

Wisconsin Veterans Museum  
Research Center

Transcript of an

Oral History Interview with

FRANK URBANOWICZ

Gun crew, *USS Frank Talbot*, Navy, World War II  
*USS Philippine Sea*, Navy, Korean War

2007

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**Urbanowicz, Frank**, (1925- ). Oral History Interview, 2007.

User Copy: 2 sound cassette (ca. 108 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Copy: 2 sound cassette (ca. 108 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Transcript: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

**Abstract:**

Frank Urbanowicz, a Chicago, Illinois native, describes his Navy experience aboard the *USS Frank Talbot* in World War II and touches on his time aboard the *USS Philippine Sea* during the Korean War. Born in Connecticut and educated in Chicago, Urbanowicz recalls being drafted in 1944. He describes his journey to Pearl Harbor (Hawaii) and being run across to his ship, the *USS Ralph Talbot* (DD 390), on a breeches buoy. He touches on shore bombardments at Tinian, Yap, and Peleliu. At Tinian, Urbanowicz recalls seeing Japanese civilians jumping off Suicide Cliff. He describes being on a twenty millimeter gun crew. He briefly talks about stopping at Eniwetok to provision and Manus, where they were indoctrinated into the Order of Neptune with cherry juice fermented on the life rafts. Urbanowicz speaks of hit and run tactics on Iwo Jima, Luzon, Formosa, Manila, and Clark Field. Low on fuel and provisions, he says the men joked that weevils in the flour were fresh meat. He describes maneuvering the Surigao Straits and doing bombing in the South China Sea, where they hit rough waters. Urbanowicz highlights the difficulty of dealing with Japanese night tactics. He describes seeing the *USS Franklin* and the *USS Belleau Wood* hit by kamikaze planes and escorting the damaged carriers back to the base at Ulithi. He relates the difficulty of capturing the downed crew of a Japanese bomber without letting them commit suicide. Urbanowicz recalls being involved in the Second Battle of the Philippine Sea, worrying about shrapnel, and shooting down planes. He highlights near-misses for both himself and his ship. Urbanowicz describes helping the Marines on Iwo Jima and watching the flags go up. With damaged sonar and gun director, he talks about five weeks in dry dock at Ulithi before being sent out to lay depth charges and do picket duty. He reports the crew was often upset by their Captain being too eager to send the ship into action. He recalls a stretch of thirty-five days with the alarm going off, so the crew couldn't even change clothes or shower. Urbanowicz speaks of being hit by two kamikaze planes, getting fires put out and flooding under control, six men being killed, and putting into dry dock at Kerama-retto. He describes the fear felt in combat—knowing what needs to be done and getting the shakes afterward. Urbanowicz recalls Tokyo Rose playing good music and threatening his ship by name. He examines the effect of the Japanese switching to daylight raids. He recalls seeing the damage and dead aboard several ships at port, and he recalls the Japanese hitting the hospital ship *Comfort* even though it was clearly marked with red crosses. Urbanowicz reveals the crew was upset while at Saipan because the Army had a nice set up while the Navy had to throw together their own spot. Sent to investigate debris in the water, he reports finding two life rafts with survivors from the cruiser *Indianapolis*. In the water for five nights and four days, he describes the survivors as having severe skin damage and shark bites, being delirious and thirsty, and

not having enough life jackets. After hearing rumors the war was over, Urbanowicz states they witnessed the surrender of Truk Island and the city of Sasebo (Japan). Sent to Nagasaki, he reports he was allowed to go ashore seven times as a mail clerk, and he details the devastation, bomb shells, and poor sanitation that he witnessed. He recalls struggling later with the VA to establish claims about radiation damage. Sailing for home, he recalls displaying a homeward bound pennant, being charged exorbitant prices at Pearl Harbor for food, and being disappointed with the homecoming celebration. Without enough points to get out, he discusses anchoring at Hilo, hearing a commotion about rats invading the ships, and, an hour after leaving, hearing a tidal wave had wiped out Hilo city. Urbanowicz reports that the Navy Department rated the *Talbot* as the second most combatant ship in World War II, and he emphasizes that the crew still meets and provides scholarships for attending the Naval Academy. He briefly talks about being called from reserve duty in 1950 for the Korean War. Assigned to the *USS Philippine Sea*, Urbanowicz states they did thirty-day cruises. He claims, "There are no atheists on destroyers," but he says their ship was too small to have a chaplain. He recalls times that Admirals would not stop to pull survivors out of the water. Urbanowicz describes his long struggle to get compensation for hearing loss and to put a memorial in a park in Janesville (Wisconsin). He talks about marching in an ANZAC Day parade in Australia and complains that in Janesville the Disabled American Veterans were charged a head tax to march in a Memorial Day parade.

Interviewed by John Driscoll, 2007.

Transcribed by Joseph Dillenburg, 2008.

Abstract by Susan Krueger, 2009.

**Interview Transcript:**

John: Ok, I'm John Driscoll and today is April 3, 2007. And this is an oral history interview with Frank Urbanowicz, a veteran of the United States Navy in World War II. And Frank, thanks an awful lot for coming up from Janesville and agreeing to the interview.

Frank: It's my pleasure.

John: Why don't we start at the very beginning? When and where were you born?

Frank: I was born on August the Fourteenth, 1925 in Stamford, Connecticut. My father was a Polish immigrant who come to this country in 1913. After World War One, he did serve four years in the Navy, he come out as a Machinists Mate, Second Class. We lived in Connecticut until about 1929 when his family migrated to Chicago. I say his family, well, his sister and his father, well his mother also was born over in Poland so they come to Chicago. He came, he went to work for Western Electric and then when he hurt his back, of course in those days they had no union, no hospitalization, and he was laid off. So we, we suffered the depression in Chicago. In about 1939 he got a job with the government at the Rock Island Arsenal as a tool and die maker. So in 1940 we moved to Rock Island, Illinois.

John: Great. Okay, okay. How about school?

Frank: Well, I had eight years of grammar school in Chicago. I started Lane Tech [Albert Grannis Lane Technical High School, today Lane Tech College Prep High School in Chicago], which at that time was the largest boys school in the country, had over 8000 boys. Quite a—it was like a tech school, they had everything, sail boat making, they had the first drivers course in the country set up by WPA [Works Progress Administration]. When we moved I went to Rock Island High School. They had no mechanical courses so I did the best I can when I had to register for the draft, they sent me notices and they said we'll be calling you shortly. So I dropped out after my third year. Never did go back for a G.E.D. or that—And I went to work in a factory that made waterproof containers for shipping containers overseas until called in. And when I got called in I took the train to Chicago and then we, they boarded us on the old North Shore [Chicago, North Shore and Milwaukee Railroad] from Chicago to Great Lakes and went in to boot training. We had six weeks of boots.

John: Frank, when did you go in?

