

**Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center**

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
DONALD LLOYD EVANS

Navy, World War II

2017

OH
2107

**OH
2107**

Evans, Donald Lloyd, (b. 1926). Oral History Interview, 2017.

Approximate length: 1 hour 1 minute

Contact WVM Research Center for access to original recording.

Abstract:

In this oral history interview, Donald Lloyd Evans discusses his years of service with the Navy during World War II. Evans served from 1944 through 1946. The majority of his service was spent in the Pacific, aboard LST-717.

Evans grew up in Kendall and his family moved to Madison when Evans was in high school. In 1944 Evan enlisted in the Navy to avoid being drafted into the Army. He briefly discusses his basic training at Great Lakes Naval Base and being assigned to an LST crew, which he joined in Jeffersonville, Indiana. The ship passed through the Panama Canal en route to the Pacific, where the crew participated in multiple invasions including: Leyte, Port of Princes, Manila and Mindanao.

Evans describes his two main assignments, running the ships post office and driving a Higgins Boat during landings. He tells the story of the ship being in a huge storm and being shipwrecked on Okinawa, which Evans said was the scariest experience of his war. He briefly describes the Palawan Massacre in Puerto Princesa when GI prisoners were set on fire. He mentions a memorable liberty in China where he went to a USO dance. Evans did many things to make extra money while in the service, including selling cigarettes, making jewelry and trinkets out of scrap metal, and ironing clothes for other sailors.

In June 1946, Evans was discharged and went back to Madison. He briefly attended UW-Madison using the GI Bill and then started a company which he has headed for sixty-five years. Evans closes the interview with a mention of his wife, who he married in 1948.

Other stories/topics of note in the interview include flying with his cousin who was a B-25 pilot at Clark Field.

Biographical Sketch:

Donald L. Evans served with the US Navy during WWII where he was assigned to the landing ship tank crew, where one of his main duties was to operate a Higgins boat. Following service, he started Evans Plastics which would eventually evolve into EVCO Plastics in Deforest, Wisconsin.

Archivist's Notes:

Transcriptions are a reflection of the original oral history recording. Due to human and machine fallibility transcripts often contain small errors. Transcripts may not have been transcribed from the original recording medium. It is strongly suggested that researchers engage with the oral history recording as well as the transcript, if possible.

Interviewed by Ellen Brooks, 2017.

Transcribed by Nicholas Albertson, 2017.

Reviewed by Mackenzie Krumme, 2018.

Abstract written by Ellen Brooks and Mackenzie Krumme, 2018.

Interview Transcript:

[Beginning of OH2107.Evans]

- Brooks: Okay. Today is Wednesday May, 24th 2017. This is an interview with Donald Lloyd Evans, who served with the Navy in the Pacific Theater during World War II, from 1944 to 1946. This interview is being conducted in the narrator's home at Oakwood Village. The interviewer is Ellen Brooks and this interview is being recorded for the Wisconsin Veteran's Museum Oral History program.
- Brooks: So were just gonna start with ah, if you can tell me where and when you were born?
- Evans: I was born in Kendall Wisconsin — umm, in 1926.
- Brooks: Can you tell me a little bit about Kendall?
- Evans: Well Kendall — when I lived there it was a pop-, had a population of ahh one hundred and, or five hundred and seventeen people. A small town where my one granddad was ah, ahh, jeweler and he had a contract with umm, railroad to repair the watches they had a roundhouse there at that time. And that's how he settled there. And my other granddad, he owned a hardware and implement business ahh, there. And so — I came from a — couple wheeler and dealers I guess.
- Brooks: [chuckle] And what did your parents do?
- Evans: My dad, I never really spent too much time with my dad because he traveled all over the country. He- he painted churches and theaters. Like he put all the saints on the — satuaries *?* and decorated them and did the gold leaf work and stuff and ah, and redid their statues and things like that. So, he was gone most the time because he had to travel to these different locations to ahh — ahh, perform. So, I didn't — have a lot of time with him, when I was young.
- Brooks: Did you have any siblings?
- Evans: I have two sisters.
- Brooks: Are they older or younger?
- Evans: Younger.
- Brooks: Okay. And, what were you like growing up? What kind of kid were you?
- Evans: I was always doing something to — to accomplish something. Seems like I was always trying to — do something like I. My granddad's stores, I'd go and hang around them a lot, because small town there wasn't any, many kids in the town. And ahh, I would help with inventory, I sweep the floor and do thing. Any- anywhere to kind of, I think, agitate a little bit into giving me a dime or so. Umh.
- Brooks: [chuckle]

Evans: Some change —

Brooks: And, you went to school?

Evans: I went to Kendall school to umm, my soph-, through my sophomore year. Then I went, moved to Madison and I went to — ahh, graduated from Madison East.

Brooks: Okay. Why did you move to Madison?

