

**Wisconsin Veterans Museum  
Research Center**

Transcript of an  
Oral History Interview with  
FRED H. STATZ  
Harbor Patrolman, Navy, World War II  
1999

**OH**  
**492**

**Statz, Fred H.** (1924-2013). Oral History Interview, 1999.

User Copy: 2 sound cassettes (ca. 62 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Copy: 1 videorecording (ca. 62 min.); ½ inch, color.

**Abstract:**

Fred H. Statz, a Madison, Wisconsin native, discusses his World War II service as a harbor patrolman on Okinawa. Statz explains the stress of listening to the “ping pong” of sonar used to search for submarines. After transferring to a harbor patrol unit, he compares his boat to a PT boat, and describes his boat’s layout and mechanics. He mentions finding a Japanese submarine that malfunctioned and describes the inside of the submarine. He relates anecdotes about surviving typhoons, kamikaze pilot attacks, and searching caves for Japanese soldiers. Statz explains the postal system and how food was distributed to the soldiers. His welcome home was mentioned, and he related his contact with the men in his unit once at home.

**Biographical Sketch:**

Fred H. Statz (1924-2013) served in the Navy from 1943 until 1946, spending most of the time with the D4C unit (harbor patrol) in Okinawa (Japan). He returned home to Madison (Wisconsin) after being discharged.

Interviewed by James McIntosh, 1999.

Transcribed by WDVA staff and Leah Schultz, 2012.

Transcription checked and corrected by Amanda Axel, 2012.

Abstract written by Rebecca Cook, 2015.

## Interview Transcript:

McIntosh: Okay, now, this is the 8<sup>th</sup> of September, 1999, talking to Fred Statz, from Madison, WI. You joined the service in what year?

Statz: February of 1943.

James: And where did they send you?

Statz: Uh, to Great Lakes.

McIntosh: Did you enlist or did they—?

Statz: I enlisted. I was gonna save the world.

McIntosh: Right, and you went to Great Lakes.

Statz: To Great Lakes, for the boot camp, and that was nine weeks. And from Great Lakes, they shipped me to, uh, San Diego, to a submarine sound school; submarine detection, I think they call it. And uh—

McIntosh: Did you have any choice in that matter?

Statz: No, I didn't. That was the result of the tests that they gave us to see where we fit in best into the service. And apparently my hearing was so acute and my memory for sounds was good enough that I could remember series of sounds, and so forth. I believe that's the same test they gave potential radio operators. And so, my choice was to join the rest of everybody who was sent out there. [laughs] And [I] went out to San Diego to submarine sound school, and I believe I was in that sound school for about uh, possibly eight weeks; my recollection's a little hazy. And there were about thirty-five of us, over thirty of us in that class, and I think they graduated eleven. And the drop-out rate, including myself, was from nerves, listening to the detection equipment, which was a series of radio sound tones. We were called the "ping-pong idiots", because there was a "ping," went out the sound, and it would hit the ship, hopefully, and the sound coming back was the echo, and that would be a lower tone, "pong," so "ping-pong." That sound was sent out about every, oh I would guess, within every two seconds. And that's what you'd listen to. And the watches on what they called a "stack," the mechanical equipment we were operating, our watches were only two hours, and there were two men to a watch, and you traded off every half hour, because most of us couldn't stand the earphones with that sound—it was like Chinese water torture.

McIntosh: This is sonar?

Statz: Yeah, this is sonar. And so we were to listen to these tones going out and turn our dial five degrees, and the unit under the ship which sent out these tones moved five degrees, and we searched all the way around the boat. And if we had an echo, we would stop and come back on it, and then go forward on it, and we could tell the speed at which that object was moving and so on and so forth. I don't know if you want to hear all these—

McIntosh: Mm-hmm.

Statz: And we could tell the direction and the speed of our target. And uh, as I say, the drop-out rate was tremendous because most of us couldn't stand the sound, couldn't stand the tone in our ears every second. Within ten minutes, I'd break out in perspiration running down my face and my back. And my instructor said, "Hey, you've got good hearing," and he said, "You're remembering the sounds and the way you've heard them on the scope." He said, "But I don't know if you're gonna make it." I said, "I don't either. I want out." And uh, apparently that was not an uncommon situation, as I say, they dropped out so many fellas and uh, I think that was about the fourth class to go through that school. And so they kept myself, they kept me on the base for about ten months I think it was, and then we were sent to San Pedro, a group of us, to form the D4C unit, which was harbor patrol boats. And those patrol boats were forty-five foot long, inch-and-a-half plywood on the bottom and one inch on the sides, and one-inch decks, two cabins, two engines; my particular boat that I had at the end of the war had 2- or 350-horsepower Hudson Invaders [engines]. But our training was up at San Pedro, and from there, we were sent to San Francisco, and out on the island. I can't remember if it's Terminal Island or Treasure—

McIntosh: Mare Island?

Statz: Was it Mare Island? I can't remember which one; it's out in the middle of the bay, and we were only there for about three weeks, maybe a little longer. And then they shipped us off of that, plans were changed somewhere along the line, and we were sent back over to a racetrack called Tanforan, down just south of San Bruno. And that was supposed to be an assembly area, and we were shipped there for—oh, we had to be there for six months. I was in that San Diego base for about a year before we shipped out to San Pedro. And then uh, at San Bruno, we were just there. We had no duties.

McIntosh: No training, no duties?

Statz: No training, no duties. They said they were gathering up enough men for a convoy and blah blah blah, and that was our reason for existing there at all. And finally they put us on a convoy. Uh, I can't tell you when it was, I

don't remember. I do remember that they loaded our boats on ships. By that time we were issued boats, and I had my four-man crew: a radio man, a motor man, and two seamen and myself, and uh, I was only a coxswain—five-man crew.

McIntosh: How did this boat, before we get too far, compare to a PT boat? Must have been roughly the same size.

Statz: Well, I understand the smallest PT boat, and I can be wrong on this, but I think the smallest was fifty-five feet.

McIntosh: Yeah. They went up to seventy-four.

Statz: Right. And we were forty-five. And our—following along on the boat, is that what you'd like?

McIntosh: Yes, please.

