

# **James “Bud” Lanz Oral History Interview**

October 3, 2011

Interviewed by Thomas Webb

Transcribed by Bruce Moser, November, 2011 & Nick Marrapode, February, 2012

Edited by Nick Marrapode, March, 2012

Webb: The first thing I would ask you to do is just state your name, and the date and where you're at, so we've got that on record.

Lanz: James, Bud nickname, Lanz, October 3, 2011. The story of my Navy Career and what caused me to enter the Navy. I was in the Boy Scouts very heavily as a kid. I got to be a Life Scout, I would have made Eagle, I was four merit badges short of making Eagle because of the war. I was going to turn 18 in the middle of my junior year of high school because I was quarantined eight weeks because of scarlet fever as a third grader. I got set back one year in school is why I was going to turn 18 in my junior year. I was very successful in knot tying, needless to say, which was a part of a merit badge. I got into semaphore initial signaling at which I won very many awards at what we called Jamborees, a competition. The semaphore is a method of sending a message to a person that can read it at the other end, and during the Boy Scout Jamboree contest you have to do this in so many minutes as to how many words are in the message. I exceeded in that and also learned the Morse Code and was always extremely interested in the Navy. I followed all the news of WW II, interested in the Navy. So I started a scrapbook which was part of one of my necessary projects in school.

So to begin with I already had an older brother in the combat engineers who had been sent to New Guinea. I had another brother that was in the ROTC at University of Wisconsin in the School of Engineering. He became an officer, after basic training he went on to Virginia in Alexandria and got to be a 2nd Lt. So, I had two brothers in the war and wanted to get into it. I didn't want to go into the Army, so I enlisted in the Madison Post Office in Wisconsin on December 7, 1943, on the anniversary of Pearl Harbor. On the 8th of January I was sworn in at Milwaukee Navy Center and I was shipped by Great Northern Railroad with many other Wisconsin boys and we got sent to Farragut, Idaho of all places. When I lived 140 miles from Great Lakes and they sent me 1600 miles to Farragut, Idaho which I'd never heard of. I'd never been out of the state. Anyway that was a six week program. Normally Great Lakes Naval Training Station, was the only one at one time, and still is the main one. Their program other than the war would be eight weeks. We were shoved through in six because they needed sailors at Pearl Harbor, and so we were rushed through. It was a very cold climate, 27 miles from the border with Canada, and It was all done in January and half of February. Graduated from there in the middle of February. And by the way, you do not graduate from a Naval Training Station unless you can dive, jump off of a 30 tower and swim with your clothes on. And if you cannot accomplish that you stay there until you do.

Webb: Now was there a lake in Idaho?

Lanz: Yes called Pend Orielle it's a French name and it was spelled in three different

brackets. Pend Orielle was very deep, in fact, over 300 and some feet deep and had a Navy sonar station in the middle on a raft and still is there, was 10 years ago anyway, and they were doing research on sonar. And so, they chose that because of the lake and they built five camps that held 5000 men per camp in 9-1/2 months, they built that camp. They put up two story barracks and drill halls about 500 yards long and had a drill floor in part of it and on one end was a swimming pool, which was all glass. You had to take your turns at standing guard duty at night, and who would come to greet you but a deer who'd come up and lick you on the hand. One got shook up one night, an eight point buck, and he seen his image in the window, he jumped through the glass and drowned in the swimming pool, and of course bled to death. And so that's pretty much about Boot Camp while there is a funny story, it's in my book, I don't know if I should do that now. One of my mates from Madison, Wisconsin could talk like Donald Duck. He was a character, he was Irish, and another young guy from Wisconsin, we kind of got to be pals. And we're in a knot tying class one day and we were sitting toward the back end. Chuck started talking like Donald Duck, mimicking the guy that's up on the stage. And the guy caught me laughing, and he said, "You come up here and show the men how to tie a running bowline". I thought this was a piece of cake. In one of my merit badges I had to mount 20 some different knots of ropes and shellac them as part of a merit badge. So I tied it and I'm left handed, my whole family was left handed, and he looked at me and said, "I'm so sure it's right, go sit down".

