeah, yeah. The only Japanese I saw in all six years that I was in the Navy, the only Japs I ever saw was at Attu. A Ranger battalion went ashore at Attu to invade and they were short of medical personnel so they took a corpsman off each one of the ships lying, who would be participate in the bombardment. I went ashore with this Ranger battalion. Well, as it turned out, there was practically no resistance. At least that did involve the main battery on the San Francisco. And the Army warrant officer, Ranger warrant officer, showed me a revetment on top of the hill that had been a lookout post and a gun emplacement and there were 12 or 15 Japanese soldiers, remains of them, where they sat around in a circle and pulled a grenade pin. Those are the only Japs I saw. We were all utterly convinced that they would die rather than surrender. Never was any question about, well, speaking from my own perspective, there was never any question about their almost maniacal devotion to the emperor.

Mark: And so the fact that the war lasted that long, I mean, 'cause initially after Pearl Harbor many people thought that, you know, we could finish them off in a couple of months and that would be it.

Lamkin: Yeah.

Mark: Was that your impression at first?

Lamkin: No. No, because I thought, I didn't know if we'd ever recover. I saw all that devastation at Pearl. All of those magnificent, magnificent battleships sunk, turned over, in, you know. My God, we sat there at night on the Nevada and we could hear those poor bastards in the hull of the Oklahoma pounding on the bottom of the ship so that somebody would come and cut their way into the hull and release them, and they'd cut their way in and the minute they cut the hole why the air pressure would escape and they'd all drown immediately. I just wondered if we would ever be able to recoup because that was so, the devastation was so apparent. They brought the, one of the carriers they brought into the harbor, oh, while we were still there working on the Nevada. Jesus, that was a shot in the arm. Everybody's spirits soared when they saw it. We had something still going for us.

Mark: But the Navy did eventually recover.

Lamkin: Oh, God, yes.

Mark: And we won.

Lamkin: You betcha. And as you look at it now from the perspective of 50 years, why it was a very short time then that the Japs were, well, after the Battle of Midway, weren't they?

Mark: Uh hum. Now, in terms of the end of the war, when the war in Europe ended, do you have any recollections of that?

Lamkin: No.

Mark: None at all?

Lamkin: None at all.

Mark: You must have been off Okinawa or something.

Lamkin: When, in 1944, January, February 1944, is that right, yes, I sat for an examination. The Navy announced that they had a university training program for future Naval officers and they had an examination fleet-wide for anybody that was interested and I sat down and I took the examination and I was successful and the Navy sent me to the University of Kansas. So from January, February, March—April of 1944 until August of '45 I went to the University of Kansas as a Navy student.

Mark: This was like a V-12 program or something?

Lamkin: Yeah, exactly, exactly, exactly, exactly.

Mark: And what sort of studies did you do?

Lamkin: I took science courses. I was interested in getting into medical school. There were certain courses that you were required to take as part of the Navy curriculum.

Mark: Yeah.

Lamkin: Lots of math. But chemistry, physics, and biological sciences. So, as it turned out for me, my intention originally was to try to get in the Academy to get an education. Turns out, why, that's the way it worked out. I was pretty lucky.

Mark: So you were stateside then when the war ended.

Lamkin: Yeah, yeah.

Mark: Now, when the war in the Pacific ended, the whole thing was eventually over. Do you recall hearing that news?

Lamkin: Yeah, I sure do because, where the hell was I, I was at Lawrence, Kansas. When the war was over I was in Lawrence, Kansas and the next day I got orders to report to the Naval recruiting, or Naval receiving station in San Francisco. 'Cause I was USN. If I'd been USNR, I'd have been out the next day, but I was USN; I had a six year contract.

Mark: Yeah. So, as for the end of the war, in this 50th anniversary year there's been a lot of controversy about the bomb.

Lamkin: Yeah.

Mark: In these interviews I like to ask the World War II veterans I've talked to their impressions at the time and their reflections upon it as time goes on.

Lamkin: Yeah. At the time I felt Harry Truman should have been raised to sainthood. Nothing has ever changed my mind. I go, on the regular basis, I go to Harry Truman's birthplace and his graveyard in Independence, Missouri just for the purpose of saying, "Thank you much, Harry Truman."

Mark: And it's not far from where you are, is it?

Lamkin: No, no, uh-uh. Twenty-five or thirty miles. A man I play golf with, Bill Hamilton, who spent three-and-a-half years in a Japanese prison camp and his feelings about Harry Truman match mine. Harry Truman saved his life.