Statz: The boat was forty-five feet long, eleven-foot beam, weighed 17,000 pounds, and we had one gun tub mounting a set of twin .50-caliber guns.

McIntosh: Aft or forward?

Statz: Uh, in the center, as a matter of fact.

McIntosh: Oh, really.

Statz: These boats were double-cabin, and in between the two cabins was the engine compartment. And over the engine compartment was the gun tub, with the twin .50s in it, and the aft cabin held my crew, four men, and that was actually just two benches with a pull-up back rest, with a cable to the overhead. And the cooking facilities were two alcohol[?] burners, and a small sink, and the head was a pump-out screw[?], of course, and a washbasin probably as big as a helmet and not quite as deep—

McIntosh: A row each for everyone?

Statz: What? [?]

McIntosh: One [unintelligible] each for everyone?

Statz: No, that was it, that had to serve the— Sure, I'm sorry. It had to serve the entire crew, so it got a little crowded.

McIntosh: And your rating at that time was a—?

Statz: I was still a coxswain. And before it was over, they put me up for a Boatswain's 2nd [Boatswain's Mate 2nd Class], but then I got a little mouthy to the wrong man and I remained a coxswain.

McIntosh: [Laughs] That's a tough crowd, isn't it?

Statz: Yeah, that was the end of my forward motion in the Navy [laughs].

McIntosh: These engines, you say—Hudson?

Statz: Hudson Invaders.

McIntosh: You mean, Hudson Motor Company?

Statz: Hudson Motor Company made—

McIntosh: I didn't know they made—

Statz: They called them Invaders, it was, uh—

McIntosh: A diesel?

Statz: No, they were gasoline. And uh, gasoline 350-horsepower-each Hudson Invaders. And, there [were] other boats there; not all the boats had Hudsons in them. I can't remember the name; there's a more popular name, GM, I don't know if it's GM or— Well, there were other engines, but my boat just happened to be, um— Here's a picture—oh, that's taken almost[?] from the bow of another boat, looking back, but you can see—

McIntosh: I see it. [Pause] How fast did this go?

Statz: Around forty-five [miles per hour].

McIntosh: That's pretty good.

Statz: While we were waiting, our understanding was that we were there waiting to go to Japan, that we were going to be the invasion group to Japan, and that our function was going to be to take in gunner control officers through the invasion fleet. This was our training; we were to go amongst the LCDTs [Leading Cadets] and so forth in our landing boats, and had gunner control people on our boats that were going to radio back to the big guns on the ships, 'cause they gave them a closer view of what was going on, see. And—

McIntosh: Well the main objective for your boat, then, was to get caught. You were direct observation?

Statz: Yes. Right. Well, going back, we shipped out of San Francisco eventually, with our boats. And we went over to Ulithi [Caroline Islands] and we were at Ulithi gathering more of a convoy. When we got a big enough convoy we went up to Okinawa, and we got there before it was secured, raided and secured. But most of the action was still up north. And Buckner Bay, our destination, **[Pause in tape, then last few sentences are repeated]** was way in the southeast end of Okinawa.

McIntosh: Now, did you pick up your boat over there?

Statz: Yes. Our boats were—

McIntosh: Too small to go across the—

Statz: Oh yeah, they were too small. And they were rough[?]-

McIntosh: They pick you up in Ulithi?

Statz: No, they had ‘em on the transport ships in the convoy that I was in getting to Ulithi, but they never unloaded them ‘til we got to Okinawa.

McIntosh: I see.

Statz: And my recollection is that we were thirty days getting there, thirty to forty days—

McIntosh: To get to Ulithi?

Statz: To get from San Francisco to Okinawa, about thirty, forty days. Ulithi I think was about, uh— Ah, we stopped in— Boy, what fifty years of memory can lose. Uh, we stopped in Pearl Harbor I think for a week and were not allowed off the ship.

McIntosh: This ship was a—

Statz: A.K.A. [Attack Cargo Ship]

McIntosh: A.K.A., yeah, because that would be transport.

Statz: Yeah, ‘cause of transport—A.K.A. And uh, none of the troops [were] allowed off the ship, and they used the rated men such as myself as a shore patroller, if you will. Four on, four off, did that for a total of forty-some days before we got to Okinawa, including the Ulithi stop. But uh, when we got to Okinawa, they unloaded, I think we had about fifteen patrol boats. And they unloaded us to use us as harbor patrol—

McIntosh: You worked in tandem and together?

Statz: No, we were all in singles. They sent us singles, which was kind of concerning, cause there was still, you know. We're still in the war, and if anything happened, we'd want a little help out there, and about one inch of plywood between you and, say, .50 caliber guns.

McIntosh: Who was your radio contactor? A destroyer nearby, or?

Statz: No, no, we had a small base on this island of Fukushima, which is about ten miles south from the outer edge of Buckner Bay, about ten miles south of White Beach.

McIntosh: So if you had problems, that's where you would radio.

Statz: We had the radio there. There was also a Coast Guard watch station there, but they had two seventy-five foot patrol boats, and that was the extent of the Coast Guard's involvement on our base, anyway.

McIntosh: Did you do anything with them, or were they a separate—

Statz: No, no. They pulled in alongside of the floating dock and we pulled in at the other side and that was our contact [laughs].

McIntosh: Were there duties that overlapped or were similar, or?

Statz: Uh, they were similar. The Coast Guard people went outside the harbor mouth, which was quite a ways out—

McIntosh: They had bigger stuff.

Statz: And they had bigger equipment. And uh, as I say, we only had a gun tub with the twin .50s, and we originally had three fifty-pound cans and charges on each side; we had racks on each side of the back of this boat. And there was a pull-pin operation; you'd pull a pin, it would kick him off.

McIntosh: [Laughs]

Statz: You know, it wasn't a high-tech operation. But that was our [unintelligible]

McIntosh: So if you used those up, you would get more back at this base.



Statz: Hopefully we'd get back to the base to get more, yes [laughs], considering those bullets, but they were fast enough [unintelligible] run.

McIntosh: When you trained originally in this boat, it was in San Diego, right?

Statz: No, the original training was San Pedro. San Diego was just base personnel.

McIntosh: In San Pedro, were they training you for doing just what you did or were they training you for some different activity?