After that it was pretty much run of the mill boot camp, no other funny episodes

happened, and I was given a 30 day leave, the end of February and went home to my family in Monroe, Wisconsin and was there actually 28 days, travel time, and had to get back and we were immediately shipped from Farragut, Idaho to Puget Sound Navy Yard in Puget Sound, Washington, which is directly across from Seattle. Our first sea duty was when we would get liberty, and liberty is a daytime time off, if it's more than that, then it's called a leave. So liberty was on a ferry boat to Seattle, there was no other place to go, so that was our first sea duty, we called it, the Blackball Ferry to Seattle. Run around did things, being 18 we were not able to get into taverns, so we got into a taxicab and the cab driver said I'll get you a bottle and you can drive around with me taking fares. Am I going too into this?

Webb: No. I might stop you for a minute and go back to a couple points, but you're doing alright.

Lanz: OK, I usually try to come up with funny stuff, I mean all my friends tell me you're writing a book and everything that's been written and shown movies about combat, I'll get to the combat, and we've had a lot of bad combat, but I like to tell some of the funny stories. So we rode with the cabbie and he picked up a drunk, a habitual drunk that he must have picked up all the time and he says, "I can't get down to his house, the street is blocked off, would you guys mind taking him down there?" We practically had to carry him he was so drunk, took him to the front door and pressed the doorbell. The wife comes to the door and says, "You blankety-blank no good sailors brought my husband home" and Chuck that talked like Donald said and

he told her in Donald Duck language," lady, that SOB has been drunk all his life and we got nothing to do with it". I try not to use any profanity, but when you're in the Navy or in any military profanity is the language because you're not around women, anyway...

Webb: That might be a good place to stop because one of the questions I had is that you were interested in the Navy, you had done a scrapbook, but what were your thoughts, I mean you sort of signed up on the anniversary of Pearl Harbor, so you for a whole year, you were living as most Americans were, with this kind of what's going on, are we in war, what did we think about it, so what were some of your thoughts as you led up to...

Lanz: As a 17 year old I was puffed up with excitement, I thought it was exciting, until I found out what blood was. So that kept my interest, I followed newspapers, I cut out clippings, like I said I made a scrapbook for one of my credits in high school and so my interest intensified with every, I read about every battle and everything that was going on that was involved with the Navy. I had in both brothers in combat Army engineers, I sure didn't want to be a marcher, cause, well I did play football in high school, but I just couldn't visualize myself doing all that walking. Besides I was so interested in this semaphore signaling and the whole depth of communications, my interest just intensified.

Webb: Other than your brothers, did you have friends that were signing up for service?

Lanz: No, because all my friends were a year younger than me because I was behind from

the scarlet fever, so they would not have to go in until the end of their senior year. See, back then, the draft would wait for you to graduate from high school if you went in, say six months. So most all of my friends didn't have to go in the service until almost a year later and a lot of them chose air force, army, several were Navy and there was a Coast Guard guy in there. So they all followed me later and most of them did not see combat because the war was pretty much over by the time by the time they got in there. It was over in May of 45 in Europe and all these kids graduated in 45. That's about it for reason to go in the Navy.

Webb: You said that your training was six weeks as opposed to the eight weeks, I think is what you said.

Lanz: In peacetime it would have been eight weeks.

Webb: Did you feel at all rushed through that, did they let you know they were speeding it up?

Lanz: We didn't know the difference. We never had no clue as to what it used to be. I didn't know that until after the war, some of that stuff. We liked the area, the mountains and the lake was very beautiful to look at, except January wasn't exactly a good time to be there.

Webb: I think you'd be used to that being from Wisconsin.

Lanz: Well, You weren't there for sightseeing. The only time we got on water was they did have whale boats, which was back from the sailing days when they went out, and

when they got a whale they had go out there throw the harpoon grab the whale to the big ship so they could butcher it up. So they were called whale boats and they had six men to a side with oars, and we were taught how to row. I already knew how to row because my Dad used to take us rowing in Wisconsin and I rowed a row boat all around the lake all by myself, when I was 10 or 12 years old. But this was much larger, longer oars and so forth. So that's the only time we got on the water, there was no other than that. There was lifesaving taught in the indoor pool. How to do artificial respiration, which I learned all this in the Boy Scouts before, in fact I had a lifesaving Merit Badge. So, the training in there was intense. There was some physical ed and you could sign up for boxing, which I did. I was in Golden Gloves at home before that, so I was interested in the boxing end of it. And of course I was 188 lbs. when I went in the Navy and I was five-foot ten and one-half, but with my weight I got a big gorilla about six-foot-two and he had the reach on me and beat the crap out of me.

