

Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
RUDY MINSTER
U. S. Navy, World War II

2003

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Minster, Rudy, (1926-), Oral History Interview, 2003

User copy, 1 sound cassette (ca. 15 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master copy, 1 sound cassette (ca. 15 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

ABSTRACT

Minster, Sheboygan, Wis. native, discusses his World War II service as a motor machinists mate aboard LSM (Landing Ship Medium) 337. He mentions learning of the attack on Pearl Harbor, joining the navy at age 17, typhoons at sea, and a recent trip to Saipan. He touches upon joining his crew at Houston (Texas), duty at Okinawa, seeing kamikaze attacks, and being wounded at Saipan.

Biographical Sketch

Minster (b. February 24, 1926) served in the Navy for two years in the Pacific theater of World War II. He is a member of the LST/LSM veterans group.

Interviewed by John K. Driscoll, Wisconsin Veterans Museum Volunteer, 2003.

Transcribed by John K. Driscoll, Wisconsin Veterans Museum Volunteer, 2003.

Transcript edited by Abigail Miller, 2003.

Interview Transcript

John: This is John Driscoll, and I am a volunteer with the Wisconsin Veterans Museum. And we are at Chula Vista Resort. Today is June 2, 2003. And this is an interview with Rudy Minster, of Sheboygan, Wisconsin, who is a veteran of the United States Navy in World War II. Rudy, thanks a lot for agreeing to the interview, and for being here.

Minster: Okay. Thank you.

John: You've got some things. Do you want to talk about those first?

Minster: Yea. This is an article from the paper and it shows our ship.

John: Okay. This is from the Milwaukee Sentinel, September 4, 1945.

Minster: And they published this picture of all the people that served on the ship, LSM 377 [Landing Ship Medium]. And this is for you.

John: Oh, thank you. Okay. Oh, that is tremendous. Now, are you in this?

Minster: Yes, I am over here. [See the copy of the article and the photograph, enclosed.] I look a lot younger.

John: We all did. So, this is a photograph, LSM 977 life ring in the middle.

Minster: No, 377.

John: I am sorry, 377. There is one, two, three, four, five, six, seven fellows, and the second fellow in from the left side is Rudy Minster. I'll give this to the museum and they will put that in the archives.

Minster: Okay. This is an extra picture.

John: Okay, and the paper shows all of the names of all the fellows there, so we can pick that up. That is tremendous.

Minster: Now, this is something else. This was in the Sheboygan Press, in November of 1995.

John: Okay, Sheboygan Press, October 29, 1995.

Minster: And the reason they published this article was because I went to them and I said,

“I wasn’t too happy about all this information being published about the atom bomb.”

John: Yea. Okay.

Minster: Because we were saved from the--

John: Absolutely. You would have been the front edge, if they hadn’t.

Minster: Anybody on the Amphibious Corps would have been--

John: You would have taken the troops ashore.

Minster: Yes. So, you can read this. That is an extra copy.

John: Can I give this to the museum?

Minster: Yes.

John: They will love this.

Minster: Now, if you want to make copies of that, why you are welcome to do that. Now, everybody is interested in what happened to their ship.

John: Yea.

Minster: I was very fortunate because I was a motor machinists mate, and I contacted the Fairbanks Morse Company, which is in Beloit, Wisconsin, and they were able to supply me with manifests and invoices of the original ship, or the original engines on our ship. And they went to, from Beloit, Wisconsin, they went down to Houston, Texas. And I was able to follow this whole thing through, because, I mentioned before, and also, oh, there was some other word I was thinking of. Invoices, manifests. And it went on board the ship, and then it went overseas, and we were at Okinawa. And then they came back. We were at Okinawa, plus the Solomons, and things like that. I won’t get too involved.

John: That is quite all right. This is your story.