Statz: No, they trained us for that.

McIntosh: You were right in line with the way things were supposed to be.

Statz: Yeah, pretty much.

McIntosh: Alright. That's all you know[?].

Statz: And then in Okinawa, we toured the bay for four hours at night; we held three hundred gallons of gasoline and a lack of anything, with no destination in mind, we just kind of idled around, you know, and it would take us four or five hours to get around then.

McIntosh: You only went about five knots?

Statz: Oh, I would say maybe five, eight knots. You know, if you're idling two engines that size, why, you moved along at probably eight to ten.

McIntosh: And what were you doing while you were idling around in the ocean, were you listening?

Statz: Well, two men were watching; we had no sonar equipment on there at all, and the only thing that ever—

McIntosh: [Unintelligible]

Statz: [Unintelligible]. And uh, the only thing that ever happened that was exciting, at least there, in respect to the war, was a two-man Jap sub we picked up.

McIntosh: How?

Statz: They were floating. They were sitting idly—

McIntosh: I was gonna say. If they were under water, you wouldn't know.

Statz: No, no, they were up on top, and apparently, they were out of fuel, and there they sat. And when we came up, they were going like this, you know, and one lineman went up, swung that [unintelligible] over at him, you know, they were giving us all kinds of motions.

McIntosh: [Laughs]

Statz: “Don’t pull that thing.”

McIntosh: Right. So what’d we do with them?

Statz: So then, we radioed in to the base, and the Coasties came up; the Coast Guard came out, ‘cause they had a bigger boat, took them in tow. They had pulled the plug on the thing, so to speak, [unintelligible], to sink it and to float[?]. I think our thoughts were, between the time we saw them, and the Coast Guard got there to take ‘em over, they’d—

McIntosh: Sink it?

Statz: Well, they tried. But apparently a piece of uh—not seaweed, what do they call it—

McIntosh: Kelp?

Statz: Kelp, thank you. A piece of floating kelp apparently got sucked up against the thing and plugged it. So when they got it and they took it into our base--a floating dock about one hundred people, that was our base, didn’t have tents or anything— But uh, they towed it in there, and we got a chance to board it, and I laid on the deck and stuck my head in there and there wasn’t any way that I was gonna get down in that thing. And I have no admiration or had no admiration for the Japanese obviously at the time, due to circumstances, but I did admire how anybody would get down in there. They had to lay down, they had to lay in there, you know, it was that small; there wasn’t any sitting up in the thing.

McIntosh: Could you see how it was propelled?

Statz: Uh, just a prop [propeller] in there.

McIntosh: What kind of engine in there[?]

Statz: No idea. No idea. I couldn’t, uh, let’s say I was too cowardly to crawl down in there.

McIntosh: Speaking of engines, back then— Were you having gasoline? I mean, uh, after the fire problem?

Statz: Well, we didn't really think about it too much. We had fumes from the motor mac[?] machines. In the morning, when we were going out, [unintelligible] we'd pull those two hatches up and the hatches were probably six-foot by three-foot, or seven, oh, more than that—probably seven- or eight-foot.

McIntosh: Get some air down there.

Statz: We'd pull 'em both, and then he'd give me the word when I could crank 'em up.

McIntosh: Wanted to let the fumes get out before you turned 'em?

Statz: Low flow [?] the fumes out, yeah.

McIntosh: Was that a problem for other boats?

Statz: Well, I think for all of them there was always gasoline fumes in those things.

McIntosh: Did you see any or have any that blew up?

Statz: No, I don't think there was really that much time, because most of the boats were sunk in the typhoons, 'cause we endured six typhoons in a particular season. And I think there were only three of us left at the end of the fourth typhoon. As I recall, they'd become more intense as you get more typhoons. And each one—

McIntosh: These were mostly in 1945?

Statz: Those would have been in '45 and '46; I was released in March of—

McIntosh: Oh, after the war.

Statz: Yes, the war was over. The last I saw of the war was[?], two kamikaze planes came over us, just about took off our radio areas[?], which were only twelve feet up—

McIntosh: Well, they'd run out of targets, so they were charging you.

Statz: No, they didn't go after us, but they were staying real close to the water and they came over; our island was probably, oh, not over thirty or forty feet high, maybe, and they came off seaside and came up over the top of

the island and dropped immediately. Well, the minute they started dropping, that was where we were; and they were gone by the time we realized what was going on.

McIntosh: Never even had a chance to shoot at ‘em.

Statz: Nah. They were just a roar and a buzz, and a bunch of scared American kids out there watching these things go over. When we heard ‘em the second time, second time it happened we heard ‘em coming. And we figured they were gonna do the same thing. And uh, one fellow dove in, one of my crew dove in the water and he said, “That son of a gun.”

McIntosh: [Laughs]

Statz: He said, “Hit that aerial”, he said “He’s liable to take his prop off.” He got off the boat. But uh, anyway, that was it.

McIntosh: Your boat was not flat-bottomed? [?]

Statz: No, it was a D-bomb [V bottom?], just a D-bomb [V bottom?]. But uh, that was probably— The dropping of the bomb, we all heard about it, it uh— The description of the first A-bomb to go down, they said it was a football, and the second one was as big as a house, and so we heard all these wild tales, but we didn’t care how big it was. When they dropped the second one, they declared the war was over, and that was that. That was all the contact I really had in there, was a two-man sub and uh—

McIntosh: No firing on you from the shore?

Statz: No, no; they used us though. Not too long after we got there, they were still setting up the base for some of the—they had tents up there, chow tent and so forth. They sent some of us with a couple of Marine groups that came over to go through the caves on the island.

McIntosh: Was this after the war?

Statz: No, it was when we first got there.

McIntosh: What was the purpose of you going to the caves?

Statz: ‘Cause it was full of Japanese soldiers hiding out.

McIntosh: I understand, but why were they using you?

Statz: Just more manpower.

McIntosh: How? This is not the duty you were trained for.

Statz: No, no. I think they just wanted more bodies and added guns.

McIntosh: Well, you didn't have any guns; they had to give you those.