Evans: My dad got a job at Gisholt Machine Company. Let's see this, I'm talking when I was born, I's little guy. That was really depression days, they were tough days. Is ahh, I don't think people today have any imagination how tough those — depression days were. Ah but ah, my dad always seemed to be able to make a living because he did a — there's always some church needs — some repair or painted or something.

Brooks: Umm-hm.

Evans: But he never know what he bring home. Sometime he bring a quarter of a beef home or something that somebody donated [chuckle] to to.

Brooks: Yeah.

Evans: So it was, it was ahh, exciting life back then.

Brooks: Yeah.

Evans: It's different then —

Brooks: So you moved to Madison because your dad got a job — here.

Evans: Yes, he got, a friend of his was a Gisholt that he knew and ahh, he went down there and he finished their — machines. And put the finish in, on the machines.

Brooks: And what year did you graduate from high school?

Evans: Ahh, 43.

Brooks: Okay.

Brooks: So while you were in high school, that's when umm, the attack on Pearl Harbor happened. Do you remember that happening? And hearing about it?

Evans: Just just vaguely. Not not too strong.

Brooks: So, and that was kinda the beginning of American involvement. Do you remember — that happening?

Evans: Well I remember that there was a lot of activity back then, you know. War was getting — started — lot of uprising and things. And bombings and stuff.

Brooks: Umm-hm.

[00:05:11]

Brooks: Any, did you have any feeling about that?

Evans: Aaaah, I was probably a lot. I- I was, I graduated, I just turned 17, when I graduated from High School so. I ha- I was out about an hour -- ahh year before I went in the Navy.

Brooks: Umm-hm.

Evans: Cause — I thought I go in the Navy because it wouldn't be that much walking like in the army. [chuckle] So, I joined the Navy and ahh — but then I got put in the amphibious unit so. Umhp. Wasn't a —

Brooks: So why did you decide to — to join the Military at all?

Evans: Well — It seemed like, when you graduated from high school, you got your invitation — to join. And you didn't much choice.

Brooks: So you?

Evans: Back then.

Brooks: You were drafted, or you would have drafted?

Evans: I would been.

Brooks: Okay.

Evans: Drafted.

Brooks: So you enlisted?

Evans: Yes.

Brooks: To avoid?

Evans: That way I got in the Navy.

Brooks: Umm-hm.

Brooks: Gotcha.

Brooks: So— you enlisted. Can you tell me a little bit about that? About how you enlisted and umm, how you got started.

Evans: Well I went to the Navy Recruiting Office and I just signed up, that's all an-

Brooks: Umm-hm.

Evans: And seemed like they were more than willing to take me in. And ahh, I- I shouldn't have done things a little different but, then I did but, I didn't because I was on the honor roll an, when I graduated high school. But I'd been out a year then. I probably could a got into one of their training programs. But umm, I just — enlisted and went to — Great Lakes. And I played in the drummer bugle core

there. Well I was at boot camp. It was a very short boot camp I think. I don't know, eight nine weeks or something like that.

Brooks: Umm-hm.

Evans: Back then. And then I come out of boot camp I got assigned to a— a— amphibious sh- ship LST and that was, just been- been, just built in Jeffersonville, Indiana. I went there and joined the crew. And a— umm, I was put in a, the begin was in the — ah, gunnery division. And I was ahh, first loader on the stern — twin forty gun. I loaded it and I's — put the shells in the — in the first ah, and ah, we picked, like I say, we picked up, or I joined this crew. And then we brought it down the Mississippi. And it was in — we had a little shake down there, in, around Panama City, down there, in Florida. And then ah —we — loaded it up. They load it with ammunition. Forty — a- millimeter and twenty millimeter ammunition. And I don't quite recall whether that was before we went to the canal or afterwards. But it's right around that time, because then, from there we went to Panama Canal. Stopped there. And umm — then we headed for- for the Pacific. We stopped one time going to the Pacific as it fun forty islands *?*, for a couple days. And then we head on to umm — to New Guinea. Which- which we docked there and unloaded all the ammunition.

Evans: And then they, w- we loaded ah, ship got ready for the invasion of Leyte. We went in on the invasion of Leyte. That was our first invasion.

Brooks: And that's what -- so when LST — usually does is transports and unloads ammunition?

Evans: Well they, everything. All the, you take, we, you take but, I think they have about seven hundred troops. Y- you know, military troops. Marines or Army. And then all their equipment.

[00:10:10]

Evans: Let's see, you had two decks. You had a lower deck — tank tank and then you had the main deck. And then you had a ramp that come down where you could unload everything.

Brooks: Okay.

Evans: And ah — so, loaded everything up for Leyte. Then we went in there. And we lost one of our umm — our Higgins boats. Umm, guys there, in that landing. And so — I know how I ended up a doing all these jobs but, I ended up with two three jobs. I- I ended up running the post office for the ship.

Brooks: Umm-hm.