Frank: I went in on May the second of 1944. Got my six weeks in, got a week of leave and because I was fairly good with electricity they said "well, we'll send you to radio school." And I was looking forward to that. I was also qualified to go to submarine school and I couldn't understand why. In fact I couldn't understand

why I went to begin with because a silver tube in my right ear due to three operations. But when I got back, my anticipation went down the drain because they said we need men. We were there about three days, put on the troop train, four days cross country. Got to Camp Shoemaker, excuse me, for two days and then bussed to Treasure Island, put on the troop ship to Pearl Harbor, five day crossing, stayed there two days. And then about twenty of us, that were all assigned to destroyers. And just a little back-up, I was assigned to the destroyer U.S.S. Ralph Talbot, DD 390. It was at Pearl Harbor, it was one of the first ships to get underway and they did shoot down a plane, possibly two and also a possible sub sinking. But then, back to me, they put me on the fleet oiler with about twenty others, eight of us assigned to this Ralph Talbot. Well, we traveled about two days at sea and we met up with a convoy and they fueled the Ralph Talbot, plus we went and got ammo and that. And to get across, they run the breeches buoy.

John: Oh boy! (Laughs) That's fun isn't it?

Frank: It (laughs)--you know people had talked about that. So we got a good first-hand experience with it, riding across. In there with two ships going about twelve miles an hour and bouncing up and down and you're at the will of the guys pulling you across. So we got on and after we pulled away, why, I got assigned to the deck duty, up on the forward deck duty, got my bunk assigned. First day wasn't much, second day was just getting broke in and getting to learn the rigamarole. So our first experience or my first experience was out at Saipan. We did shore bombardment at Saipan, sort of a mop-up deal. Then they relieved us there and they—We did some bombardment at Tinian. Then we went up to Guam. We did shore bombardment at Tinian. And that was my first look at how fanatical the Japanese were. They—there was a cliff and they have another name for it, Suicide Cliff, where people would throw the children, the old ones off the top and then jump about two hundred feet into the sea. So you saw that, you saw the bodies floatin'. And—just step back a moment. I was assigned to a twenty millimeter gun crew. I was on the port side, just forward of the bridge and had two five-inch guns in front of me. And every time those guns fired of course, you got the brunt of it. And when they fired off the port side, why, it kinda shook you. And that's something that me and the Veterans Administration have been under great difficulty in trying to get them to understand that, that shock. But after that we went down to Eniwetok and got some provisions. And then we did some convoying, then down to Yap. We did, worked with a couple carriers down at Yap. They bombed it. We went in and did shore bombardment, us and another cruiser. Then a sub that was out on safety duty, they would look for pilots that ditched, they come up and they fired their guns and then they got out of there, went back on station. Then we hit Palau or Peleliu depending on how you want to call it. And from there we went down to Manus in the Admiralty Islands and, of course going down there you're going south of the Equator so we all got indoctrinated into the Order of Neptune. And one of the last things we had to do, and I think the fella's had some advance warning on it because they dumped all

the water out of the beakers in the life rafts and they filled it with cherry juice. And for about two weeks in that hot bouncing sun, it fermented. And it was potent, believe me, nobody took more than half a glass. But, we went down the Admiralty, to Manus in the Admiralty Islands and it was a beautiful place. But we only stayed there two days and then we started out and we find out we were in the big leagues, they put us out with the big carriers. So we headed northwest and spent a couple days again around Yap. Palau, they were bombing Palau, in fact they invaded it. And then we took off and they told us that we're on a dangerous mission that casualties are to be expected. If by chance you happen to be captured, you're only to give your name and rank. Well, that didn't set too good. But as we went up and the carriers hit Iwo Jima the first time and we sat up there for about two more days and hit it. And we were on a hit and run tactic. They would run down, would run down to Luzon and hit Luzon the first night. Then we come back up and hit Iwo again. Then we went down to Leyte and hit Leyte. Then run up to Formosa and we hit Formosa, stayed around there for two days and bombed it. Then back down to Luzon and Manila and Clark Field. This sojourn took us out at sea for forty-two days without basically seeing land. And in the mean time the American troops had invaded Luzon, but the Army Air Force was slow in getting their planes up and the head of our task force, which was 38 point something like four, he was hollerin' because we're getting low on fuel, bombs, provisions. We were begging every time we went alongside for fuel we were begging for something. We got a lot of flour with weevils in it and we get, we were down to rations of two pieces of toast, and a bowl of tomato soup.

John: Oh, good lord!

Frank: And we made a big joke of the weevils being "fresh meat." Then we got some Australian, New Zealand mutton and butter. That stuff was rancid. It was—we didn't eat too much of it. Then we run into rough seas, the typhoons. And it was hard to eat then. They made cold sandwiches when they could. So after thirty-eight days at, on this trip we back down to Ulithi, stayed there for a couple days. Then we loaded up again, seemed like we took on extra provisions. We now into, towards the end of November of forty-four and we got our orders to go out. It was quite a fleet. It was about, as I recall in doing some checking up here the last two weeks, there was about twenty-three destroyers, including one Australian, a couple DEs [destroyer escorts], we had carriers with us and jeep carriers and battleships with us. It was one of the largest forces assembled. And the second day out we got further instructions, we're going on a dangerous mission, the possibility again of heavy casualties is very possible. They give us instructions that if you're captured, name and rank only. They told us if we happened to get ashore, how to contact Philippine natives that would take care of us. And they also stated in a joking way, which was not a joke—and actuality, we found out later was that if a pregnant Filipino woman looked at you, stared at you, it's because she wants to project your image in to her baby. So when we were up in that area we headed toward Surigao Straits, down by Mindoro. Mindoro Straits is very narrow, doesn't leave you much room for manouvering. So we went through

basically single file at night and then out on the other side into the South China Sea. We did bombing and that up there and as luck would have it nobody really got hurt. The Japs of course came out at us full force and what the jeep carriers and fighter planes were up in the air all the time. Then they went to night tactics, so of course we didn't—we lost a lot of sleep. When we left that area we headed back to Ulithi and then we went back down to Manus again. Provisioned up and then we started back up about three days later. Headed back towards what we thought “well, were gonna to Surigao Straits again.” But no we went strait up the eastern coast of the Philippines and up into the China Sea. And we were told then that China Sea gets very rough. And it was. Like being in the typhoon all over again. And those that are not familiar with the destroyers, their freeboard is very low, probably six feet above the water, and they can be top-heavy. So you roll and bounce, in the heavy weather there we rolled as much as forty-two degrees. Which made a lot of fun because your looking up at the sky at one time and your hands touching the water the second time, the second roll. So we went around into the South China Sea down into the Sulu Sea. Did some more bombing, hit Leyte and Manila again. Went down and hit onto southern part of Luzon and Mindoro. And then we actually at Mindoro there's a group of islands, I can't think of the name of it, that we stopped briefly and took a little R. & R. We never got off the ship but the island was beautiful and it had a beautiful smell to it. They decided we'd have to do some bombardment there, so we did a little shell work. Then as we left there the invasion of Mindoro started and the planes had bombed the island so thoroughly that our troops going ashore basically had no opposition. But that didn't stop the Japs from coming out after us. The planes coming out to us—very rough. In fact this coming out is where the first time the Japanese had tried the suicide planes, the kamikaze. We're under attack with the planes and one of the planes dropped a bomb on the Franklin [U.S.S. Franklin, CV-13], set it afire. And it continued on and hit the carrier Belleau Wood [U.S.S. Belleau Wood, CVL-24] and set that afire. They put the fires out fairly quick and we continued the raid and we after a bit they had us take the carriers back to Ulithi. They detached us and says “take these damaged ones back.” So we did. But just prior to the Franklin getting' hit, it must have been from one of the Formosa raids, we found a Jap “Betty,” [Mitsubishi G4M Medium Bomber] the crew in the water. So they told us to pick 'em up. Well, we spent forty minutes trying to get 'em aboard, they wouldn't do it. Two guys slit their own throats. But they didn't die. And what might have been the senior officer or pilot he come up to the ship and started up the ladder and got about a third of the way up, then stopped. And with one hand holding on and the other had he reached into his tunic and he pulled out a grenade. Well Japanese grenades are the impact type. Not like ours, you pull the pin and throw. You have to hit something. Well he never go a chance to hit the ship because two chief boson mates they fired .45s into him and sent him on to Jap heaven. We did manage to get the other four guys aboard ship. We held 'em for two days and then when we went to transfer them to the carrier Franklin, it—we set up the breeches buoy, and nobody thinking that they would try anything, they, the first guy going across sittin' in that chair, he got about halfway between and he let out a Bonzai scream and