Minster: Okay. Anyway, when, following the manifests and invoices, and the bills of lading, I followed them through to the Mankota Power Company, up in Grand Forks, North Dakota. So that is where they have out engines. They have five engines, and they are using them for auxiliary power, because it is an atom plant up there. So they use it for auxiliary power, and they had to use them several years

ago when they had those big floods up there.

John: Oh, yea, I remember that.

Minster: You remember that? So they used the five engines, two from LSM 377, and two from another ship, and one from a third ship. And they were very receptive when I went up there. I went up there with my wife and I wanted to show her the engines. And from Grand Forks, North Dakota, Betty and I drove down to Omaha, where the LSM 45 is. And she pitched right in and got her fingers dirty down in the engine room.

John: Great. These are the engines?

Minster: Yea. These are the engines.

John: These are the ones up in Minnesota? [Should be North Dakota.]

Minster: These are the engines in Minnesota, [Should be North Dakota] and now they look real clean. They didn't look this clean on the LSM 45.

John: Can I take these?

Minster: Yea.

John: Rudy is giving me two color photographs. One is landscape and one is portrait. And they both are of an engine, a diesel engine, Fairbanks Morse diesel engine?

Minster: Yes.

John: And on the front of the engine is a decal, or a number 7, and you can see that on both of them, and these are the engines from his ship that are now at the power plant he just mentioned up in Minnesota. [Should be North Dakota.] That is tremendous.

Minster: If you want, and the Mankota Power Company went all out, and they printed a special book, an article in a book, that we have. Now, this is 7, and there is also 9. I think this is 7 and 9 are the two numbers, and when I went to the Grand Forks Power Company, the Mankota Power Company, they let me start the engines.

John: Well, you were qualified.

Minster: Yea. Well, I didn't know I was going to have all that. They went all out for that. And they even contacted our commanding officer who was over in Massachusetts,

who at that time lived in Massachusetts.

John: That is tremendous.

Minster: Okay. So, what else do you want? Oh, you were asking me about Pearl Harbor. When I found out at Pearl Harbor, I was at a circus that night in Sheboygan, and I used to be a member of the circus team. And that is why I am standing on my hands up here.

John: Oh, okay. There is a photograph of Rudy standing upside down on a hook ladder with the sea in the background. Okay.

Minster: Do you want a picture of that one, you can have that, too.

John: Okay, but I don't want to take any of your treasures.

Minster: Now, how do you get that out of there? This is signing fire bombs, and these are B-29's in the background. And this is on Saipan, and I went back to Saipan because I always wanted to go back to Saipan, and, fortunately, in 1995, this tour also had Iwo Jima. So I became somewhat of an Iwo Jima fan.

John: Okay. Oh, that is tremendous. Can we back up just a bit? This is great. Ah, how about early life. When were you born? What was your birth date?

Minster: I was born on February 24, 1926.

John: Where?

Minster: In Sheboygan, Wisconsin.

John: What about family? Early life? Education? Before the service?

Minster: I went through North High School, in Sheboygan, and then later on, went to, at that time it was called Mission House College, now it's Lakeland College. They got a little higher class and they didn't have a program for business administration. So I went to Carroll College, in Waukesha. And that is where I met my wife. She was a student, not a student nurse but she was, she finished nursing training down at Evanston, Illinois, at Evanston Hospital, and so she was, along with two other nurses, she was a nurse at Carroll College.

John: Okay. I teach at Carroll College every now and then.

Minster: Did you?