Evans: A—and then, taking care of the mail. And then the second job I was, I drove a Higgins boat — for on the landings. You'd take about 35 guys in a Higgins boat, into the beach. And so I had, those are the two jobs I ended up with. Cause I was just a Seamen. You know, just started in the, so I did have any rank or anything. And umm — and that's what I, so that's what I ended up more or less

doing. Running ah, taking ya p-, I had a little post office there, take care of. And then there would, I drove the Higgins boat. I go in with a Higgins boat and get the — mail. Bring it back and-

Brooks: So these are two things you did at the same time?

Evans: Those are the two jobs I had.

Brooks: Umm-hm.

Evans: Yes.

Brooks: Umm-hm

Brooks: And — what did you think of them?

Evans: Ah, they were okay. I was pretty- pretty much my own boss. You know they, well they tell me where to go and where to come. But outside a that I, pretty much my own right. *?* Because I r-, I drove the Higgins boat, run the boat. And then- had a seamen up in front that took to the, took care the- the bow. It dropped down. And then, had a had a motor mac on it, took care the engine. So it was just a three man crew.

Brooks: Umm, what was running the post office like?

Evans: Well — [chuckle] here's post office [chuckling] ri-, take care of it.

Brooks: Yeah?

Evans: That was about it. I didn't have any, they gave me a key for the locks and that was about, for the bag, and that was about it. Rest I did on my own pretty much, yeah. Must a had confidence in me to — to do it. To take care of the post office, because I took care of it right *?* tell I left the ship.

Brooks: And, how much mail would you get in.

Evans: I, it was a hard time finding mail.

Brooks: Oh really?

Evans: Because a, we were traveling all the time and you never know where you could pick some up, But I would ahh, I would take in ah, get the radio men working to try to find out if it was some mail at that post office that was gonna be near, if there was post ma- post office near where we were gonna be there that I could c-call on. And so I, had to do a lot of bird dogging to find mail.

Brooks: So that was part of your job. Finding out where you could —

Evans: Yeah, sometimes we wouldn't get mail for three months. You know, quite a while.

Brooks: Yeah.

Evans: And ah, then ah, when — I could get rid of the mail, because I could usually find an Army — outlet where I can — they take the mail from me. To get the mail going but, coming in was a different story. So, those were my two job, main jobs. Running that Higgins boat an, and ah, taking care of the post office.

Brooks: Did you have any close calls on the Higgins boat?

Evans: Well — I don't know what you would call a close call. I took ahh, I took in — what bothered me more than anything on the invasion, we made six, I made six invasions. Took, went into the beach.

Brooks: Umm-hm.

Evans: And umm — I think, what bothered me more was the, the Cruisers out there. Lobbing these big shells off, because they neve- half of them never made the beach. You know an, an when they hit, wherever they went in the water, the water really went up. It was quite an explosion. So umm, I think that — once I got to the beach I was okay. I- I got the guys off — and I got out of there.

Brooks: So you'd, drop them off and then return back to the ship.

Evans: I'd- I'd go back, see the Higgins boat they went with these — personnel they let off out in the water a ways. And then you drive in, they were kind of a -- a head start up, a head point to- to get — the beach established for the LST's to- to dock in. And they would, not only that but, we- we could — we let the — let the LST's know where — it was good to come in. They got some, maybe a little depth because ther- once they come in an, and docked the, on that beach they had to get off too. Get out of there.

Brooks: Umm-hm.

[00:15:56]

Evans: And that wasn't always too easy to do. Wasn't so bad if they got unloaded but, when they first come in — it's kind of hard sometimes.

Brooks: So you said you did umm, six invasions?

Evans: Yeah. I made, first one was Leyte. And then we went on to — Mindanao. And then Mindoro. And then Puerto Princesa. Then Manila. Then we went into Mindanao ahh, again because they were all a— there was a Japanese Marines at Mindanao. And this first group that, when we came in the second time, this first group is only about thirty percent strong. We brought, brung reinforcements in and helped them, because this Jap — Marines had Pillboxs and stuff on Mindanao an, they had pretty tough going.

Evans: And so, that was the landings I made. Pretty much in. Then umm— but, the worst experience I would say had was at Okinawa. We got ship wrecked there at Buckner Bay. We got caught in a typhoon. And it pulled a anchor — out of the ship and we ended up in the beach against ah, Liberty ship that was already there, on the beach on its side. And we pounded that — through the storm.

Brooks: Wow.

Evans: And ah, we didn't know we gonna come out of that or not, because it- it- its pretty hectic. When it's what I remember, when I tied myself between a couple of the air vents in the tank ank an, to hold myself in place, pretty much. But it was, it was probably a, a roughest going.

Brooks: How long was it, how long did that storm last?

Evans: Oh, I don't know, probably — pretty much a day or so.

Brooks: Were there any ships lost in that storm?

Evans: Oh yeah. There a lot of them on that beach. Like I said, like this Liberty ship, it was on its side.

Brooks: Umm-hm.

Evans: On the ship when we pounded against there.

Brooks: Umm-hm.

Evans: When we hit the beach.