unbuckled the chair and jumped down between the seats, between the ships to go to his death. So then all the others we handcuffed across and to us that was an omen because it was two days later that the Franklin got hit.

John: Oh wow.

Frank: So all during the month of December we played around the Philippines with the carriers. Then we found out that the fleet that we were with, the twenty-three destroyers, they, that was the largest fleet ever assembled that went west of the Philippines. We got several ships damaged by the kamikaze, including the Australian ship and a cruiser. We started the new year out again with the carriers and we went and, kinda went north with them. And they were—went down towards the southern end of the Philippines and got involved in the Second Battle of the Philippine Sea. And of course—the Japs were tricky. We'd go to general quarters because we had bogeys on the screen but, and the fighters would scramble but they could never pick 'em up. And we wondered why. Then we found out later the fighter controllers weren't sending 'em up high enough. And the Jap planes come up very high, over twenty-eight thousand feet, just about their limits. And some of them were spotters, others tried to drop down. And another trick of theirs was coming down over the top of the water, underneath the radar. Then they'd come up. We had very many anxious moments with the planes. It was nothing to have ten, twelve planes at a time attack you. And of course me being on a twenty millimeter, I had a birds-eye view. You would see this stuff, all ships firing. You worried about the shrapnel 'cause what goes up has gotta come down. It looked like rain in the water and you were hoping to heck that your helmet would withstand anything coming down. The smoke was so thick you couldn't see through except when a plane come through the smoke and then, bingo, their opening up. I say a birds-eye view, it was always a scary view. The five-inchers would start shooting at about six miles. Our forty millimeters would start about two and a half miles. When our, we had to shoot with the twenties, why they were only about a mile away. So they were getting close. And you watch these planes, looking, diving down, dropping bombs. Of course we got several near misses. While we were in this action, of course, our executive officer happened to spot a torpedo come towards us. He sounded the alarm we, we did a hard turn and it missed us. The other ships did a hard turn, it missed them. It wasn't long afterwards here come a plane, not much out of the water, headed right towards us and we didn't have much of a chance to move. So we kept shootin' at 'im. And we kind of resolved ourselves. "Well, what do we do when we get hit? He's coming right amidships." But a five inch gun hit him. We think it was a five, maybe it was a forty. Blew it up, blew half the pilot up. Blew him up in the air a ways, got his parachute half opened up. Of course the parachute being white, his blood on it being red, looked like he was coming down wrapped up in a Japanese flag. So a sigh of relief went up on that one. There was many other occasions that we had like that. Near misses, a near miss is something within three hundred feet, if not closer. And you watch the other ships. You're seeing these other ships get hit. It wasn't long afterwards when the Franklin got



hit, the second time, and she got in tremendous trouble. One heck of a fire and all we could do was just sit there and look at it blow up, ammunition going and that. She took quite a lickin'. The Belleau Wood took the bad lickin'. And men were jumping off the ships and trying to get away but a lot of them didn't. In fact they rescued over eight hundred men out of the water. Ships were going, destroyers were going in close with, putting hoses on it. And men were dodging shrapnel coming out of the firearms ammunition blowing up. Just like when we blew up that plane that close one guy was burnt on his face from the concussion of the blast. So when they finally got that settled down, that's when they told us we had to take 'em into Ulithi. We felt a little relieved in a way to get, to get outta there.

John: I can imagine, yeah.

Frank: That wasn't long because we turned around and went right back out there and spent all of January, the new year we was out between the Philippines, Formosa, Okinawa they were bombing. Then they sent us back to Ulithi. We joined the carriers again and went back up to Iwo Jima. In the meantime the heavy seas had damaged our sonar so they, they said we're basically useless for submarine action. So we went into doing shore bombardment. We anchored—[unintelligible]

John: I don't know what that is, I think we're still running. Ah let me--Ok, we're back on. In fact, I'll tell you what, let me—

**[End of Tape 1 Side A]**

John: Ok, go ahead, we're on.

Frank: Well, they detached us to help out the Marines on Iwo. We circled the island doing shore bombardment. Then they assigned us to help the Marines out. We dropped the anchor about five hundred yards off shore. One thing about the Marines they always had a captain as a spotter. So we would fire at his command and evidently we did quite a job because he would come back and say "well done, right on target," and so forth. We were close enough that we could hear the noise from the beach, we could see the fire, the firing, the flame throwers working, hear the screams. When the Japs decided that maybe we were too close they started picking on us, so we had to pull the anchor and move out a little bit. And then the—some of the other battleships and cruisers were also firing and one of the battleships was missing the island completely and firing over us and into the water behind us and it sounded like a freight train going over the top of ya. And of course our planes are out there bombing all the time. And at night we would run with a searchlight on watching for barges, guys trying to get through, around the lines and we shot up a few barges on that. Now we took up a spot on one end of the island and we worked it over and it was on the opposite side of the island and then they relieved us. Told us to go back to where we were. And right after we left, why the cruiser that relieved us, they got hit by shellfire, so we felt lucky there. But going around the tip of the island, why bingo, there's someone looked