Statz: They had to give us, uh, they didn't even show us how to shoot it; it was a .45 side arm and a carbine. And uh—

McIntosh: They gave you a helmet, too? You probably had—

Statz: We had helmets [at the] beginning. I think this one fellow and myself, off my boat, and two Marines; and we went through about four caves. But, it was frightening. I'm a chicken at heart. [laughs]

McIntosh: Alright. So, how did they tell you about dealing with the caves? What was the [unintelligible]?

Statz: Well, the caves for the most part, we only went through two. When I say "through", we probably didn't go in over 150 feet; we let the Marines go ahead. We said, "We'll back you up, guys", you know—way back.

McIntosh: Did they just throw grenades?

Statz: They just threw grenades.

McIntosh: And then followed that up?

Statz: Yeah. That's exactly the way they went through there, and I thought we all had broken eardrums [by the] time we got out of there.

McIntosh: I expect.

Statz: But uh, I never did see a Japanese in there. I never did see a Japanese soldier. But we were sent down there to just kind of clean up security, and the two Marines, with my fellow and myself. I think it was a total of about eight or nine Marines over there, and each two Marines took two sailors. And that way they didn't have to have a lot of Marine power.

McIntosh: Tell me about food.

Statz: Well, we were on our own.

McIntosh: But you had your hundred-yard base; did that have any supplies?

Statz: We had a hundred-yard dock there, and while we were tied to the dock we could walk up to the mess tent. And after the first typhoon, everything was gone, and we would go out and beg off the ships what came back into the harbor after the typhoon, 'cause they cleared the harbor for the typhoons, sent all the ships to sea, where they had some room.

McIntosh: Did they call you mud peddlers[?]

Statz: Well, it was—no, I'm sorry, it would be fall—late summer into early fall, I would think, of '45, cause I got out of the service—

McIntosh: Before or after the end of the war?

Statz: Oh, that was after the end of the war.

McIntosh: But, during the war, when your so-called base was operating, you got and received food and supplies and mail from other ships—is that correct?

Statz: Uh, for mail we had to go over to Okinawa to a place called White Beach. And they had a tent set up for mail, and—

McIntosh: A Navy facility.

Statz: I suppose. To be honest, I don't remember which it was. I suppose it was Navy. And uh, we'd go there and tie up to one of their floating docks, and one of the boys would run up and pick up the mail for our whole group. And so we didn't have to go over every couple of days; we'd go about once every ten days, and we'd send a different boat about every other day.

McIntosh: For all [unintelligible] the boats?

Statz: We'd pick up the whole island; we'd pick up all Fukushima, anything addressed to Fukushima, we picked it up and brought it back. We were the mail boats at that time.

McIntosh: Was the mail pretty good? I mean, [unintelligible], not too late?

Statz: Oh, I guess so, uh— Gee, I don't know, I don't know that I can remember—

McIntosh: You don't remember anything special?

Statz: No, I can't remember anything special about that. It seems that probably, we probably had it in three weeks, anyway.

McIntosh: Mm-hmm. That's pretty good. How about food?

Statz: Well, the food at the mess tent, uh, when we were not doing—

McIntosh: That's where you picked up your food, also?

Statz: No, we went out to the ships. They had a couple of concrete ships; actually, poured concrete, they looked like great big LCMs [Landing Craft, Mechanized]. Big [unintelligible].

McIntosh: They didn't have any LCDs, or any LSDs [Landing Ship Dock], there were only big supply ships?

Statz: Well, this was thick, [unintelligible] concrete? I can't remember all the numbers and the names, I'm sorry, but uh, these were poured concrete ships. No power of their own, they were floated across, and they were just used for floating warehouses. And we could go out there every, uh, 'bout once a week, cause our refrigeration facility was sure pretty small, so we couldn't get into get anything that had to be refrigerated over a day or two. So we were pretty much on our own.

McIntosh: This is on board your boat.

Statz: On board my boat, yeah. And we finally made a deal with one of the supply barges, we called 'em, "[USS] Lignite"—for some reason I still remember "Lignite"—and the [unintelligible] in charge of that, he had, I suppose, three or four enlisted men to help load onto those that were picking up food and supplies. Uh, made a deal with him. We would go pick up his mail or take him in to where he wanted to go in exchange for—

McIntosh: Better food.

Statz: Better food. 'Course his food, his frozen chicken and frozen steaks, all came in cases, so we had to take a whole case of everything. And we would take the cases and go back and sell it to some of the guys. Not in our own outfit, we'd give our guys [some], but to the—

McIntosh: Other boats?

Statz: Other people on the shore that wanted a better meal; we'd sell them steaks and uh—

McIntosh: What did you get in return for those?

Statz: Well, I think for a steak, we probably got seventy-five cents or something like that, or fifty cents. And when we'd get enough money—uh, twenty

dollars, 'cause we didn't draw our pay over there—I think I drew about ten dollars a month.

McIntosh: You mean, you didn't have a use for it. You didn't need it.

Statz: We had no use for it, yeah. And uh, just left it. And if we'd gather up enough money from selling all of our ill-gotten gains, we would go up to one of the air fields, Yontan Airstrip [Yontan Airfield]. And the C-46s that the army had on these strips were all operated—no, I shouldn't say operated—but under the control of master sergeants, and the pilots that flew them were assigned to go take plane number so-and-so and go do something with it. So, you really, to get to the man in authority of all these airplanes, you'd go to the sergeant. And we would go to the sergeant and give him twenty dollars for each one of us for a round trip, and we could go anywhere we wanted, usually over the Shanghai area. And we'd get three flights for twenty dollars, and so we could tour a little bit. This was after the war was declared over. And so we managed to get around a little bit. Most of our survival for food and travel was kind of a survival situation.

McIntosh: You mentioned the kamikaze nearby. Was that a problem? The kamikaze—

Statz: Uh, they hit one ship. I don't know where the heck they could have come from, but they came from—I think they came from the West. I'm trying to remember the direction of our island, how it was laid out. But I think they came from the West; I couldn't figure out how they could get that far. 'Cause they were kamikaze planes, and we were in the south end of Okinawa. So where they heck did they get there? We never figured that out. But uh, no, it was only those two instances, two kamikaze. We watched them go out and they'd stay so close to the water you'd think their props would hit the top of the waves. When they'd get out near the ship, if they wanted to hit, they'd go right straight up in the air, right straight up and then come right straight back down. And uh, one ship was hit. **[End of Tape 1, Side A]** But one plane missed entirely, ship wasn't even moving. And one plane missed entirely, and I don't know what happened to the other two planes that were on the other attack. I never did see what happened there. So that's really about the extent of all my excitement in World War II.