Brooks: What do you mean you pounded against it?

Evans: From the waves that would—

Brooks: Oooh, so your ship was?

Evans: Yeah.

Brooks: Yeah, beating against that ship.

Evans: Yes.

Brooks: Oh, I see. Yeah. Wow.

Evans: So, and try to keep your balance in 150 mile gale, you know, isn't that easy.

Brooks: Umm-um.

Evans: That was the most scariest thing I've seen, I saw. In fact, worst then any the — the firing or any of that. The shelling or any of that. To me it was. And umm, but we made it — I made it through it. That was the main thing I guess.

Brooks: And how big is an LST?

Evans: It's about, I think it's 310, 320. It was pretty good size. But the Higgins boats, they weren't that big. The— like I said, had about thirty-five guys standing up.

Brooks: Umm-hm.

Evans: You know.

Brooks: And where, what was your sleeping arrangements like?

Evans: In that ship?

Brooks: Umm-hm.

Evans: Well, they had areas on the k- tank deck, which is m-, tank deck was in the middle of the LST. And where they, all equipment went and stuff. And then on each side you had a, sort of a quarters, like where — these fold down beds. That you could sleep in. And that's ahh, I had a bunk like that felt that come down and then- then, when you got up you put it back up, for the day. And then, then — under the mattress I pu-, we all put our blues under there and we slept on them. That would press them.

Brooks: [laughing] Just to keep them a— keep them flat.

Evans: Yeah.

Brooks: Yeah.

[00:20:30]

Brooks: And what was food like on the ship?

Evans: Food? Well it was a typical — ah— invasion food. Like we had ah, lot a hydrated food. We had to hydrated g- potatoes, hydrated eggs, and for meat we had spam and corn beef.

Brooks: Umm. Hmmp. Yep.

Evans: And that come out of a can. So ah, umm, but we had, one thing we did have on our ship that was really, it was really good. We had a baker. And this guy could really bake the best, really good bread. And, every time somebody have a birthday or something, he make a big — ah — cake for ah flat — form.

Brooks: Umm-hm.

Evans: So what was, which was nice. And ah— but, he was good. He was really a good baker. But, our cooks and that they had to make the best of what we had. Uh, they didn't have their — greatest ingredient to start out with. Eh— It ether came out of a can or, you know, or — it was hydrated eh — nah. *?* So, that's about it. I guess as far as the food goes an— an- an- that and ah, the —The um, last umm— trip I took was kind a interesting. We went to French and to China. Picked up a Chinese army. And took them up to Mancherial [Manchuria?] — to fight the Commies. And r-, they were in shorts when we picked them up. And uh, fugindo *?*, you know, when we dropped them off they had these quilted outfits they them, to keep'em warm. They, we dropped 'em off at snow, up in Mancherial. *?* So they had quite a change. We did aboard ship too [chuckle] I guess.

Brooks: [laughing]

Evans: But ah —

Brooks: When was that?

Evans: Well that's just before I co- I know ah—. It must a been — probably April or May or something in the spring.

Brooks: So, 1946?

Evans: Yeah.

Brooks: Hmm.

Brooks: Is there anything else you can tell me about umm, the invasions that you participated in. Just kind of how — how it worked.

Evans: The invasions what?

Brooks: The invasions that you participated in. Just how it worked getting everyone on the Higgins and things like that.

Evans: Well, first of all the— LST's would stop — out away from shore, aways. And then they would ahh, sort of — pin a, anchor there or something. They be, and then — they would take and they put these uh, rope latter over the side. And ah, they could control, somebody go down there and then they, the guys that were going in would go down these ropes into the Higgins boats. And then — I would — drive them to shore, drop them off, hoped everything went okay, and got out of there. I was fortunate I made it each, each time. But ahh, Tthe worst, worst one was at Puerto Princesa, that I remember — there was ah bunch of umm — GI — prisoners there. Bunch of Army prisoners there, the Japanese had. And umm, they were using them to build a sort of air strip up at []. And um, I still can remember see, they had like a- a tunnel, where they herded all these guys in, and they set them on fire. And, you see this raw meat from all these solders and stuff and. Only f-, I understand only four made it out of there. Of all these prisoners that made it over the side of the mountain. And that was in — that was probably one of the saddest things I saw.

Brooks: Hmm.

Evans: There —

[00:25:20]

Evans: But ahh, war — and you know they talk about war, people thi-, talk about it so casually and that. To me — it's pretty serious thing because, I think in the Pacific there was fifty thousand casualties during the war. An — and they were all young guys just, we were all, you know, eighteen, nineteen, twenty years old. And ah, never got, you know, fifty thousand never got to see life. It's pretty, so I — I'm [chuckle] I hope we don't get into war again.

Brooks: Were you able to keep track of what was happening in Europe?

Evans: Europe? Ahhh, not too much. We had our hands full in, out. Japanese were tough, tough fighting outfit. They weren't easy. And ah, and they didn't ahh — they didn't give any mercy neither, they were — ether you, one way or the other.