- John: Beautiful. That is the oldest college in the state.
- Minster: Yea. That is why it is called the Pioneer College.
- John: Yea. Okay, how did you get into the Navy? How did that happen?
- Minster: Oh, before, while I was still seventeen, I joined the Navy, and at that time they had a program so you could join at seventeen, and if your birthday was after you joined the Navy, then they would let you finish high school. So, I was already in the Navy, so on June 6, 1944, it didn't take long, I graduated on June 6, 1944, so when I came home from graduation, they had a letter there, for a lot of people.
- John: They weren't wasting any time.
- Minster: That's right. And a lot of my friends that went into the Army ended up in the Battle of the Bulge. Because they were the untrained troops over there. But we went through Great Lakes, and also Little Creek, Virginia. Now, this is a book here that talks about Great Lakes. Or it talks about not Great Lakes, but it talks about Little Creek. See, here it says, "Little Creek, Virginia."
- John: Yea, I spent time at Little Creek, and at Great Lakes.
- Minster: All right. Now, these are shipmates, here. And this is me diving off the bow of the ship.
- John: The number of the ship was?
- Minster: 377.
- John: Oh, that's right. That is in that picture.
- Minster: I went through high school with a fellow by the name of Bill Zaegel and he unfortunately was killed in an airplane up in Alaska, but I met him over on Saipan. And so he came aboard the LSM, and he had to go back to the ship that night, but there was no way of getting him back. So the commanding officer put up the garbage scow call, for a garbage scow. And that is how he got back to his ship. Okay. So, I won't keep you any longer.
- John: Oh, that's okay. How about time at sea?
- Minster: How about what?

- John: How about some of your times at sea?
- Minster: Oh, we had a lot of typhoons. Yea. I think I got another picture here of...
- John: Where did you go aboard? Where did you join the ship?
- Minster: Oh, we joined down in Houston, Texas. And then we went over, from there we loaded up with pontoons, and ridiculous not to know about pontoons, but they were used for docks. So we went to Okinawa, and unloaded our pontoons, and then we were in Buckner Bay, and that is when the kamikazes came at us. They came at a lot of ships. And I'll tell you one of the scary parts about kamikazes. Not only do they come in and hit the ship, but they fly low between the ships, so what are we doing with our .50 caliber machine guns? We were firing at one another. That is terrible, but that is part of the game. We also shot at garbage, and everything else that floated by. So, what else do you have to have here?
- John: When did you get out?
- Minster: Oh, I got out in almost two years to the day. Here is the ship, the 377. But there is a picture of her underway. Now, these are all Japanese money, and all this stuff. This is my dog tags. You know what a dog tag is?
- John: Oh, yea. I've got mine. I've still got mine.
- Minster: 3066705.
- John: You still remember it?
- Minster: Oh, you had to remember it. You had to memorize it, because in case you were captured by the Japanese, you were only supposed to give them your dog tag number. The fellow before me was talking about when he came out of the Navy, and they sewed on our uniforms, what they called the Ruptured Duck. You remember that? A Ruptured Duck. And he didn't mention that, but that is what we had. All right. What else you got for me?
- John: When you got our, Rudy, veterans organizations? VFW? American Legion? Did you take part in any of that?
- Minster: Well, I was injured overseas. So I came back on an AH12, which was a hospital ship. Now the war was over, right now. I was injured in Garapan Anchorage, on Saipan.
- John: What happened?

Minster: Part of my toes were gone. They are still gone.

John: From a wound, or an accident?

Minster: No, not a wound. There is a difference between wounding and injury, and mine was an injury. So, anyway, they couldn't cure it over there, on Saipan, because of the fact that you had so much junk in the air, and it was humid, and stuff like that. So I came back on a 12, AH 12 [Auxiliary Hospital Ship]. And ship was built for the invasion of Japan, and that was probably planned to happen. The invasion of Japan was called the Olympic. Here is a picture of our ship under way, and that it for you. And that is somebody else on some other ship took that.

John: Yea. Fairly heavy seas, too.

Minster: You can see. We were a flat-bottomed ship and we never had to worry about torpedoes because they would go right under us. Because we only drew four feet of water.

John: You did some rocking and rolling in a heavy sea, though, didn't you?

Minster: Oh, you bet. When I was in the engine room one time, we were in a typhoon, and the glass from the gauges in front of us were broken. They broke and the glass trickled down onto my tables on my desk.

John: That is great. That is a tremendous story. Man. Can I get a release from you? We need that to get the--

[End of Interview]