McIntosh: Well, you haven't touched on the typhoon business, though. Tell me about that. This is after the war—?

Statz: Uh, I think the war was over by that time.

McIntosh: I see. You had warning?



Statz: Well, our chief, who stayed up on shore in his tent, would come down and tell us, “There’s a typhoon coming, and I want you guys to secure.” Well, he’s talking to a bunch of kids from the Midwest; what do you secure? All we knew is tie it off the kingpin, which is up in the bow of the boat, which was a four-by-four with a pin through it, and then we’d wrap our lines around that and then to the dock or to whatever we’re tying up to. And there were a lot of large ship buoys held in the harbor, and I’m probably not accurate on this, but I was sure impressed with their size, and they were made out of concrete and steel; those things had to be eight feet across. And they were kind of cone-shaped. And the top of it had an enormous steel ring with a shackle on it, and we would go out and tie it to that. Of course, we were chortling to ourselves the first two typhoons, “Ho ho ho, let’s see it break us loose from this baby.” [laughs] Well, I’ll tell you, it didn’t take long to break us loose. So, about the first three typhoons, most of us, the boats were out in the harbor, going around, just trying to survive. And some of those swells were—

McIntosh: Loose? The boats were loose?

Statz: Oh yes, yeah, we were loose. And those swells were thirty, thirty-five feet high, enormous. And it was a frightening situation. When you put a forty-five foot boat up and a thirty-foot wave comes under, at one point you’re at a balance point and she drops, down you go. I put my helmet on, because my spotlight, which was directly over my head, it had a control handle, like a little wheel that came down, and I was supposed to operate my boat and handle this wheel, and that was a bit of engineering, too, whoever dreamed that one up.

McIntosh: The wheel was to do what?

Statz: The wheel was to turn the spotlight. And so the spotlight, we couldn’t tip it up and down, but we could turn it sideways. [laughs] And the control wheel was about eight, nine inches above the operator’s head, and here’s the wheel house [gesturing to a picture]

McIntosh: Yes, I saw that.

Statz: And [on] that little control roof, was I think about a ten-inch spotlight up there. I could twist it around, but I don’t know what I thought I was supposed to do to tip it, it didn’t tip. But anyway, when a swell would come under, the boat’d drop; the boat would drop faster than my body would drop, and that thing’d hit me in the head. It darn near put me out one time, the first time it happened, and then I got my helmet on. At any rate, the typhoon, we heard later, for whatever truth, that those winds were up to maybe 150, 180 miles an hour. And I think there were only five of us

left, six of us for the last typhoon. And what they did, it got so bad, we completely broke loose. We learned how to tie our boats to the buoys so that we would stay. But it got so bad that we were afraid we were gonna get pulled forward and drop on top of those buoys, and we had about a seventy-five to a hundred-foot lead, with about a two-and-a-half inch [unintelligible], that they use on big ships. But what was happening, that [unintelligible] was tearing the kingpin right out of the bow of our boat, tearing it off of the keel where it was attached. And so we had to break loose from that. But uh—

McIntosh: When the boats went down, most of them just got engulfed by the waves and turned turtle and sunk that way?

Statz: No, we lost most of them, including my own boat. The army, we radioed them, and I guess it was some of the army trucks, they had army trucks; they lined them up on the beach, with their lights on, 'cause most of this was at night. And we were radioed to come in, and that was our guide to come to the beach and they'd run 'em up on the shore. And when I lost my boat, I only had one engine 'cause I'd already hit something with the other prop, and the boat would vibrate too hard, so I shut that engine down. And I went out, drove a couple hundred yards, three hundred yards, maybe, and went in like a surfboard, and one engine just screaming. And of course it was out of the water half the time and that motor would really wind up, but I thought, "You're going down anyway, I don't care what happens to you."

McIntosh: This is its last hurrah, yeah.

Statz: Well, at that time I only had two men left on board; the other two got off. And uh—

McIntosh: Before you got into the storm?

Statz: [When] the storm got bad, two of the men got off. There wasn't any reason for all of us to be endangered, and I had to because it was my boat. And uh, we were out cruising around, surviving somehow, and we got radioed that the lights would be on, the trucks would be lined up on the beach, had to bring 'em in. And I did, and my two boys jumped off, and [unintelligible]. And they had personnel, with ropes tied around, tied to the bumpers of these trucks; and these guys were down on the shore, as close as they could get with the waves coming in, and any time a boat would come in, they'd run out and the crew would jump off the boat and these guys would run out and grab 'em, and—

McIntosh: So they didn't get swept away.

Statz: —swept back out again. And that’s what I did with my boat, and I lost one guy; uh, Michaels, I think his name was. Just before we were going to go in, he’d been scared to death all the time. We all were. But he had his life jacket on, and he a hold of one of the only two rings we had on there, [unintelligible] rings. And he grabbed it and he said, “I’m going.” And when we got in, I wanted to get in fairly close to see where I was gonna put that thing, and then I was heading back out to make my room to come in. And when we got in close, he jumped.

McIntosh: Prematurely.

Statz: Prematurely, he jumped off. Way before; we were maybe a hundred and fifty, two hundred feet off shore yet. And he jumped over, and they never found him.

McIntosh: Never found him. Swept out to sea.

Statz: Never found him. But anyway, I went out a few hundred yards I guess, water in[?]

McIntosh: [Unintelligible] Fifty-fifty?

Statz: I think there was probably as much sweat running down my body as there was water comin’ over the top of that boat [laughs]. But uh, it came in pretty good; it broached as we got real close, and she broached and laid over and I was lucky, I jumped off. There was three guys—

McIntosh: Were you tied in up until that moment or did you want to stay with it?

Statz: No, I wanted loose, I wanted out of there if anything happened. ‘Cause there was only one small hatch, and you had to go up a ladder with three steps on it.