Webb: Did you keep boxing after that, or was that . . .

Lanz: No, that was my lesson, I'd had enough of that. There was no way available to do it, on small ships to my knowledge.

Webb: You said they sent all the Wisconsin boys to Idaho, and there were five camps. Were there people from other places at these camps too?

Lanz: The camps were all named after Navy heroes that died in Pearl Harbor and shortly after. Our camp was Camp Warren, was named after a very famous Navy pilot that

was shot down during the Jap invasion of Pearl Harbor. There was Camp Binyon, Camp, gosh, I don't remember them all anymore, but there were roughly 5000 per camp. Five camps was one heck of a lot of men.

Webb: I just wondered when you've got rowing experience and all this Boy Scout experience, did it seem to sort of put you ahead?

Lanz: Very much. In fact, I used to laugh in some of the other guys in class. They didn't get the knots. Knot tying is intense, long thing, I mean you had to practice with repetitions. That's the only way to learn how to tie knots. Just to look at it and say you're going to tie that knot, and you won't find many who are able to do it unless you have some experience. So, yeah I had an easy time at that, we never used the signaling in Boot Camp, all they wanted to do was get cannon fodder out on the ships. That's a poor term but that's about what it amounted to. They needed men to mount the ships.

Webb: OK, let's go back to your first on sea experience.

Lanz: OK, we were shipped from Pier 41, Seattle, to Pearl Harbor on a Dutch troop transport called the Nordham. Dutch, I emphasize, did no versteh English, most of them, maybe the Captain and some of the officers. We are put in No. Five hold where the crew lived, five decks down. In the middle of the hold was a 15 gallon garbage can. Now guess what that's used for: seasick boys puking. We had two nights of that, we decided the hell with this. In the Navy you are given a seabag, 20 inches in diameter, 48 inches long with a cord through grommets on the top. You

are given a canvas hammock, all your gear goes in the seabag, and being in a cold climate it was all Navy blue wool uniforms. In the bag would be an extra set of blue uniforms that had no white stripes on the bib or on your sleeves. Your dress uniform had your stripes and your rate. You got a white ring around your shoulder and that designates you as an apprentice seaman. You put all that hammock around that seabag and carried that on your shoulder. Everything you own is in that bag. One extra pair of black polished shoes and a dress uniform and a work uniform. Later when you get a ship you work in dungarees, no uniform, unless you're on a cruiser or battleship and you've got a lot of brass on there and you've got to stay in some kind of uniform instead of the dungarees. The ship was 16 days to Pearl Harbor. It was very rough at times, the ship contained on the main deck what we called Officer Country, they had staterooms above decks. One of the officers was the actor Henry Fonda a Lieutenant JG. Never got to talk to Mr. Fonda., but us guys from Hold No. five would try to assemble above decks for fresh air. There were huge 36 inch diameter ventilators on the main deck, ventilating all these pukey decks down below. So we'd tie up our hammocks in between there, but they were so close together the hammock was more curved than straight so when you got out of there you had to walk around for 10 minutes to be able to get vertical. We would see Mr. Fonda above deck, he was always out during the day when it was sunny and he always had a book and was always reading. That's the only time would ever see Mr. Fonda. Us three guys from Wisconsin had a little bet who would get seasick first. Well, you had to wear Mae West life jackets. You're