Brooks: Do you remember hearing when the war ended in Europe?

Evans: Nuun-, probably but, I don't really recall. Like I, the stuff I give you.

Brooks: Okay. So, the w- when after the war ended in Europe that it obviously continued in the Pacific. Umm, what were your thoughts when the bombs were dropped?

Evans: Well that probably saved an awful lot of young men's lives. Might a been twice the number that — there was. If they wouldn't of dropped those bombs. It probably the — the most important part of the war.

Brooks: Do you remember what you were thinking at that time?

Evans: Ah, not too much. Maybe this will help a little. Get things going. Over with.

Brooks: Yeah. Well, I'm always just interested in— how people reacted, at the time. You know, what your— what you thought when you heard about the bombs.

Evans: Well we didn't — we didn't -- I don't think we heard that much about them. You know ahh, It was done and was over with and that was about it.

Brooks: Umm-hm.

Evans: It- it was a, it wasn't ahh, anything that we got involved in. I saw my cousin twice over there. He was a B-25 pilot. I saw him in Clark Field and at Subic Bay. Saw him twice.

Brooks: Wow.

Evans: So that was, that was kind of nice, interest.

Brooks: Was that unexpected?

Evans: Well, ahh- from my folk I knew where he was located pretty much an. [chuckle] Then I, in Clark Field I tried to get him to take me, take me along on a trip. [chuckle] He says; if something happens [chuckle] that will be the end of me. He said as a pilot. [chuckle]

Brooks: Yep.

Evans: But I did go up one time — over there. They at, they were repairing some planes and they needed some weight, for in the planes then. I ah— and two of my friends, we volunteered to go up and ah, they gave us Mae West *?* and a parachute an-, we went up and flew around. It was really interesting to watch, looking at those islands around, flying over them. That was, that was interesting.

Brooks: Did you, every wish that you had gone into the Air Force?

Evans: To go into the Air Force?

Brooks: Um-hm.

Evans: Oh, I don't know. I might of — like I said in the beginning here I, just went and signed up. You know I didn't really — have anybody to guide me or anything. What to do, what not to do, or what direction to go. I umm, I might of enjoyed been, being a pilot.

Brooks: Hmm.

Evans: My cousin was a pilot an- and he seemed to enjoy it. He ended up -- he stayed in and he ended up ah, flying that lift over to — in Berlin lift over there, that cargo plane.

Brooks: Umm-hm.

Evans: So ah, it might been interesting. But, I still had my little boat, my little Higgins boat, and so I drove that.

Brooks: So do you think you were happy with your choice to join the Navy then?

[00:30:34]

Evans: Well, ah nobody bothered me much because I could always go in my Post Office if it, if it — [chuckle] if the heat got a little heavier or something. So ah, and ah — but ah, things happen once and awhile that ah — I didn't notice very well. *?*. Specially if it was one the, happened to one of my friends, or something like that. I kind of like to know why — know understand what happened but, lot of things happened during the war that you don't understand.

Brooks: Can you give me an example?

Evans: Example—Oh, I don't know, umm. We had a gunners mate one time — that— shot off a — a rifle — and ah, one of the — other g— guys in the gunnery department got b- blamed for it. I didn't think much of that. And he should a been the one that — took the rap for it. And ah, then umm, one guy f- went down the tank deck from a b- a b- b- boat one time. Fell down there and broke his pelvis. Something like that and ah. So there's a couple things that, you know happened here or there that — wasn't so happy. But ah. I- I usually stayed to myself pretty much and wouldn't get involved in what went on around the ship too much. 'Cept the mail I, sorted the mail out made sure — each div- division got, got their mail an- — when I got it. So umm — I don't know — what I was saying. I taught a lot of the guys how to dance.

Brooks: Oh really?

Evans: Where I use to dance a lot. I was a pretty good — dancer. I think I'd — I'd. And so, so when they went on liberty I'd, I give a, some dance lessons to get them started, so it wasn't no liberty. Th- they could go to t-, go to a dance. [chuckle]

Brooks: What kind of dancing?

Evans: Sw- mostly swing.

Brooks: Nice.

Brooks: Did you get to leave the ship on liberty?

Evans: I- I usually, well I, I was the first one off the ship because I took the mail off. [chuckle] I picked up so an- and ah. I was always got to go on liberty with every group practically. [chuckle] Was-

Brooks: Lucky.

Evans: Yeah I, well like I say, I was kind of a — had control of — of my own destiny pretty much.

Brooks: Umm-hm.

Brooks: Were there any um, specifically memorable ports? That you stopped at.

Evans: Well we was, we was in the port — for two three months. At Qingdao, *?* China. See, when we get, we get put on this — on this ship wreck from this typhoon. It took out thirteen beams on our port side. From then bo-, you know, pounding and so. We st-, went to umm Qingdao, China and they put in, they repaired that side of the ship. And umm, that umm, we's was there quite a bit. So we got to know our way around pretty good there. And then umm, Shanghai — I, I went a — USO — place there one time that was, they had a lot of ah, white Russian girls there to dance with. Was it, it was interesting.