and said “oh, there’s a flag up there.” So of course that was the first flag. So it wasn’t long afterwards somebody said “the flag is gone.” And then pretty soon the second one come back up. So we stayed up at Iwo for over two weeks, doing bombardment and looking, doing coastal survey and moving out and doing, trying to do some sub contact. And they sent us back to Ulithi for repairs ‘cause we had been pretty well banged up as far as the sonar and then our gun director was starting to act up. And I don’t know if you call it good luck or what we—but we spent about five weeks in Ulithi. They couldn’t fix us to begin with in dry dock but as long as we were in dry dock we got the ship dry, scraped it and repainted it, waiting for parts from the U.S. Finally the sonar parts come out. Of course we had a Captain that was an eager beaver. Oh god how he wanted to get out there on the line. Had to get out there and he finally talked ‘em out, even though our director wasn’t working quite right. And we got out, so they said “Okay, take this convoy up to Okinawa.” Well we were not all that happy ‘cause we had seen ships come in and they were pretty well battered up. And one of them, you wondered how the heck they limped in. There was a lot of ‘em, as I understand, still had some of their dead in. And it worried us a little bit because in earlier actions with all the near misses we had, all the constant air raids, we had been from the break of dawn until dusk under constant air attack. There was one stretch of about thirty-five days that we didn’t take our clothes off. We slept in the same clothes. You basically didn’t take a shower, a cold water shower or a saltwater shower because you never knew when the alarm was going off. So after seeing what we did, we thanked our lucky stars and said “Well, the good lords watching over us.” And then—because our Captain was so eager to see action again, he didn’t like this laying around, we took a convoy and headed up towards Okinawa. En route we picked up a sub contact so us and another destroyer, we started laying depth charges and that was a new experience. The depth charges, the five hundred pounders that rolled off, the ash cans had quite a jolt to ‘em. If you’re running at high speed and they’re set anywheres from a hundred to three hundred feet deep and they lit the waters up and they bounced the ship around. Of course we had the Y-guns [a type of depth charge gun named after its shape] shooting stuff off the side. After about three runs it started getting dark so we had to leave that action. We think we got the sub but because of our premature leaving we didn’t get official credit for it. But we convoy off at Okinawa. They refueled us. We reprovisioned, new ash cans in, put some more ammunition in. And they said “you’re going out, out on picket duty.” And we said we don’t want that. None of us wanted it. Well, we headed out, oh probably about twenty, about twenty-five miles northeast. There’s an island out there called IE Shima, that’s were Ernie Pyle got killed. Off that island, we were out there and the—we got out there about six-thirty at night, about nine-thirty the general quarters alarm sounded and said bogeys coming towards us. So we says “uh-oh.” It was on the Twenty-sixth of April, 1945. And we of course went and started lookin’, started screening. And they kept coming, coming in, clouds come in and then we lost ‘em. And for some unknown reason, I guess its part of the zigzag problem, the Captain ordered a hard turn left, to port. Well in a way that was a godsend for me because in the direction we were traveling when we got hit, that plane would have

hit right about the front of the bridge, right in my area. But as we were turning the first plane hit us right at the waterline, just off the fantail, probably about twenty-five feet off the fantail. The engine lodged into a sleeping compartment. On the earlier destroyers they had open gun mounts on the two rear ones, on the fantail. The wing broke off and slid across hittin' the—let's see, it was six, eight, nine, hittin' ten men. One man was cut in two pieces, they picked him up, looked at him and threw him overboard. And in the meantime, gasoline from the plane had started a fire on, on the deck, close to the depth charges and that. And a bosons mate, who was awarded a Silver Star for his actions there, he picked up a fire hose and he swept that fire into the sea. Which was a good thing because the second plane come down and he hit that fire and there was no more than about fifty yards off the ship when it hit. Then they started looking after the wounded. They took 'em all down to sick bay. There was six men who had their legs basically cut off at the knees. Most of it was just hanging by a thread, they were pretty well bleeding. And this was about ten minutes to nine that they got hit. By four o'clock in the morning all six of 'em were dead, died from shock, loss of blood. We had three other wounded that we saved. Of course we flooded, the two after living compartments flooded. Captain thought we were in danger of sinking so he put out the word and they sent a tug out to help us with the—we got the flooding under control and so they told us to head back towards Karama-retto, which is a group of islands near a cove about twenty miles south of Okinawa. That was being used as a base. So we limped our way back there at about ten knots. In the meantime it was a constant fight with the Jap planes were out after ya. People don't understand that even though it's dark there's always light out there. And being towards the end of the month your back, getting back up towards the full moon again, so there's an awful lot of light. We got in, they tied us up another, alongside of another ship that was badly damaged and we kinda considered ourselves lucky. They, they held us against that ship for about six days then they put us in the dry dock 'cause our Captain wanted to get back out and see some action. That didn't sit too good. People have talked about the role—how scared were ya? You were scared, but it was a funny type of a scary. You didn't really realize it until it was all over with, that particular action. The adrenaline was running so much into you that you were concentrating on what you were doing and not what was going on. You knew what was going on, you knew you had to watch for the planes, you knew you had to shoot. The twenty-millimeter guns had three men, what they all a loader, the spotter and a gunner. Well the loader and the spotter, the spotter took the empty magazines off but both the spotter and the loader, they watched when you were firing because every third shell was a tracer so you could holler "high" or "low." And so after it was over, then you, then you really got the shakes. But there was many a time, many a time you were generally scared. It a—scared beyond belief. Well we, we got back in, into dry dock. Of course the first thing is no guns to be fired, even during attack. You're liable to knock the blocks out from underneath you and the ship would fall over. But you had to man your guns! That's the worst part, you had to man your guns. And what they did, they sent out small whale boats with the smoke pots and they set up a fog but the dry dock that we were in, that Captain was reluctant

to get his smoke pots out. I don't know if he was paying for it himself or what. We found the crews of the dry dock to be very self-centered. We were a ship that didn't make much ice cream, didn't have modern facilities to speak of like air conditioning and so forth, the ships stores. And they wouldn't wait on us at first, you waited until the end of the line and we found that again later on. They took care of ship's company first. They didn't care about us. They put tarps over the top of our ship. We had a hole, the original hole was twenty by twenty from the plane and then, just to back up a little, when the engine fell out of the plane and the rest of the plane broke loose after the second plane had hit, maybe that plane, his bomb going off jolted him but he hit our propellers and that jarred the ship again and we thought we got hit a third time. But we—we would man it, we could hear the planes flying over us. And Karama-retto was just a cove with a bunch of hills around it. And it was like a graveyard. The ships were coming in and those that they thought were not salvageable they took stuff off of it and they actually sunk 'em in the harbor at Karama-retto. For some unknown reason, well before I get that part, one of the things that was a little scary too, and we found this down off the Philippines, Tokyo Rose would broadcast and tell you "Well, we Ralph Talbot, we know where your at." Name another ship, "Enterprise, we know where your at. We're gonna get ya." When we're in dry dock she come out, "Ralph Talbot we know your in the dry dock at Karama-retto. We're coming out to get ya." "We missed you before but we'll get you this time." But they had good music, that was the nicest part of it, the big band music, Glenn Miller and all of that. So it was a refreshing thought although your sitting there, you know, you're scared. And you're upset because you got a Captain that wants to get glory but the for some unknown reason the Japs went to daylight raids. Which was a disaster for them because then our planes could come up and were shooting them down. They did cause damage and it was frustrating to sit there, watch 'em come over, watch the fighting and not being able to protect your—

John: God, I can imagine. Yeah.