McIntosh: To get out of—

Statz: To get on the deck, to get out of that boat cabin.

McIntosh: Oh, that’s right you were—

Statz: And you only had that much; I wasn’t as big as I am now, but I doubt if that thing was, well, it wasn’t twenty-four inches wide. That hatch—

McIntosh: It wasn’t easy to get out of.

Statz: No. And there was one pipe grab, and they'd grab that and get up this short little ladder, about three steps I think, and pull to the side. There was only maybe two foot of deck there. And there were side nooks[?]

McIntosh: I suppose you worry about that, picture the boat rolling over on you, too.

Statz: I don't think I thought about that. I think I was thinking about, "I hope those guys can get me."

McIntosh: They did?

Statz: Yeah, the guys—

McIntosh: They were right there?

Statz: They were right there. When we came in, I don't think my boat had even gotten really onto the sand before the next wave would suck it out— those guys had me, and they had my other guy, the other one that was left.

McIntosh: Tell me about the boat; what happened to the boat?

Statz: Well, you know, that is really interesting. The boats were all taken back off; I think three of us ended up on the beach. A little side light[?] to that: those trucks that were parked up on the beach, giving us the light, the windows were completely obscured, sandblasted, from the sand off of the beach. And so were the headlights, the glass of the headlights were all sand. Yeah, you couldn't see 'em; they were— burned 'em off. And the paint was off the front of 'em. And they were just scoured by the sand. But at any rate, about two days after the last typhoon when I lost my boat, I can't remember who it was[?], one of my people or somebody, but he came up to me and he said, "Hey, Statz," he said, "I think I got something for you." And he handed me a picture. The one thing I came off that boat with in my possession. I still had glasses on and I had a pair of cutoff shorts, which is all we all wore. My wallet was gone, my watch—I don't know if I even had it at that time. But all my possessions were gone except the shorts I was wearing, and my glasses. And uh, as I said, two days later, a fellow walked up to me and he said, "I got something that belongs to you." And he waved the picture at me and he says, "This you?" And it was a picture that was taken on my boot leave, at my home; there was snow on the ground with my mother and my father, and about a third of the surface of the picture was washed off, but you can still see who it is. I've still got that picture. And he found it on a little island about maybe five, six miles from our island, where my patrol boat, and another one of my group— mine on top of the other. I couldn't get over it. Two boats had landed at different times on the same beach, ended up in the same spot, one on top of the other, and they were both demolished, of course. And he was on a

boat that was sent out looking for people or survivors or anything, you know. When they saw the boats on the beach, why, one of the guys jumped in. They couldn't take that boat [that] they had in; they didn't have a landing craft[?]. And anyway, that's what he found. And I still have that picture framed on the wall at home. It's the only thing I came out of that war with.

McIntosh: So, you're out of business now. Now what?

Statz: Then, we were put in tents, on a native [unintelligible] Okinawa's, with a sweet potato field. And they put the tent in there, and a bunch of cots. And there we were, what was left of our whole outfit, with just a pair of shorts on, that's all any of us had. And uh, laying on army cots without blankets, without a darn thing. And getting these sweet potatoes off the ground. One of the fellows had been on a farm in Kentucky somewhere and I guess they had sweet potatoes. He says, "Boys, these are good to eat!" [Laughs] He was picking em up and scraping em off with his fingernails and borrowed a knife somewhere, and he was eating the things raw. But that was it, that was, uh—

McIntosh: And who fed you there?

Statz: They must have set—

McIntosh: The Army?

Statz: I don't remember, they set up some kind of a station; I'm sure they had one here. So, somewhere there, we set up. When they uh, what'd they do with us? They took us over to the main side over to the main island in Okinawa, to White Beach. And they issued each one of us a set of dungarees and a set of blues, and one pair of shoes, that you're gonna wear with your dungarees or your— doesn't make a difference. But uh, that's all they gave us. And I still had my dog tags on, 8682692. I don't think anybody ever forgets that number, do they? I think the first thing they did with you in the service, they tattooed it in your brain. [laughs]

McIntosh: That was associated with your pay number, you know; you had to write that number down; if you couldn't write that number down, you didn't get paid. So I think everybody remembered that.

Statz: [Laughs] I forgot about that. I'd forgotten why you'd remember a number like that; that's it. But then we were put on another, I think it was an APA [Attack Transport Ship] coming home, another transport. And it came directly into San Francisco, and went under the Golden Gate at 2:00 in the morning, and the speaker came on about 1:00 I suppose, to announce that we were going under the Golden Gate within the next hour. And I'd say

half of the crew, or half of the troops on there, there were a lot of us, went up on top side, 'cause there were cars up there. And they honked, waved—

McIntosh: On the bridge?

Statz: Yep. And it thrilled the hell out of us. Yeah, that's a good one. That's a good memory. And they put us into a dock—

McIntosh: You quickly went home?

Statz: Uh, pretty much. They put us in a warehouse with a podium, and a man said, of course we had no gear, and we're practically wearing what we own, so what's the problem? And they said, "Your name will be called off," and we had to register, because they didn't have anything on us. We had to re-register over in Okinawa, and I guess those records weren't with us. And [they said,] "You're on liberty until we call your name." So I had one crew member with me, a fellow from North Dakota. And he and I decided, "Well, we got this set of blues on; let's go out."

McIntosh: You probably had a lot of money. Did you get paid?

Statz: Uh, we didn't have any money. We still hadn't gotten paid. No, I got all my money over in Great Lakes, got that in Great Lakes. Didn't have any money; somebody had some money, I think I borrowed five dollars from somebody. I hope I gave it back to him, I can't remember. But uh, we went into San Francisco and we had quite a night. Phew! We had quite a night. Got back about ten in the morning. There wasn't any muster, there wasn't anything, it was just, "If you wanna go home, you better be here when we call your name." And so we went in and fell asleep—we'd been up most of the night. And I finally got a hold of one of the SP's [Shore Patrol] or master-at-arms or somebody there, and asked him where I can find out if my name had been called. [He asked,] "When'd you get here?" [I said,] "Three days ago." Well, somehow, either he told me or I went up someplace but anyway, my name had been called, and I missed my train. And they had a cure for people like myself, who weren't around to get there, they put us all on one train. All the misfits, I 'spose, were there, cause we weren't around to get this chance[?]. [Pause] And uh, they took us all to the railroad station and put us on a train straight through to Great Lakes, and I think I was only in Great Lakes maybe a day, day and a half, something like that.