Brooks: [laugh]

[00:35:33]

Brooks: What did you think of China?

Evans: China? It was alright. It- the international village there in uhh, Shanghai and that was — I's I got a cream puff there. And that's the first time I seen anything like that all through the war. But ahh — I don't know, I say *?* But you had to watch out for the Chinese. You didn't know. Like one time I was, I had my, my pea coat on and I had my hands in my pea coat and here this guy, I was trying to sh-sell me something, like a little scarf or something he said. With one hand and the other hand was going in my pocket. Trying to clean out my pockets. So, I was fortunate I had my hands in there. So I —

Brooks: Yeah.

Evans: Caught and — funny how things come up to you ah, remind ya — remind you mentioned that. Its, little things like that I guess. But umm, then I, I had a f-, I didn't smoke. So I sold all my — ah, cigarettes so I had plenty of working money. Plenty of cash to, at all times, to do what I wanted to do. Like when the shore ride plane went. I would, I had a friend that run the — ooo ah — the store and he would ah, see that I have a couple cartons of cigarettes when I went to shore.

Brooks: Umm. Nice. Anything memorable that you bought that you brought back with you?

Evans: Oh I, I never really had a chance to buy too much but, I did make things and sold 'em to other people. I don't uh, I [chuckle] I always wanted. It's ah, been all my life is, like you ask when I was a kid, making a few bucks here or start doing something like that. I took in ahh, I got ah, a couple air ah, Japanese Air Planes that had went down that were ah, by the shore. I took and peeled off some of the aluminum — sheeting on 'em. And, when I went back to shore, I took and made some flat — bracelets out, then you could send them through the mail that way. And then, when they got home they could just bend them to, to fit the arm. And I would, I put the, their girlfriends name or their wife's name an-. And then they put palm trees on it and ah, different oriental things and upside. *?* I'd sell them. I was always making, when I got home I had a fair amount of money . That I sent home, from doing things.

Brooks: Did you make anything thing for anyone that you knew back home?

Evans: Well my sisters I made stuff for them and send 'em to them.

Brooks: Nice.

Evans: Like down in um — who they at hm *?* — shoe it *?* — — ummm, where we took the ship down and. Were took out for testing and stuff. And getting it, getting acquainted with it. Ahh, they had gambling there. And I won some Silver Dollars. And I sent them home to my sisters. They get a kick out of it. I don't think they ever saw, a Silver Silver Dollar. So, things like I did.

Brooks: That's nice. You're a good big brother.

[00:40:04]

Evans: Oh, I had, I liked my sisters, they were younger but, ah. They were good people.

Brooks: Were they involved in the war effort at all?

Evans: No. No, ah my — oldest sister she became a X-ray technician. She worked in the hospital, fact here in Madison. At the hospital and ah she, she married a, the guys brother that run the — the — the X-ray division here. And ah—

Brooks: Wow.

Evans: And ah—

Brooks: Small world.

Evans: Yeah. And ah, my Adam. My other sister, she ah, she married a preacher. It is a small world. So — but there, there there were, they were good people.

Brooks: So-, can you tell me about umm, you said you don't really remember when the bombs were dropped but, do you remember hearing that the war was ending in the Pacific?

Evans: Probably. But I do re-, recall anything great about it.

Brooks: Or about hearing that you would be sent home soon or. I guess what I'm wondering is; after the war was over, so that was in 1945. So were you part of like, occupation forces. What was your, what was your role after the war was officially over?

Evans: Well the last trip I made was up to Manchuria ** I come back from that an —

Brooks: Umm, that was it.

Evans: I got on a — ahh, old maintenance ship that could — hardly move in the water and come back to the states.

Brooks: So when that, when that mission was done. That was when you were free to go home and get discharged. '46.

Brooks: Umm, can you tell me a little bit about that trip back?

Evans: Well that trip back was, it was a real slow ship and lot of the maintenance people on it rigged ps- like big canvases. Like, lot of big sails.

Brooks: Hmm.

Evans: To speed it up a little bit.

Brooks: Umm-hm.

Evans: And they would —

Brooks: [giggle] Get creative.

Evans: Yeah and speed the ship up a little bit an-. It back, because the thing would only go about nine knots I think. Not very fast. And then — then we made it back and — I talk about businesses that just sapped thing too. I had a business in ah- ah, Navy Pier one time.

Brooks: Hmm.

Evans: My mother gave me a little, a little tiny iron. Elec- electric iron for — ah — ironing my whites and that. So I set up a little business there there and I- I ironed all the guys whites so much the tops so much ya bought 'em. **

Brooks: Wow.

Evans: And so I [chuckle] always making a buck somewhere.

Brooks: Yeah.

Brooks: So, when you — first came back, where did you first dock?