Mark: Yeah, I was going to ask, do you feel like some veterans do? That the atomic bomb actually saved their lives?

Lamkin: Millions, millions of lives.

Mark: Including your own perhaps.

Lamkin: Including my own.

Mark: Okay. So you went back to San Francisco then? Your still active duty Navy.

Lamkin: Yeah. Now I'm really pissed because I'm a second semester junior at the University of Kansas, and a successful student, and I went to school five days a week 8:00 in the morning to 5:00 at night. And you can, you know, taking 20-22 hours a semester, you can pile up hours in a pretty good hurry.

Mark: Oh yeah.

Lamkin: And here I am at 92 to 94 hours after I've been there a year and I'm qualified to apply to medical school. Shit, I've got all of the requirements and there are vacancies in the medical school.

Mark: Uh hum, and Uncle Sam comes a' calling.

Lamkin: Yeah. The U.S. Navy says, "Hey buddy, you're not done yet."

Mark: What did you have to do there?

Lamkin: So they sent me back to San Francisco, they send me back to the receiving station.

Mark: And what sort of duties did you have?

Lamkin: Well, they sent me to the Philippines. Can you imagine?

Mark: How much time did you have to spend there?

Lamkin: About three weeks.

Mark: Three weeks, that's it.

Lamkin: Yeah, yeah. Then they sent me out to the Philippines, "Philippines sea frontier" they called it. And they flew me, or I flew with some other kids, in one of those PBYS and I had blue uniform, Navy blues on, sat in that aluminum seat on that PBY and by the time we got to Manila the back-end of those Navy blues had, were just like they were aluminum plated. All had worn off on the back of those, sliding back and forth. Geez, that was a long trip. I went out there to help them decommission fleet hospital 114 in Manicany which is south, and southern Semar, around Leyte and south of there. They still had Naval installations there and they needed, I was a lab technician for the most part in the Navy, and they needed a lab technician at this fleet hospital on Manicany Island. So I went there until my time was up. And in September of '46 they sent me back to the States and I immediately came back to Lawrence, Kansas and enrolled in KU as a civilian.

Mark: Yeah. This was your free and clear discharge from the Navy.

Lamkin: Yes.

Mark: Did you have any thoughts of re-enlisting or anything?

Lamkin: No, absolutely none.

Mark: Why was that? You sound pretty adamant about that.

Lamkin: Well, because my goal was to get an education. And having glimpsed, having satisfied myself that I could successfully compete at a university level without a whole lot of kids my age made me certain that I wanted to go back and do whatever I could to finish my education.

Mark: Did you go right to Kansas? Or did you stop back in Hudson at all?

Lamkin: Well, by God, I went right back to Kansas. I made intermittent trips to Hudson as, like when I went to Seattle to get the Nevada I was allowed to spend two or three days en route and I spent that with the folks in Hudson. And then I would get, on the odd opportunity I'd get an eight or ten day leave and I'd head for home.

Mark: Go back ...

Lamkin: But when I came out of the Navy and came right to Lawrence I was late in getting out, in terms of the semester.

Mark: Right.

Lamkin: They started, I think they started the semester September 6 maybe, and it wasn't until the middle of October. But I called them and they said they could enroll me late so I hot-footed back here to get enrolled as I planned.

Mark: And you did.

Lamkin: Yup.

Mark: And you were successful in that.

Lamkin: Yup.

Mark: Okay. I've got a couple questions about some post war experiences. This is the point where a lot of these types of interviews end. But we're part of the Veterans Affairs here so we're interested in some of the post war experiences as well. One of the most important legacies to come out of World War II was the GI Bill. And you used the GI Bill to finance your education.

Lamkin: Oh, boy, GI Bill saved, I started to say "save my life" as a platitude—the GI Bill opened up an entirely new level of livelihood and whole new economic sphere. My family were all working people, railroad people. My mother is a first generation American. She went to business college and she's regarded as

the most highly educated one in the entire family. So this was, this opportunity for a university education was ...

[END OF TAPE, SIDE A]

Lamkin: ... but that money that I received and the tuition deal because see I was technically classed an out-of-state student ...

Mark: Right.

Lamkin: ... when I first got back. But then I was there in Lawrence long enough so that I became a Kansas resident.

Mark: Yeah.

Lamkin: But, no, for the most part we didn't suffer. We ate well and I liked to fish and hunt so we augmented it with squirrel and rabbit, you know, and crappie, and etcetera.