Frank: You know it—you mention something like that to people and you thought "oh my god! How could they do that?" It's easy. And in one of the diaries that I have the, this one Radar man said "The thought of intelligence in the Japanese went away when they started the daylight raids. It showed how stupid they were." Well we spent twenty days getting that hole fixed up. They had to enlarge it to twenty by forty because of damage. We had buckled frames yet. And the only clothes we had was the clothes we had on. All the other clothes were destroyed by water. It put us out of dry dock and they finished up on the ship. They were working basically twenty-four hours because they put a tarp, a couple tarps up to hide the sparks at night, the lights at night. And that didn't sit too good. We told 'em work in the daytime. Finally we got done, got fixed and the old man is hollerin' he wants to get back out. So they put us—give us a convoy to take from Karama-retto up to Buckner Bay at Okinawa. We got up there, they said "Ok, now you go back out on the picket line." Go back up and they said "Gee, this is not for us." We where, the comment was made "The Captain wants to be in the

thick of it, why not put him in a whale boat, give him a machine gun and let him go?" And the—we spent about two days back up on the picket line of course, under fire. And then they detached us, they said we have another duty for us. And lo and behold we couldn't imagine what we were gonna do. So they run us back down to Okinawa and, which wasn't that far away but they refueled us, replenished our ammunition, give us a little more food. And we thought, this, this is not good.

John: If they're taking care of you that's bad.

Frank: Taking too good a care of us. But they put us back with the jeep carriers which we had worked with down in the Philippines. So we had a lot of respect. The jeep carriers were working the China Sea between Okinawa and Formosa, and China. So we had that duty there. And it was relatively calm because the Japanese were coming from the north and on the south we weren't getting bothered. You got an occasional stay come in or again you had the high flyers. And so that felt pretty good. But then they, after oh, towards the end of May we took the carriers back to Ulithi and they tied us up alongside of a destroyer tender in Ulithi to get to finish up repairs on our director, gun director. And they put us between tow destroyers that had been damaged. And that was an awful sight. The one was a newer one, it—the deck from the bridge all the way to the fantail, the back end of it, was just flat. One mass bit of twisted steel. The boiler er, the engine room was open, you could look down into it. That's on one side, on the other side of us is another destroyer that come in that took four suicide planes. It had a hole in it and they cut open the deck, the main deck. And I can't remember the size of the hole, it was fairly large size, but then they lowered men down into it to look for bodies. So they would—you were doing your duty but then you gotta remember the temperature is up there. It's hot. They would bring these bodies up and lay 'em under a quarterdeck on canvas for identification. They would bring up all kinds of pieces and parts of bodies. And the stench was unbelievable. The flies were having a field day. But they had to identify that. And the thought went on, well, life goes on. Death is gonna be a certainty. And one of the fella's says "I wish I had a camera, that I could take pictures and send it back to the states and let those slackers, those conscientious objectors, those union employees hollerin' for more money and that, those that have never done sea duty and laughin' about it in a safe haven, let them come out and see it because you can't describe it, you gotta see it." Which brings back, after we got hit and were in Karama-retto, they, the night that we got hit, we got back, well, the following night there was another big raid at Karama-retto. Well, there was an auxiliary hospital ship that got attacked by the Japanese. It took a suicide plane right in the middle of it. One of our men that was injured was right in there, they never did find him. They knew he was aboard and never did find him. Two others that were injured were off to the side, below decks but off to the side, they were re-injured more severely but they survived. The night after that, the Japanese hit the hospital ship Comfort. All lit up, bright white, big red crosses on it, they hit it amidships and killed quite a few people. So those are the kind of people you put

up with. And that kinda sticks out in your mind. But we didn't, after we got back to Ulithi we got our gun director straightened out and that again, we played around with convoys back and forth between Ulithi and Okinawa. And then we, they shipped us back down to Saipan with a bunch of damaged ships and merchant ships. And we spent two days down at Saipan. One of the days was a work party day, which made us feel very upset and very much in a hole. It seemed like the army had taken the island over, built some beautiful roads for them to go, barracks for the people stationed there, for the officers, built beautiful buildings for the Japanese that were there, but as far as the Navy was concerned we had to create our own recreational spot. They had a part of the island over near what was once a sugar mill that was badly damaged. And we had to go in there and clean it up. Take the brush out, there was no mechanical means it was all hand labor. We had to put fence posts in. You dug it with shovels, no post hole diggers. Another bad feature, there was no toilets there, so you just wandered out into the forests and relieved yourself. There was no water. Those that stayed over night they had little wire spring bunks to sleep on, and fight the mosquitoes and so forth. So when they got back aboard ship, any of us that went on the work party got back, we were glad to at least get our hands clean, get a shower, it was hot. Finally we got the hell out of Saipan. They said go up to Ulithi for further orders. They put us out on picket duty outside of Ulithi. Now Ulithi was one hell of a big navy base. And they—we were about sixty miles out of Ulithi and they send us a message, told us what direction to go, latitude, longitude. Said a patrol plane flying overhead had spotted debris in the water, possibly from a ship. "Make haste at flank speed." Well, that little destroyer was faster than the more modern ones that they had built during World War II. So they kicked it up and we were doing forty-four knots.

John: Oh my god, that's moving! Oh, that's movin'.

Frank: (Laughs) Movin'. For eleven and a half hours we did that. Finally we had to slow down because number one boiler got hot and they didn't want to lose it. So we slowed a little bit, took it off the line, cooled it down, put it back on and resumed speed. And just as, just before dawn was breaking we—

John: We're ok. I'll tell you what Frank, let me, let me—

**[End of Tape 1 Side B]**

John: Okay, go ahead.

Frank: Well, as we got up into the area we saw lights on the horizon. I would imagine we were about six, seven miles away. The Captain immediately put us at general quarters. As we got closer the lights got brighter so we put the big 36 inch searchlight on and started sweeping the water. We spotted two rafts in the water. Now all this time we did not know what we were looking for outside of the fact, possibly men in the water. So we headed towards the two rafts. There were six

men between the two. So we got those men aboard and they were one sad, sorry looking sight. It was then we found out that they were off the cruiser Indianapolis.

John: Oh wow! Oh yeah.

Frank: They had been in the water for five nights and four days, because they went down at night. We gingerly got them aboard. I say gingerly because their skin was so soft and wrinkly that if you grabbed it too hard you pulled the skin off. They were in pain. They were black, like a gorilla. The only other comparison I can make in color is the aboriginals in Australia which I saw a couple years ago. You get back in to the Outback and you see them. They wanted food, they wanted water. Water mostly. Well we did not give 'em water. We gave 'em soup, or juices. Nobody has got a recollection of what we used to clean up the men. The Captain had made arrangements ahead of time before we reached the area, that bring up any spare clothing, any blankets, up to the mess hall so that we had some clothes there. So that, like I say, we gingerly wiped them down, washed them down. And we kept looking, of course any life raft that we took people off of we sank it. They say you can't sink those cargo nets or what you call, life rafts, but you can.