Evans: I think it's Treasure Island.

Brooks: M'kay.

Evans: And then we got on a — ah, train across county train. And ended up in Navy Pier I think of it. Then from their home.

Brooks: How long were you at Navy Pier?

Evans: Umm, must have been a week or two.

Brooks: And that was kind of just getting everything in order so that you could be discharged.

Evans: Yeah.

Brooks: Do you know what month that was?

Evans: I think it was June.

Brooks: Okay. So, was there anything particularly memorable about your discharge?

Evans: I was just out of service. That was a — went to; what am I gonna do next?

Brooks: So you're discharged at Navy Pier and then, how did you get back to Wisconsin?

Evans: Well, Navy Pier isn't that far from Madison. I think I just come on train or a bus.

Brooks: What was your home coming like?

Evans: Just another day in the world. I was home, that was it.

Brooks: No parties or parade or anything?

Evans: Nope. Just that I was back home.

Brooks: Did your family ask you a lot of questions about your service?

Evans: Not really, not really. Umm — when I was overseas one time — when the, say I was in the Higgins boat I could get a shore too but, I j- I park it and it was a — seamen watch the ship well I did what I wanted to. And umm, there was a boat. I got a whole bunch of umm, one landing, I got a whole bunch of Japanese rifle — na — swords, your know, there fitted into the rifle. And I sent a whole box of them home to my dad. And I told him to give one to each of my uncles. They's, they kind of appreciated it I think.

[00:45:54]

Evans: So — then I sent some, some knives from the Philippines home. Especially this war one ** knives. You ever see one of those?

Brooks: No.

Evans: You want to see one?

Brooks: Ah, maybe when done with the recording.

Evans: Okay.

Brooks: Yeah, love to take a look. Yeah.

Evans: I got a c-, I think I got a couple there yet.

Brooks: Yeah. Brooks: So you took some souvenirs.

Evans: Well I was always trading for something. Like this one knife, I think I got in there, I traded it, the Dungaree shirt off my back — for it.

Brooks: Wow.

Evans: I thought I come out okay.

Brooks: You can always get a new shirt.

Evans: Yeah. So — I, I was always getting things for — people. I sent a lot of stuff home like a. In New Guinea there I sent a lot of — uh, shell necklaces and stuff like that. And we, sisters, I think gave me some grass skirt one time. It was made by the, the New Guinea girl, a people there.

Brooks: Yeah. That's awesome.

Evans: So — it was umm — interesting I guess. I can, I can't complain. I made it through in one piece and I live a long life an. I don't know, I don't really have any complaints.

Brooks: Did you think about staying in at all?

Evans: Well, no— I wasn't. Well they wanted me to come back in. What they, after discharged, found out World War II there and they wanted me to come in for the Korean War.

Brooks: Hmm.

Evans: And ah — oh yeah I, I thought I had enough.

Brooks: Yeah.

Evans: So — I didn't relist.

Brooks: So what was next? You said you had to decide what to do next.

Evans: Well, I signed up and went to the University — for two years. And then I st- I- I started this business. And um, I been in that for 65 years.

Brooks: S-, did you go to UW Madison?

Evans: Yes.

Brooks: Did you use the GI bill?

Evans: Yes.

Brooks: And what were you studying?

Evans: Civil Engineering.

Brooks: And then you started EVCO.

Evans: Yep.

Brooks: Wow.

Evans: Come —

Brooks: You said for 65 years, right?

Evans: Well I was — I was with my brother in law for about fourteen years I gue-. I gave him half of everything I made. Which got kind of old after a while. And, especially when he didn't do much, he wou- helped his dad on the farm. And a, then a — I wanted to hire some mo- more people, expand the company. And he says; aren't you satisfied? Ja making enough? So — I started a EVCO. Now I got, what — 1,200 to 1,400 people working.

Brooks: Wow.

Evans: All around the world.

Brooks: It's impressive.

Evans: So — turned out, turned out okay.

Brooks: Did you stay in touch with anybody that you met well you were in the Navy?

Evans: Stay?

[00:50:12]

Brooks: Did you stay in touch with anyone?

Evans: Oh yeah. I umm — I still ah, get the — Scuttlebutt Magazine. From 'em. Navy amphib — magazine. I've and ahh — I kept in track, touch with ah one guy that kind of kept the ship — ahh, personal in touch but, he died here a couple years ago. And ah, so, that kind of fell apart.

Brooks: Did you umm, join any other organizations? Any veterans groups?

Evans: Not really. Ah oh, ah VFW. I belong to that. That ah, I- I became a life member of that, long time ago.

Brooks: Why did you decide to do that?

Evans: Well, they were [chuckle] they were having their meetings at my restaurant. I had a big supper club. Out in, on interstate by DeForest. Seven Ease it was called. And ah, they held or meetings there. So — least I could do was join.

Brooks: Yeah [ha].

Evans: I did — what umm — I've had a lot of side line businesses. Yeah. Stuff.