Mark: Uh hum. Now, I've spoken to a lot of vets who went to school here in Wisconsin, especially at the UW campus, and they describe a campus filled with veterans. I mean, their classes are filled with ex-servicemen, their social lives are filled with ex-servicemen. Was that the experience at Kansas as well?

Lamkin: Yes, absolutely, absolutely. Just flooded, they just flooded in the campus. Oh, my God, they had, you know, like they had courses in algebra that was taught at 8:00 at night to take care of the crush of entering freshmen and so forth. It was so, there was an ordinance plant called Sunflower close to Lawrence and when the war was over they shut it down but they had built a huge housing addition to that Lawrence, or to that ordinance plant, and after the war, after '46 when all the students came back, it was all filled up with GIs, ex-GIs.

Mark: Yeah. There was a very similar thing here in Madison, too. There was an ordinance plant nearby that was converted into housing for students. Now, in terms of, were the veterans good students do you think?

Lamkin: Oh, yeah, yeah. There were no, there was the occasional dude who thought that this was a free ride for whatever but the University of Kansas administered their scholastic requirements to the point that, I think everybody there had to maintain a minimum of a C average to stay in school. And if they didn't, why then I think their GI benefits, especially education, went out the window.

Mark: Yeah.

Lamkin: Yeah, the competition was fierce. Geez. I had a course in entomology, a little old gal, Swedish gal, Mary Larson, graded on the curve. God dang the curve was high! Of course, I was shooting for grade point.

Mark: Yeah.

Lamkin: Really shooting for grade point.

Mark: Um, so after the war then, I mean after college now, you completed your degree there and it comes time to find work.

Lamkin: Yeah. Well, I was trying to get into medical school and I was a little naive. I thought that if you did your, you know, did the courses and got good marks that it was automatic. Well, I met the reality of politics in the medical field. I didn't have anybody in my family that was a doctor, I didn't have anybody who was a doctor that would sponsor me so I didn't make it. So I went up to Wisconsin and I said that down in Kansas I'm a non-resident and I talked to the dean at the University of Wisconsin and he said, "I'm sorry. We have a responsibility to our own undergraduates." So that closed the door on that avenue. Then I went to work for, I got a good job with a drug company.

Mark: Now, did you have difficulty finding work after the war?

Lamkin: Uh-uh.

Mark: There were a lot of veterans floating back into the country now. Did you have problems finding something to do?

Lamkin: No, no, I didn't. Having spent six years in the medical field, having been a good student in pre-medical sciences, and a trained lab technician, my academic background fell very much in line with the work with the drug company. And there weren't too many candidates for that. It was a bit, I wouldn't say it was exclusive but everybody wasn't equipped to talk intelligently about the chemistry involved.

Mark: Right. And so you had skills you had gotten in your education.

Lamkin: Yes, yes, yes.

Mark: I see. Uhm, there are various housing programs for veterans. Did you use any loans to pay for ...

Lamkin: Yes, I did.

- Mark: Okay. I'm not trying to pry into your finances. I'm just trying to get at the use of veteran's benefits.
- Lamkin: Oh, yeah. I used that in Roswell, New Mexico to buy a little old house.
- Mark: Was it the federal home loan program that you used?
- Lamkin: Yes, yes. If I could dig around, I still have the entitlement paper. And I used, then it happened that I had opportunity later in life and I used it again. Gave me a better rate and some sort of a loan guarantee. I forgot the mechanics of it now. Yes I did use that.
- Mark: Okay. I've got two last areas I want to cover. The first involves sort of emotional and psychological and emotional readjustments back into civilian society. The problems that some Vietnam veterans have had, they've been in the news the past few decades or so, and sometimes World War II veterans experienced similar problems but it hasn't been so widely publicized. So when you came back, did you have any sort of troubles readjusting back to society or did you just fit right in?
- Lamkin: I didn't have any problems. I didn't think I was any different than anybody else because there were so many of them ...
- Mark: Right.
- Lamkin: ... around. And the last part of my Naval service was so benign that it was almost like being on a, had I been home or close to it, it would have been like being on a vacation. My time I spent in the Philippines was just marvelous in terms of the experience.
- Mark: Right.
- Lamkin: And it wasn't life-threatening at all. Plus I was directed, I was career directed. I knew what I wanted to do and all I had to do was get on and do it. I didn't have, and I didn't feel that I had been put upon. I didn't feel like I had been victimized because I volunteered to begin with, for one thing. I felt a little shitty about being sent back to the Philippines after the war was over and that may have closed a window or a door for me as far as medical school was concerned because by the time I got back, of course, everybody else was back and vacancies were non-existent.
- Mark: Now, in terms of your reception from civilian society, you apparently felt that you were brought back into society fairly well.
- Lamkin: Yeah.