probably too young to ever know the actress Mae West. She was known for her big bust. So they called the life jackets Mae West. So we're wearing them, it was compulsory everybody had to wear them in case the ship should get torpedoed. Decided we're going to bet five bucks who was going to get seasick first. Bob one night says he's going down to the head, that's a Navy term for the toilet, restroom. Don said, "I think he's going down there to puke and he's not going to tell us. When he comes back, I'll watch for him and when he comes ready to come up the ladder, the steel staircase, you wait for him then poke him in the stomach in the dark", I mean it's pitch dark, no moon no nothin', blackout conditions. Anytime a hatch comes open the lights go out and the red light comes on. So I'm waiting at the top of the ladder or steps, we call them the ladder aboard ship, and he's got a whistle, so I'm feeling out and I can hear him mumbling, and that's got to be Bob, he's always cussing about something. So I reached out and punched him in the stomach. He fell to the deck, took us a long time to quit saying floor, and hits the deck, and about that time somebody comes out of officers' country, the hatch comes open, the light goes off, the red light comes on and who is laying on the deck the Dutch Captain. I'm not lying to you, strike me dead if I'm making that story up. That rotten so and so Chuck that can talk like Donald Duck is over there laughing his fanny off, and if I could have caught him I would have beat the crap out of him, he knew who was coming. That's pretty much the end of my troopship trip to Pearl Harbor.

Webb: Did you get into any kind of trouble, or was the...

Lanz: He never knew what hit him. I don't think I hit him that hard, but he did had a paunch on him so he was pretty vulnerable for the punch. So we'd see different kinds of things at night, you could see phosphorus coming off the waves, once in a while you'd see a porpoise, porpoises like to follow ships, seen that many times in two years, occasionally you'd see a whale, because the whale routing is from Alaska to Acapulco, Mexico roughly. So, we would cross that route. So, that's pretty much until we got to Pearl Harbor. And we were assigned to a Receiving Station, which was overcrowded with 400,000 military on the island of Oahu. That's the island that Honolulu and Pearl Harbor is, you've probably heard that.

Webb: Well of course you heard of the stories and probably seen the newsreels of what happened in Pearl Harbor. Was there any kind of, as you pulled in were you able to see any...

Lanz: When we come into Pearl Harbor from the ocean, the harbor is in three channels called Lochs, L-O-C-H, which is Scottish I guess. In the middle of Pearl Harbor is Ford Island Naval Air Station, which was for PBY amphibious flying boats, fighter planes, torpedo bombers, dive bombers, all of the stuff the Navy puts on carriers except for PBY flying boats. They use that for rescue and air search, which was a big thing in the Battle of Midway when they spotted the Jap fleet. This Ford Island was a tie up for all the battleships that were sunk, the Arizona and all those that were lost in the Jap invasion. We would go past that into Pearl City which was a town along the back shore of the harbor. Which were some civilian workers in the Navy Yard,

which was very restricted because of Jap spies. There were a lot of Japanese working on the island which will later come up in another story. So, they did not have a place to put us. The place is jam packed with personnel, Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, you name it, over 400,000 on that island. Two ladies' houses in the city, and you know what I'm talking about, doing a world of business, which I never ever got into.

Anyway, we got taken out to the very western point of Oahu which was a Marine Corps rifle range with the targets floating in the ocean. Another bad story about the two dummies I lived with. We're put in barracks, concrete barracks, I mean this is a real permanent thing. The targets were floating in the ocean. We decided we're going to go swimming one day, we had no supervision, we're there waiting to get assigned to a ship. So we get in the ocean and the current carried us behind the targets. We're in the water, I was an excellent swimmer and the other guys were OK and we see something in the water making little splashes, which turned out to be bullets, 30 caliber bullets going past the targets. We got carried over to the target area, we never did get behind a target, and we never did see one that I can remember. I still don't why we didn't see them, but we're lucky we got out of there alive. During the night, the 16 inch shore guns decided to have target practice. Those concrete barracks shook like you wouldn't believe when they started firing those shore 16 inch guns aiming for the Jap Navy to show up again. That's it, we now get assigned to ships. Want me to stop there?

Webb: How long a wait did you have before you were assigned a ship?

Lanz: I think it was something like three weeks for some, four weeks for others.

Webb: Was there additional training or something that you had?