McIntosh: Now, go back a bit—you said you got a chance to go to Shanghai?

Statz: Yeah.

McIntosh: Tell me about that.

Statz: Well, we flew over to Shanghai to what they call the “standard oil docks”—

McIntosh: You had a week for that?

Statz: No, no, no, we had twenty dollars to get there, and when we got there, we monkeyed around, fooled around and traded a little bit. We had some packages of cigarettes—

McIntosh: But you were allowed a week?

Statz: Well, we weren’t allowed anything, we were—

McIntosh: Oh, you did it on your own.

Statz: We didn’t report to anybody. Well, I guess I’ll put it this way. By the time the war was over, there was no muster, there wasn’t anything. There was no food given to us. And our gasoline, we’d have to go out to one of the barges and uh—

McIntosh: Nobody paid any attention to you?

Statz: No, we were totally loose.

McIntosh: So these trips to Shanghai were just something [unintelligible]

Statz: We could go anywhere we wanted. I used to hitchhike around Okinawa. I spent some time up at Naha [Okinawa], but that was just a mass of rubble, and so there wasn’t any [unintelligible] But we were loose; we had nothing to do. We had a boat, we had a nice big boat. The hospital ships were in; the [USS] Hope, [USS] Cherokee, and I forgot what the other one was. But there were three of ‘em; they came into Buckner Bay. And they had turned our little island of Fukushima into an officers’ recreation area. And they’d built a respectable building there, some kind of corrugated thing, and I understand it had a barn. So the nurses and the officers could come from the hospital ships in for their parties. And, like I say, we were pretty much on our own—

McIntosh: They didn’t have one for the enlisted men?

Statz: No. Our entertainment was to jump off the boat naked and go swimming. [laughs]

McIntosh: Did you have access to beer from time to time?

Statz: Uh, that was some of the deals we made with the man on the Lignite. When we'd go out and get his mail, why, we'd get cases of beer. We could buy bottles of beer; some of the officers were selling beer that they could buy in the recreation hall that was twenty dollars a bottle. Twenty dollars at that time was, you know, that was a quarter of my pay. Not quite, but I wasn't about to spend that kind of money.

McIntosh: So, with this deal you arranged with this air force, you got yourself to Shanghai.

Statz: Yeah. And we'd just go there and wander around and—

McIntosh: Was that an easy trip?

Statz: Oh yeah.

McIntosh: Couple hours?

Statz: I don't know. I really don't. Boy, the things that have gone.

McIntosh: [Laughs]

Statz: But we didn't really do anything; as I say, we went over there with cigarettes, and we came back. I had a beautiful Mandarin coat at one time, gorgeous coat, a silk garment with, I suppose, with gold trim. It was sure pretty. And I thought, "I'm gonna take that home to my fiancée"—who will then be my wife—I was gonna take that home to her. [I thought,] "Boy, will she love this." Well, there were fellows coming, they're still being shipped over there; the war hadn't cranked down enough that they'd stopped all shipments of personnel to Okinawa. The war's over, there are still troop ships coming in. So here are these fellows, the war's over, there's nothing for them to do, and they couldn't go home with any wonderful souvenirs. So I guess they felt kinda bad. So I was offered a hundred dollars for that silk garment. And I looked at it, and I thought, "Well, no; Pat doesn't know I got this thing, and I could use the hundred bucks."

McIntosh: [unintelligible][laughs]

Statz: [Laughs] So, the hundred dollars felt better in my pocket than that silk. I'd have lost it anyway.

McIntosh: Was there a place to eat and drink that was satisfactory in Shanghai?

Statz: Uh, we didn't really get very far off of the docks—yeah, that's right, we didn't go into anywhere. We were too shy, too scared. And we were told



not to go in there without at least two to three men, I think it was. “Never go alone, and always go armed.” So I think there was always two or three of us.

McIntosh: You carried side arms?

Statz: We carried side arms. By that time we had side arms. By that time we had more side arms than we needed to survive.

McIntosh: I see how loose things were.

Statz: Oh, like I say, when the war was over, we were—

McIntosh: On your own.

Statz: We were just totally on our own. For food, for anything. There was no muster, as I mentioned awhile ago. [We were told,] “Go do what you wanna do”, and we did. And the biggest problem we had was just being able to make deals for our food, and gasoline for the boat. And I remember Thanksgiving, Thanksgiving over there, a destroyer let us come aboard for Thanksgiving dinner, but we had to go into Okinawa ‘cause we were way out in the bay, way out in the harbor. We had to go in and pick up some stuff for one of the officers, I suppose a captain or whoever. But he needed something and he wanted it quick. So the deal was, “How would you boys like to have Thanksgiving dinner with us?” [unintelligible]

McIntosh: [Unintelligible]

Statz: So we took our expensive big patrol boat and went in and—

McIntosh: This was a destroyer, huh?

Statz: Yeah, it was a full destroyer.

McIntosh: It was probably a commander, then.

Statz: Probably. I just can’t remember. I remember, though, we were—I think it was a boatswain maybe, or—a rated man. Anyway, we were turned over to him. And I came up alongside and my boys got off and then they came up alongside the stern and they tied me off there, and I got off. And we had a real nice, still got the menu. They even issued a little menu, little bitty thing like this. And uh—

McIntosh: And the food was good?

Statz: Oh, after what we had, chewin' your shoe leather would have been good.  
[laughs]

McIntosh: They didn't issue you any pay rations or anything like that, army type stuff? You never had to deal with that?

Statz: No. But I had mentioned awhile ago the officers' recreation, and they used us for taxi cabs after awhile, and we really resented that. We're here to fight a war [unintelligible].

McIntosh: Between ships?

Statz: From the hospital ships into the officers' recreation area. And so—

McIntosh: You used your boat.