- Mark: Some veterans will talk about how people back home didn't understand the sacrifices we went through and sometimes feel a little resentful about that. Apparently that's not the case with you.
- Lamkin: No, no, not at all, not at all. Plus the fact it's not my nature to piss and moan. I've attempted to make the best out of a given situation and that doesn't mean that I'm free of negative thoughts but ...
- Mark: It's a matter of how you look at it.
- Lamkin: Yeah, yeah. I thought I was, for the most part, well treated and well taken care of.
- Mark: Okay.
- Lamkin: I had a little difficulty empathizing with the Vietnam people. As a matter of fact, I have a real difficulty with that. But that's a different bag of worms. I don't know anything about it.
- Mark: Yeah. Okay. I've got one last area I want to cover and that involves veteran's organizations and reunions and that sort of thing. Now, you've already mentioned that you're a member of the Pearl Harbor Survivor's Association, is that right?
- Lamkin: Yes.
- Mark: I'd like to step back to the time when you first got out of the service. When you first got out of the service did you join any sort of organizations?
- Lamkin: Nothing.
- Mark: Nothing like the Legion or the VFW or anything like that.
- Lamkin: No, nothing, nothing. No.
- Mark: Why was that? I mean, was there a reason for that?
- Lamkin: No. Just too much else going on. Too much, I didn't have any disdain or scorn or anything for those organizations. I just, there was just too much going on for me to have time to be involved in any of them. And then Naval service was too fresh in my memory to want to be reinforcing it. Enough was enough. I felt I've done it, I'm through, let's get on with this other deal.
- Mark: Uh huh. Now, as you went later in life, did you eventually join any of the bigger organizations?

- Lamkin: Yeah I did, yeah I did. Especially this Pearl Harbor thing that I've mentioned and my wife and I have developed a circle of friends in this. One a Marine, another one an old machinist mate off the San Francisco, and my old division officer off the Nevada. Well, we go places. We're going to go to Canyon City, Colorado in a week or ten days and meet up with a bunch of old Navy farts and some Army people, too, and have a two or three day reunion in Colorado.
- Mark: Uh hum. Sounds like a lot of fun.
- Lamkin: They usually, like we'll go to the Royal Gorge and see the local sites and get taken to the world's largest trinket shop, you know how that goes. Tours.
- Mark: Yeah. And so for you it's mostly a social outlet, social activity, the veteran's organization.
- Lamkin: Yes, yes, absolutely. I became a member of the VFW but that was because I was a Pearl Harbor Association and we were trying to get something done and it became politically expedient for me.
- Mark: I see. Now, when did you start getting involved in these veteran's activities. I mean, were you into your 30s and 40s or even 50s?
- Lamkin: Oh, much later than that, much later than that.
- Mark: Really?
- Lamkin: I didn't, I was a member of the Pearl Harbor Survivors Association for a long time before .. I saw something in the paper one time and I wrote off and joined it. But that was the extent of my participation. I traveled extensively the last eight or ten years of my working career and as a result I didn't have much time at home for veteran's deals or anything like that. I would say that my real active participation in this is when I retired.
- Mark: Which was in the 1980s sometime I would imagine.
- Lamkin: Yeah, yeah. Like maybe '80, oh, poop, yeah maybe like '82.
- Mark: Yeah.
- Lamkin: '82 or '83. And it's been a rewarding, I enjoy the people. We're all approximately the same age. Somebody who's 72 1/2, we call them kids. You know, we're so stratified.
- Mark: Uhm, those are all the questions I have. Is there anything you'd like to add? Something you think we've quashed over a little?

Lamkin: No. I think, I want to say that one of the most concrete feelings, one of the most positive feelings I have about this time we're talking about throughout my entire life, as a result of this six years experience, I've had the feeling that I've done my part. I have the confidence that I've done my part and I have, I think it, I have enriched my sense of gratitude about the privilege of being and living in a country like I do. It's immeasurably enriched my life.

Mark: That's a good note on which to end this I think.

Lamkin: All right.

Mark: Well, thank you for taking the time to talk with me today.

Lamkin: Thank you for the opportunity.

Mark: I appreciate it.