In our sweeping we picked up twenty-six men: twenty-five alive, one dead. Later that afternoon we transferred those men to an APD [Fast Transport Ship] who had more facilities that they could handle these men. And then the four of us ships, we formed a sweeping group. We were roughly about a quarter-mile apart, we'd steam five miles up, make a turn, a right angle turn, do another five miles. And people say "well you're gonna miss something." Well you gotta remember there was four ships, outer and inner. A few men were picked up, most of them were dead. Any life rafts or that that was spotted was sunk. The men were delirious as can be imagined. Many of them had shark bites, pieces of flesh missing. Some of them were still pretty coherent. They told up stories about the sharks coming after 'em. And then also about men saying they're going down to get a drink of water, and they'll take their jacket off. And one of the things that we found out from our ships reunion when a couple of the fellas showed up, is that, and its in their books that they have, that when somebody died they took the life jacket of and put it on somebody else because not all men had life jackets. The kapok life jackets that they had were getting water-logged. They were actually only meant to be about seven days in the water and these men had been in for five days now, or four and a half days. So they're up to their shoulders.

So after doing that, they relieved us off of that and they sent us back to Ulithi. And then we were transporting convoys between Ulithi and Okinawa again. And during one of the transports it was stated "the war is over." Well, we had heard that rumor. And of course the Navy's word for rumors were scuttlebutts. So it was always scuttlebutt. We didn't pay much attention to it. We said "yeah, yeah, yeah, you know how it is" and "we'll believe it later on." Because on the previous trip into Okinawa, at Buckner Bay we were anchored

waiting to take a group of ships back to Ulithi, a Japanese bomber, torpedo bomber had come in and dropped a torpedo went in front of us and hit the battleship Pennsylvania about 4000 yards away from us with a tremendous explosion that even we felt it that far away, that's a little over half a mile.

John: Great, let's stop for a minute—

[Tape is turned off, begins mid-sentence]

Frank: --war over. You know it really didn't sit that good with us. We continued—  
(sound of papers rustling) That's a picture of the hole in the ship.

John: Oh wow! It's remarkable that you stayed afloat. That's something.

Frank: After we made a return trip back to Okinawa the Commandant up there said "I've got a glorious duty for you guys, would you want it?" Of course, our Captain being an eager beaver said "sure."

Well that was a good duty. We escorted the cruiser Portland, which was the only sister ship of the Indianapolis, and another destroyer. We went down to Truk Island. Now Truk had been bombed, and bombed, and bombed and left alone.

John: Yeah, they bypassed it.

Frank: They bypassed it completely, just like they did Kossel Road[s]. Kossel Road[s] was another big base that we bombed and bombed and they left it alone then. And Kossel Road[s] was a beautiful island. The smell of the vegetation was like perfume when you were close to shore. We steamed into Truk harbor and dropped our hook and the Portland went in about a thousand yards ahead of us. And a Japanese launch come out. It had two flags on it. The interpreters on the Portland evidently told them that we don't talk business while the flags are up. And it took some convincing to do it and they made the Japs put the flags down. Then they come aboard and they used some of our officers as witnesses to the surrender of Truk Island. So later that afternoon we left Truk and we headed back up to Okinawa.

We laid up there for a couple days and we got to go ashore. We were limited to where we could go. Of course it was pretty bombed-out around Buckner Bay. Most of the liberty was spent drinking beer, and that you're three cans of beer in a Japanese cemetery, because that had the only shade there was. On the open spots the guys played a little baseball, a little touch football. And so they, we kinda started to relax a little bit. Then the thoughts were "well, maybe we'll go home."

Then again they said "we have an interesting duty for you." So of course our Captain says "fine, what is it?" Which didn't sit too good with us. So off we go. We steam out of Okinawa and we find out we're going to Nagasaki. We get to Nagasaki Sunday afternoon. We see the bombed out city. It was a bombed out



city. It looked like a corn field stubble. Occasional chimney here, a pole here. And I do have a picture that was taken, a remnant of a Catholic cathedral up on the hill. We picked up some brass aboard our ship and left at night. We headed for Sasebo. Well we were familiar a little bit with Sasebo because we were with the carriers that bombed it. So our escort they stayed outside the harbor again. That was a tricky harbor to get into and didn't give you much room to move around. So we pulled in and we dropped the anchor and we looked around. We could see couple carriers sittin' on the bottom, other merchant ships there sittin' on the bottom, the shipyard all damaged up. Then there was two submarines that were operational, they were fairly close to us. They picked up and moved a distance away. Of course the first thought is are they getting in position to fire torpedoes on us? Because you know, getting a little jumpy. But a couple boats come out, the Japanese delegation come aboard to actually sign the surrender of the city of Sasebo, Japan the Navy base of Sasebo, aboard our ship. We were edgy because on the hill, Sasebo goes up. It reminds you of San Francisco, going up the hills. Up on the hills is big guns, aiming right at the harbor. Well, the boats come out, in the meantime they took a look at our bridge, certainly around it, pointin' up there. Of course we got, I don't know about twenty-nine planes painted on there, got shore bombardments, got ships sunk, got subs sunk. They're looking at us and we can't imagine what the heck is so interesting about us, we're an old, rusted ship, but the a—

We finally get the surrender out of the way and then we take off back for Nagasaki. Get into the next morning and we get a chance to look around. Of course I was the mail clerk at the time and got to walk ashore. They had already set up a fleet post office. Nagasaki was an interesting sight. One side of the river going up, you had the harbor and then you had a narrow river going up to the top of the hill, the center of the city, where the bomb, actual bomb was dropped. One side was homes, the opposite side was a shipyard and a big Mitsubishi factory that was all blown apart. And there was another factory that was just a shell. And then by now they're starting to bring down P.O.W.s and civilians that had been captured. So we watched them come down and load at the wharf and take 'em out to ships to head back towards the States.

Well, we only stayed there the one day, then back to Sasebo. Our duties then were to cover the Marines coming in. Well it took about three days before the Marines come in after the surrender. So the transports brought the Marines in while we stood cover guards, so to speak. And I got a good chance to kinda look the place over of course. They told us "well, you're gonna stay here for a couple of days, you're gonna have liberty, but you gotta wear dress blues." And Sasebo has got of mostly mud streets, the old section down by the shipyards. So of course our dress blues got muddy. People, some wear the old fashioned kimonos, sandals, some barefooted. The modern part, which we weren't allowed to go to, up to but not beyond, they were all bombed out shells. The stench was horrendous. They had no sanitation facilities and I can remember a couple years later when I got called back in the Korean War, and I, we would wonder the hills outside of Yokosuka, that they just dug a trench behind a house and that's where all their human waste went. They mixed it with dirt and put it in their gardens.

Of course you had the smell of, of the decaying matter in the bombed out section. No doubt there was human body parts that they never found.