Lanz: That's a good point, no training. We were put on these ships green as grass, don't know nothin'. What you learned in Boot Camp did not prepare you for ship duty. I never did figure that one out. Anyway, I'm assigned to LST 34 which was a Landing Ship Tank. Has a flat bottom, 328 people, 52 feet wide, has twin diesel engines. The firing power is a three inch gun on the stern. All other guns on the bow and the bridge aft, aft meaning rear, 40 mm. We were not meant to be firepower. The equipment on the ship was strictly to protect you when you're on the beach and air raids. Anything other than that in convoy we had destroyers and destroyer escorts escorting in the convoy. And the convoys would travel like five in a row and about 300 to 400 yards from one row to the other. In between that, the destroyers would go back and forth, back and forth searching for submarines. So on the 27th of April I was assigned to LST 34. I was given the job as a deck jockey, or swab jockey we would call each other. We're 2nd class Seaman, by the way, you graduated to 2nd class Seaman from Boot Camp, which is two stripes on your sleeve. Then the education is very limited as to what we're going to do on that ship, other than swab jockeys cleaning the deck and the toilets and all that which I hated with a passion. The man in charge of the deck is a Master of Arms. He is at least at least a 1st class Seaman. Now, that's not right, he's a 1st class... what did I just call him? Usually,

they are a Chief Petty Officer. A Chief Petty Officer wears a visor cap like an officer and dresses like an officer in GRAY, instead of the Navy blue. He is in charge, the Master of Arms is in charge of all Seaman and that is his rate, so he is in charge of anything that takes place on the main deck, coming and going, anchored, moored to a pier or to another ship, whatever, he was in charge of that. The Captain would give him an order of what we're going to do and where we're going to go and he sees that it gets done with the seamen, which we'll be tying up with two inch ropes to the dock, or to another ship, or if you have to go out in the bay or harbor and anchor. So, that is his job. Most guys don't like him because he has to have a very strict attitude toward all the dummies that are swabbing the deck. So he's dealing with guys from all over the United States that have never been to sea, most of us. So, they come to understand that the guy has a bad job. Anyway, so, we are going to load up ammunition at the ammo depot, which is at West Loch, and that's another whole bad story later on which was called the second tragedy at Pearl Harbor and we were part of it. We went over there to load up ammunition and gasoline, diesel, not gasoline this time, and troops, 2nd Marine Division, who were beaten terribly at Tarawa just the November before and our ship was part of it. And that was in November in the Marshall and Gilbert Islands and our ship is part of a book, I can show you the book, a copy of what took place there. They were going to discharge the Marines, they had to pass over a reef. The high tide was given to them by an Australian scout on the island. He mixed in with the natives before the Japs were ever there. He gave the tide information to the Navy and the Navy went

by that. Turned out to be a disaster, the tide was wrong, the water was too deep over the reef, and these men with 60 pound packs, gun and backpack and ammunition, drowned trying to cross the reef. The ones that survived were machine gunned in the water as they walked ashore. So, it was a bad disaster for the 2nd Marine Division. The ship was, after discharging the troops ashore, was out in the bay area waiting to assist with the ammunition, supplies or whatever they need once they secured the beachhead, which didn't happen for three days. A shore gun started shooting onto LST 34, this was before I'm on it, and three shots missed the stern, the 3rd shot was about 100 yards according to the book, from the stern of the ship, so they escaped. So back to me and my duty on LST 34, we're getting ready to go on maneuvers, here comes our first training. Nobody sat right down and said you're going to do this and you're going to do that, and this is going to happen and that is going to happen, that never took place. What do we do? So, we're just swab jockeys, and there's six, six, about 18 of us was in the deck force. We're going to go to Maui in the group of islands which is between Oahu and the big island of Hawaii. Maui in 1940... yeah 44', I don't get out of boot camp until 44'. In 1944 Maui didn't hardly have nothing on in it, all these hotels and everything came along long after WW II. So the invasion consisted of battleships and cruisers shelling the heck out of the island to get the defenses weakened so when we make a beach head we could land our troops. When they did that to Tarawa and the island of Betio which was a bad one, they shelled that island something terrible, but Japs were in concrete pillboxes, mostly underground so they didn't really wipe