Statz: Using my boat, yeah. I thought "Hey, I'm not your taxi cab driver." But, so we were sent out to bring the nurses in, and I'd go out and I'd have maybe six or eight ladies on the port, and sometimes more because they threw them up at forward cabin. There were about three or four, 'cause I had to bench my bunk with my bench in back of me. And then the cabin aft, as I said, with two long benches, that would hold at least four gals on each side of the table. And they saw that we had lemons in there—we'd made a deal somewhere along the line, and we had lemons in there. And they saw the lemons [and they said,] "Ohhhh, where did you get the lemons?" So, the end result of the whole thing was we made a deal: we know there's a beach, and we've got some steaks, and we've got a couple cases of beer, and if you ladies would like to have more fun than going into that officers' club, doing all of that. So the gals, four of 'em went with us.

McIntosh: So what?

Statz: Well, the ladies went with us and we just went up to a beach and it was all on the up-and-up and we had a great time. We all went swimming, and nobody had swimsuits, of course—

McIntosh: No horsin' around?

Statz: It was too many— [laughs]

McIntosh: Boy, I thought this was gonna be a real good story.

Statz: [Laughs] Well, I can't say it all in front of the camera for heaven's sakes—

McIntosh: Why not?

Statz: Well, anyway, we had an interesting time and we picked the same ladies up later, in a week or so later. And per cab ride into the shore [unintelligible]. But at any rate, we had a very interesting time.

McIntosh: Oh, that's nice. You ever keep track of those few people?

Statz: No, unfortunately. One fellow, one of my crew members, in fact his picture's in here, he used to come up and lay down on my bunk, my dimension [of the] forward cabin, and go to sleep. And I hadn't had contact with anybody I was in the service with, until about a year ago, and I got a letter; oh, I got a phone call first. But it turns out it was this fella who now owns a large electrical supply house down south in Virginia somewhere, big wholesale operation. And one of his salesman had been up to Chicago at some kind of a meeting, and he was told to look up in Chicago and look up in Madison. He still remembered my name and where I was from. And the guy found, he tore out the whole page of Statzes, and took it back, and he started calling Statzes. [laughs] And my gosh, we made a connection.

McIntosh: And then?

Statz: And then I sent him copies of most of these pictures I've got here. I asked him if he had any pictures from our Okinawa experience, he said, "No." And I picked out a number of the good ones. But I had a picture of him, I have a picture of him, lying on the bench asleep up there, and I had it made up to a five-by-seven and put a note on there. And he would tell me about his grandchildren, he was married and had grandchildren, and I said, "Here, show your grandchildren what a hero you were in World War II," [laughs], I said, "asleep on your patrol boat." But uh, that was the only contact I had.

McIntosh: You don't keep in contact with him anymore?

Statz: I don't know where anybody is. Never did after that.

McIntosh: Never any meetings, or any of that stuff?

Statz: We were so broke up; I think there was only about forty, forty-five men in their outfit to begin with.

McIntosh: Among all these boats, huh.

Statz: And the boats were all split up and the guys were gone, and the typhoons wiped out so many, there still wasn't hardly anybody to talk to anymore,

really. And the one fella that I was with all the back through to Chicago, lived up in Milwaukee and I ran into him walking down the street in Milwaukee one day. I was over visiting. I'm walking down the street and I said, "Isn't your name Ken Swim?" Here's a stranger walking, and I walked right [up to him and said], "Isn't your name Ken Swim?" He says, "Yes, you son of a bitch, are you Fred Statz?" And I said, "Yeah!" He says, "I remember you. I remember you made me scrub the damn decks all the time." But uh, that was the only contact I ever had outside of this gentleman that called me and we exchanged pictures and family pictures. He kept saying he was gonna come up and drive up through this way and I kept telling him I was gonna come down that way—

McIntosh: Those things never happen.

Statz: Never happened.

McIntosh: Did you join any veterans' groups when you got out of the service?

Statz: Uh, VFW [Veterans of Foreign Wars], that's it.

McIntosh: You're not active in that?

Statz: No.

McIntosh: And did you use the G.I. Bill?

Statz: My father did. My father owned a business here in town, and being of good German extraction, why the older son was expected to be part of the business and inherit it, and uh—

McIntosh: The business was?

Statz: Wholesale retail painting and wallpaper and picture frames, and so forth. Right here in the Capitol Square. Or, a block off the square. And uh, so, the money, I'm not sure how they worked that, but I was supposed to have fifty-two dollars a week, was it?

McIntosh: Twenty dollars a week, for fifty-two weeks.

Statz: That's it. Okay, well my father took the twenty dollars a week and paid me thirty, and I was working for fifty dollars a week, sixty-six hours a week, seven in the morning 'til six at night. I don't know how long, until my father, bless his soul; he came up the hard way, and he said, "You're darn sure, I came up hard enough that I knew what the good times would be if they ever got my way [laughs]." But, yeah, that was the advantage we took of the fifty-two, twenty a week, yeah. He got the twenty and then added

thirty dollars to it and paid me fifty, for sixty-six hours. Once one of our sons used to say something [like], “You guys don’t even know what work and hours and money is.” “You’re talking to the wrong guy, just drop it.” So that was pretty much it. It was all, nothing really exciting.

McIntosh: Oh, it was exciting, I thought.

Statz: Like my father used to say, he said, “I wouldn’t take a million dollars for that experience in World War I, but they wouldn’t give me[?] a million dollars to go do it again. Never.” It happened, it’s done with, it’s behind me. I was in the service just over three years, three weeks.

McIntosh: He was in the army?

Statz: He was an army man, uh, in the motor division. He kept an interest in different people, different ways. He kept a diary of his year and a half in the service, in a small like-spiral notebook, it’s very small. He entered whatever date: “Fort Sheridan, date,” “Left Sheridan, date,” “Arrived, date.” One page of this whole thing is just exactly that. “Arrived to Paris,” “Left Paris,” or Versailles, or whatever, and the date. And that’s his whole army career on one page. **[End of Tape 1, Side B]**

McIntosh: One page?

Statz: I have it framed, also. So, there was—

McIntosh: A Calvin Coolidge [laughs].

Statz: Really, really brevity[?] But that’s really all my experience in the war.

McIntosh: That’s excellent, that’s excellent, yeah.

Statz: Not that interesting.

McIntosh: Oh, it’s very interesting.

**[End of interview]**