The Japs got real smart and kept raising the prices. And of course when you're out at sea for about eighteen months, even that, some of them started out at twenty-one Dollars a month, I did, and it wasn't long afterwards we got thirty-five Dollars a month, you can still build up a little bit of money. We were only allowed five dollars U.S. money for, to transform into Yen and I believe at the time it was about seven Yen to the Dollar. They raised their price, so the guys quit buying. Then we'd go—

We would escort ships to other places. Wakayama, we took a bunch Army soldiers up to Wakayama. Another time we had some officers and that and we're taking them up to Wakayama. It was a Sunday and treated 'em to fried chicken and all the trimmin's and ice cream and all. And I says "Oh you guys got it made. Life like this is beyond belief." Well, as we got into the open sea the water got rough, as it usually was. The next morning they were all leanin' over the rail and all that wonderful dinner was going to feed the fishes. And they said "We won't no part of the Navy, especially this so-and-so destroyer life!"

But we made a total of seven trips into Nagasaki. And every one of them of course I had to go ashore, take mail there, bring mail back. And the guys, they were busy writing letters now. They removed the censorship so you could write what you wanted and that meant more mail. They had a barn-like structure that was our so-called recreation center or beer tent. We would get our beer there. We weren't limited to three cans like we were off the ship. Sometimes we'd sit out by the wharf and watch the people on the other side as they were bringing them down to load 'em up on ships to take 'em back home. Other days we were allowed to wander the city. We were allowed to go one mile from the wharf. The bomb drop, from where we were at, at the mouth of the river, was roughly a little over two miles. The officers were allowed two miles. The frightening part about it was that a couple of years later, after I'd got out of service I signed up immediately on getting out for Nuclear Defense Agency, being for radiation. Well, I got a map that showed the area we was in was 0.3, I forget what they call the name of it now.

John: Roentgens?

Frank: Roentgens. The bomb, the main center as point five, zero point five [Roentgens]. So we were still in there. I have a claim with the V.A. on a eye injury and eye damage and I just got a verification after a lot of letter writing and such and being declared dead by the V.A. that substantiated my saying that: yes I was in Nagasaki, yes I had walked for the mail, yes we were in the radiated area, yes we had sat on the wharf, yes we were able to drink the water from the reservoir which was contaminated from radiation fallout, and no we did not wear any badges to detail how much radiation we picked up. And the V.A. keeps saying "well, send us information, you send the same thing back, send us information."

But we, we played around between Okinawa and Sasebo, mainly between Sasebo and Nagasaki and a couple other ports in Japan. And getting very, very

upset. Newer ships, newer destroyers that had come out were being sent home. And here we were, the ship had left the States at the end of May of 1944. Here it is October of '45.

John: The war's been over for a couple months now.

Frank: The war was over for two months and still we're out there. Finally they decided we're able to go home. Of course in the mean time, we're transferring men off on points. But the worst part about it was the men that enlisted right at the start of the war or the war, before the war started, had to fill out their full term. If you signed up for four years, you did your four years. There was a few of them that were real upset, they went almost into '47 before they got out. On the 29<sup>th</sup> of October they said, "You can go home." So they broke out the homeward bound pennant. They made this up ahead of time, hopefully to use. Couple of ships with us, they were, it's a long run from Japan to Pearl Harbor for a small ship, were running low on supplies, fuel. So they stopped us at Midway Island. We got to go ashore at Midway Island. Played with the Gooney Birds. And if you've never seen the Gooney Bird, it's an interesting sight to see. Some people got a chance to send a cablegram home, saying that they were coming home. We fueled the next morning, headed for Pearl. We got into Pearl in November, stayed one night there. Refueled again and we were glad to get into Pearl because we were out of food, again. We were getting hungry but we didn't care and were eating anything. We stayed there and then, one night, found out what the business people in Pearl Harbor were doing. They were really screwing the servicemen because they raised their prices exorbitantly. My trip there in '44 I went to a restaurant that I got a plate of chicken livers and spaghetti for 35 cents, a shot of Three Feathers [whiskey] for 35 cents. This trip I went back to that same restaurant, they had quadrupled that price. And I wasn't that hungry.

But next morning we sailed for home. Got into San Diego and figured, "aw, they'll meet us there, we'll have a big celebration." Heck, all we had was a Navy band playin', some people there to make some speeches and the mayor of the city, "well done." We all got thirty day leaves, half the ship at a time. Those that didn't have enough points, like myself, we took the ship back to Pearl Harbor. They decided that they're gonna use it in the atom bomb tests. So we had to strip the ship a little bit. I didn't have to, being the mail clerk that was my full time duty. And we spent a week down on the edge of Oahu where they had a submarine base that was their R and R when they come back after long cruises, they rested there. So we went down there and we rested. And then, at the end of March four of us ships we went out to Hawaii, anchored at Hilo. I say anchored, we had to anchor in the bay because our Captain was junior. The other three ships, they kinda laughed, they tied up at the wharf. April 1, we knew we were leaving April 1 so we were making preparations to go at daybreak. Then there was all kinds of commotion coming over the radio about rats and we couldn't figure out what the hell was going on. And they were talking about being invaded by rats. As we got out to sea, here it come that the rats had all left Hilo and

climbed aboard these three ships and right after, about an hour after we left the tidal wave hit.

John: Oh my god!

Frank: That was when they still called it a tidal wave and you still see stuff on the T.V. about it. It wiped out the old city of Hilo which was a shame because it was a beautiful city. They have never rebuilt that. And after we got back I spent about two weeks at Pearl and then they said "Well, you're gonna have enough points." So back on a troop transport, back to the States, back on a train to Great Lakes and then I come home.

John: When did you get out?

Frank: I got out, well, there's a difficulty in dates. My discharge papers says May the third of 1945 or '46. And the V.A. has got me down as being out on May the second and then again as getting out on May the sixth. So we do have some problems in numbers. But that ship, the Ralph Talbot was rated in February of '46.

John: Let me turn this over.

**[End of Tape 2, Side A.]**

John: Okay, now we're back on.

Frank: The Navy had, the Navy Department rated the ship as the second most combatant ship in World War II. She saw more combat action than any other ship in World War II except the carrier Enterprise. Despite the fact that before my time she got in a fire-fight with three Japanese cruisers down at Savo Island, took six hits and a couple near-misses and they lost a few men. They brought her back and fixed her up, put her back on. She played quite a dramatic role in the Solomon Islands and that now, which just got hit by a tsunami. It was quite a ship, quite a group of men. I don't think, from what I've talked to other, that there's another ship that has a crew like it. We still meet. In fact this year we'll meet in Nashville, Tennessee. We're the only ship out of World War II that has set up any scholarships. We have two twenty thousand dollar scholarships at the Naval Academy to help young men get through. And it was all raised through us, through donations from us at our reunions, we have no help from business people. The ship, during its lifetime of ten years created seven Rear Admirals.

John: Oh wow, that's a lot.

Frank: That's a lot of it (chuckles). But then, of course, after the war in 1950--I'll back up a little bit. When I got discharged because I was drafted-in and naturally I was a reservist. So I had to finish out my ten year term as a reservist and I said I want

no part of active duty or anything, no active reserve. They said fine but in 1950 they called me to go back. I was working on the railroad and they, they gave me a deferment, took it off, and we started all over again. We took a troop train out to the west coast. I rode a troop ship to Yokosuka, Japan. Was there one day and then I was on the aircraft carrier U.S.S. Philippine Sea. So we'd go out every thirty days. They had thirty day cruises. You'd go out thirty days, come back thirty days. Well, it just so happened one of the fella's in the Post Office was in a seaplane assignment in World War II with an officer that was aboard ship and he give this officer hell when he come down for mail and got to be quite chummy. So when they had to do four hours of flying every time we went in I got to do a lot of flying above Japan. Of course I went up in rank, I come out of there a AT2, which made a big difference in pay. And I got a few more medals and so forth. But between the two services I've got a total of seventeen medals and ribbons.