them out at all. So this maneuver was supposed to improve on that, all this effort. And so they shelled the heck out of Maui and this went on for about six hours, six to seven hours. There was nothing there to destroy but a bunch of palm trees and raised holy heck on that island. Then we're supposed to make a landing of our LST which has bow doors and a ramp. The ramp is what makes the ship water tight, the bow door just comes to a point so it can knife the water and push the waves to the side. There was a hatch between the ramp and the bow doors that was from Number One 40 mm gun tub up on the bow. There were three on the bow, the one in the middle had a ladder from the floor of the gun tub down in between the space between the bow doors and the ramp. Later on we found out this is where guys went to smoke when there were black out conditions during the night so submarines wouldn't see us. So, we land all these troops, once we land our troops, by the way, the procedure to land a LST would be to 25 minutes before beaching you pump all the forward bilges to the aft to bring the ship up on the bow and the stern down so you can get up on the land easier. The pumping is accomplished, the speed, the flank speed is about 13.5 knots, that's about 13 miles an hour. The ship is built to be flexible so when we hit the beach you've got a big abrupt stopping. The procedure I missed before that, at 200 to 300 yards from the beach, the stern anchor which has a two and a half inch steel twisted wire cable, two and a half inches in diameter and the stern anchor is dropped about 250 yards from the beach. Very important, that's the way you're going to get off the beach, plus it keeps her from washing up on the beach sideways, or broached. That's another

story later on, my fault. So this is accomplished, this is the first time we ever see this, 37 new men are seeing this for the first time. So, after you discharge your equipment, trucks, jeeps, tanks, troops, whatever. That part of the maneuver is over you bring them all back on the ship and we got to get off the beach, but we got to use the stern anchor to get you off the beach. Ordinarily, you don't do that when you're loaded, you're unloaded. So coming back off that beach with your load that you took there, it is pretty tricky and some of them wouldn't get off the beach, so then they'd have to have other ships that are out to sea come in and hook into your winch and help get you off the beach. OK, the maneuver is over with, this is on the 15th of May 1944. The maneuver took place for three days and we're supposed to return to Pearl Harbor and load up for the invasion of Saipan. Disaster, we are caught in a storm halfway back to Oahu Pearl Harbor. Aboard some of the LST's were the LCT, a Landing Craft Tank, I have pictures of them. It is about 47 feet long and about 36 feet wide and there's nothing but 20 mm guns on it. It's meant to take troops to the beach and use it after the beach is secured for transportation for different things while the island is being occupied. This ship is launched off the main deck of an LST by pumping the bilges to the starboard side at 38 degree pitch. The railings are on hinges, the railings are lowered down, the LCT is on 12 x 12 inch timbers. It is chained and buckled down to the deck, our main deck had all kinds of openings where you could hook onto very big anchor chains. So that LCT is launched into the water with the men on it, so it's a pretty big splash and they call it the experience of egg-nag. Those people can advance to the beach after we hit the

beach. So there's a little bit of protection. Coming back in the storm two of those come loose from the LST's and go overboard and all the Marines and the crew are drowned. So, two LCT's are lost in maneuvers.

OK, we're back in Pearl Harbor, we're in the West Loch which is the western channel of Pearl Harbor, of the three, we're at the Navy Ammo Depot is a beach store locator. Next to this Ammo Depot is sugar cane fields, a lot of people in there are Japanese, farm workers and maybe spies. This is how Tokyo Rose got her information. The 21st has five rows called tares, T-A-R-E, of LST's, about eight in a row and there's five rows. At 1300 hours on the afternoon, one of them blows up. They're loading high octane aviation gas, shells all the way up to 16 inch that go to battleships, ammo all the way down to 30 caliber, and Marines. The second one blows up from the missiles of sparks and pieces of shrapnel and goes down into the third row, the third one blows up, another one next to that blows up until six LST's explode and sink. Men in the water, flaming water, swimming and hollering for help. The orders that we had, we were moored in a different part of West Loch, we were ordered to go to Tare Eight, which is on the very end, I have a photograph of it. We just arrive when the second one blew up, and our engines were still running. Our Captain was extremely alert, I'll tell you about him, and so we're able to back away, we just had to cast off our bow line, and we back off into the channel. The aerial photograph shows us and about five other LST's also in the same position of moving away, so we escape the explosions.

Webb: What was your mood then, did you know kind of what was going on or were you completely...