Brooks: W- do you think that your, life was changed by the fact that you were in the in the Navy?

Evans: Well if I had to do it all over again I think I would of tried to — do something when I was in there that would accomplish more then what I did, course what I did was taking guys into beach. That was a, wasn't the softest job in the world. But ah, I think I would ah, maybe become a pilot or some — or um, run L- ah, Destroyer or something like that. Try too anyway. I think — with my life, what I've accomplished, in my life I wouldn't a had any problem doing anything like that.

Brooks: So how has your life changed because of the Navy?

Evans: Cause of the Navy? Oh, I don't know if it's really affected it much because I never really — I never put that in emphasize. I ahh — I talked to people about — being in the service, if they been in service and they — they want to talk about their service when. I'll add a little bit to it. Kinda socialize with them then I. *?* And, especially here were the people that were in service are- are old like me. You know I'm 91 years old. It's a, getting up there.

Brooks: Is there anything that you missed about the Navy after you were discharged?

Evans: No—. Um, if I had a, like a r- if I had a position in there, that I felt like, really accomplished something. I p- I might stayed in.

Brooks: Umm-hm.

Evans: But ah, I don't think — uhh — just driving a Higgins boat — was a — the greatest thing for my — ego *?* — see.

Brooks: Did you think it was hard to transition back into being a civilian?

Evans: Um, I don't think I had any problems. I was always kind of independent, ah, do things at my own more or less. Just like starting this business, when I was going to school.

Brooks: Umm-hm.

Evans: Then it started to take off and I had make up my mind. Whether to stay in school or ah, run the business. So that ain't easy thing to do nether.

Brooks: Umm-hm.

Evans: Well, are you gonna be successful? So, it's a lots — ifs and ands.

Brooks: So why— did you— want to do the interview with us?

Evans: Why would I do it?

Brooks: Hmm.

Evans: Well, just to be sociable. More or less. If I could, maybe I could say something that help somebody else down the road or something.

Brooks: Umm-hm.

Evans: I was trying to do things to help other people.

[00:55:45]

Brooks: Is there anything important about serving in the military that you think younger people should know?

Evans: Well I suppose, its depends about what part of the military they're in. Ah, I think a, some parts of the Military pretty well glued down to — doing one thing and that's about it. And following instructions and that. Wise — I probably had quite an advantage over other people. Having that little Post Office and driving the Higgins boat.

Brooks: Hmm.

Evans: And ah, that's the average person in there. So — I can't really complain. So — tomorrows another day. Whether I'm here tomorrow, I don't know. But I make the best of it in the meantime.

Brooks: Okay. Was there anything else about your service that you wanted to add?

Evans: Well, it's about all I did. What I told you.

Brooks: Umm-hm.

Evans: If — I think about, some of the things I coulda done that I, nobody give me any direction or any idea of what I could done. I remember on— see I was out of high school a year before I went into service, I had the time and ah. If I had to do it all over again, I think what I would do — or woulda done. Is to take and join the — they had these groups that they were sending to the university. They like, but they, you had to go in right out of High School I think. A year later was to late.

Brooks: Hmm.

Evans: Or— I would try to get a design group, a product design group, in the in the Navy. Design products — for them. I would, I think that woulda been nice. I would enjoy that. Just a plane, cause I like to draw. I- I- did love drawing. And ahh — ju just taking design. Because I'm sure they had a lot of things they had problems with during the war. That they need refinement and stuff. And ah — I and, I had ah — ooo, a time schedule that didn't bother me that, to work on something. And it didn't bother me to tear it apart and put it together two or three times and. Fight from my granddad — my mother was sick when, was sick when my oldest sister was born. She was in the hospital there. So I stayed with my grandparents awhile. He was a watch maker I told ya.

Brooks: Hmm.

Evans: First thing he did, when I was there one day, he brought this old alarm clock at home. Put it on the table and gave me a screw driver. Says; take it apart. So I took all the screws out, took it all apart, spring out and everything. Says; now put it back together. So that's the next stage. So if I would been, lived with him longer, he probably made a watch maker out of me.

Evans: So I've done lot a strange things in my life I guess.

Brooks: Yeah.

Brooks: Alright. Anything else you want to add before we turn the recorder off?

Evans: Umm, I don't know what it would be. I've just, one thing I, one thing I gotta — give credit to is- is the wife I got. I got a wife that was smart — she — a hard worker. And ah, she was exceptional partner. She set up my office and everything.

[01:00:37]

Brooks: When did you get married?

Evans: Ahh, 1948.

Brooks: So you?

Evans: 69 years ago.

Brooks: So you met her after you were out of the Navy?

Evans: Ye- yes. After I come back.

Brooks: That's great.

Evans: So umm, we had a good life together.

Brooks: Yeah.

Evans: Umm-hm.

Brooks: Great. Well I think that's a great place to end. So I'm gonna go ahead and turn this off.

Evans: Okay.

[End of OH2107.Evans][End of Interview]