John: Good lord, that's tremendous.

Frank: Out of the Asiatic/Pacific the World War II, was in eight major campaigns. Philippines, you got two of 'em, we got China Commendation, you got Presidential Citations for the Philippines, Navy Combat Service. So it was an interesting life, it was a rough life. One thing it did, it as they say, there are no atheists in foxholes. There are no atheists on destroyers or smaller ships, especially in combat. In fact, was it Christmas of 1944, we were down at Manus in the Admiralty Islands and this one fella wrote "went to Christmas mass and the first time I can ever remember going in shirt sleeves and sweating profusely." And that was one of the few times that we ever got to go to a mass because we never had a chaplain aboard.

John: Oh, that's surprising.

Frank: Ships that small didn't have any. Basically you had about three hundred and sixty-five men and officers during wartime. And we were quite expendable, besides our four 5 in/38s we had four mounts of twin 40's, we had four 20's and then we had sixteen torpedo tubes. So off the Philippines we were alerted several times "prepare for making torpedo runs." And—

John: Did you ever launch torpedoes?

Frank: No, we never had to. The Japanese were somewhat like the British. They loved to get into a fight but when the going got tough, they backed away, they'd run away. And that's what they did down at the Philippines. Was it the second battle? What did they sink? I know they sunk the Ommaney Bay, and they had two destroyers sunk, and they could have wiped out the entire fleet but they just turned around and left. I think the saddest part of the whole thing is the fact that our leading admiral, Admiral Bull Halsey especially did not want to stop and pick up survivors off of our own ships. There was an interesting book just come out called *Halsey's Typhoon*. In which it tells about it. He wanted to go get 'em and

the heck with everything behind us. And it has got very derogatory remarks in it about General MacArthur. Who we had a great understanding about that because he wanted to be it. It was his way or nothing. He wanted command of the Navy and the Navy told him "NO." The Navy did things that he didn't approve and they didn't care. We invaded islands that he didn't want to do. He didn't want that side-stepping islands like we did. (Laughs).

John: Now this is what I did last time. I don't know, I don't know.

Frank: It's not that windy out there.

John: No, I have no idea what the—I thought maybe it was a motion detector, ya know?

Frank: And so they, you find a lot, I think, like that. They have given a lot of glory to the Indianapolis because she delivered parts of the first atom bomb. Sure, her greatest loss was the eight hundred or so men that went down. That was great loss but when you go back into the early parts of the war, down at Savo Island in August of '42 when the Juneau was blown up in broad daylight. And they lost that one with about six hundred men. The Captain, well the Admirals wouldn't stop, well actually he was a Captain but he was the Admiral in charge by name because the Admiral was killed when our ships fired on our ships and in fact they killed two Captains that way. And they buried the records when they got into Tulagi and that's in a book that's now out of print I think. But out of the hundred and forty men that went into the water and were saved, by the time they found it five days later they only found ten men. And the last I heard was two years ago there was only one out of ten that was left alive, sharks got all the rest of 'em. And they glorify that and yet they don't give credit where credit is due. I don't understand it. I think instead of all of the rig-a-ma-roll that they're talking about now about Iraq, which in my estimation is uncalled for to begin with because they never did find what they were supposed to, they should go back to putting history in the schools. Let these children know what their forefathers through, and what their fathers or grandfathers went through to keep this country going. We've paid money to the Japanese for repatriation, we're giving money to Hmongs and Laotian people. What about us veterans?

John: That's very true, that's absolutely true.

Frank: I have been fighting for four years to try to get some compensation. I finally got a little bit on my ears, I have got a sixty percent disability on the ears. They've been playing with the eyes for four years. When I went earlier in life, the rolls were always closed. Not to belittle a party but right after World War II when Eisenhower became president, they shut down the roll and they cut compensation, pension in half. They opened it up again after the Korean War and then they closed it. It was opened when Kennedy was president and I applied for hearing loss. It was closed when Nixon took over and it stayed closed until Carter got in. Then they opened it up and Reagan closed it. Then it stayed closed until the law

was passed in about '96. Then there was some limitation put onto it. I had to file four applications with the V.A. before they recognized me. I've got copies, I'm one of those that love to make copies. And right after I got in, we have our present President, he shut the rolls, he cut compensation down, now he wants a veteran to pay more money for drugs. He wants 'em to pay a yearly fee to be enrolled in the health system.

And they keep, the thing that bothers me more than anything else, they keep saying our boys volunteered. They didn't volunteer. A lot of us volunteered in World War II. Maybe the Korean War. But when you're activated, you're in a reserve unit, you're activated, that's not volunteering. You know, you look in the dictionary it's a different, a different meaning to the word. So I have favorite terminology. Once you're a draft-dodger you don't care about what the other guy did. And now people cannot basically run to Canada to escape the draft because Canada now has the right, because of a law that was signed, that they can look into your record and if you were convicted for D.U.I. they don't want you up in Canada. They turn you around and send you back home. If I was twenty years younger, I would move to Australia. I marched in the ANZAC Day parade which is comparable to our Memorial Day. That is a wonderful, wonderful experience. Our line of march was forty minutes long and the people just shouted, clapped "God Bless America," "Thank You, Yank!" They take care of your veterans. I have friends down there, when they have to go to Sydney they're paid the cab fare, to take the train the train fare is paid, if they have to stay more than one night they get an apartment, their wife gets an apartment to stay, plus the compensation. You know that's taking care of their people. It's not here. You look at your Memorial Day parades. Another thing that sets my crow, I belong, I'm basically the chaplain for our D.A.V. chapter in Janesville, we could not march in the Memorial Day parade until we paid a head tax to the Janesville Patriotic Society. We had to pay three cents a member in order to be able to march.

John: That's sickening. That's sick, that's awful.

Frank: You know that, the Disabled Vets used to meet in city hall and when the Patriotic Society was formed they chased the Disabled Vets out. And you see it in a lot of places. They look upon you as "What? Who are you?" They've got a park in Janesville. They cater to the ski team. There was six Medal of Honor winners that have roots in Janesville at one time. They wanted to make memorials for them. They fought for over two years because people didn't want it. They didn't want bridges named for the Medal of Honor winners. You know it's—

John: Yeah, that's, the world's changed.

Frank: It's too damn greedy.

John: Well this is a remarkable story Frank. I'll tell you. Man, you've got a tremendous memory. You really do.

Frank: As I tell you, I have been doing some research and I've picked up stuff. I have only told you part of it. There's more you know. You go into more gory detail about the Jap raids and all of that but—

John: Well, let me wrap this—

**[End of Interview]**