Lanz: Complete surprise, I expected none of this. To this day, the Navy doesn't have a good explanation. I'll come to that a little later, there's lots of them, and the high witness are the ones that are most dependable. What the Navy said was 336 killed, 147 wounded, iffy. They didn't want the Japs to know that we've already lost two LCT's and 6 LST's before we ever get to Saipan, and they're expecting us to come. So, the report, we never were given any of the information what the death was or anything, but we spent the next whole day fishing American bodies out of the water. Us and many other LST's were not damaged. So this was the only experience, I mean we're young and stupid, we don't for a second about what's going on. And neither do most of the captains, this is not planned, nobody knows anything about it. So LST 480 for one was one of the survivors, and that'll come up later as what that captain, the seaman said. So the Navy says there was poor handling by the Navy personnel handling the shells, star shells for one. When they are going to shell in dark a target, they shoot up rockets, star shells, to light up the area and then they fire. They said that someone was smoking, they also said someone dropped one of the star shells and set off the gasoline. The stories went on and on and on. The Jap farm workers immediately must have had radios to contact Tokyo Rose, I'm sure you heard of her. She would tell all kinds of lies, if we were in a sea battle she would say we won and the Americans lost all this and that and it was bullshit. And then she would play Glenn Miller music and stuff to make

us homesick, all kinds of American dance music which was popular back then. So she announced it before midnight that night, I don't all this until after the war you know and I got a lot of literature about it. And so we finished loading up. We take off for the invasion of Saipan three days later.

Webb: So, after experiencing that, three days later you're...

Lanz: Oh yeah, there's no holding the horse race you know. So, us young guys are flabbergasted, we don't know nothing. And there's nobody to console you or anything, you just live with it. So we get to Saipan, we've got 17 LVT's on the tank deck. Those are amphibious halftracks. Those are going to carry again the poor 2nd Marine Division to the shore and the first wave officer is on our ship. So that means we're going to discharge the first 17 LVT's tanks. My job and some of the seamen were to handle ropes so when our bow doors are open in the water, the ramp comes down and the ramp is partly submerged. It has one inch steel cleats all the way across so they can get traction. But when they hit the water they start going sideways and they could dent one of the bow doors and damage it. So a seaman would have to handle ropes onto the top of the tank and guide them until they got out beyond the bow doors. In between the cleats they put some planks for some reason cause that steel was kind of slippery, so they put planks in there between the cleats to give them traction. I step on a 30 penny spike, it went clean through my shoe, I still got a damaged big toe, crooked from that spike and in fact I just had it treated at the VA here about two months ago. They don't give a Purple Heart for

that kind of stuff.

Anyway, they are the first wave, OK. Two weeks before this invasion an American submarine brings in the UDT, which is now called Navy Seals, Frogmen they were called then. They got like a gas mask for under water which is long before they had tanks. And that's all the poor devils had to go under water with the explosives and blow channels through the reef. So they blew three channels, OK, disaster. So they get back to the submarine, go back to wherever they come from and those tanks got to go through those open channels single file. The Japs observe this exploding on the reef a long time with 8 inch guns in caves up in the mountain. They were zeroing in on them just like shooting ducks. 487 men... 58 made it, out of all those guys. And so it was a bloody mess, picking up bodies and putting them on our deck, and the hospital ships of course were out beyond the reach of the guns and we would have to make trips back and forth with those butchered bodies...

Then on our ship was a detachment of Seabees to help build things when they got up on the shore. Seabees are an engineering outfit in the Navy. One of the guys I played football against in Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin and we got to be good friends. And with all of this going on, we're not allowed to go ashore. We had two LCVP Higgins boats which the Wave officer was in one and other one went up there, they could carry 27 personnel and they had 30 caliber machine guns in the stern of the LCVP, and when he went to the beach he sent back to me a whole suitcase of Jap souvenirs which my Dad and son has. Jap gas mask, a flag, family picture of his

family and a lot of personal stuff. So I gave that to my son and he's going to donate it to the museum in Madison, Wisconsin. So, anyway we are told the third day, "All amphibious ships get out the area, the Jap fleet is coming from Guam". We hadn't invaded Guam yet. Our carriers are in the area, Bull Halsey and his Third Fleet. They start launching their airplanes, we're out of the area and find out what's going on. And to this day, that is known as the Marianas Turkey Shoot. I got the records, I think 373 Jap planes were shot down. That put a great big dent in the Jap air force, Navy air force. So that was a big, big gain for the American Navy because we wouldn't have so many planes attacking us.

So, we're back heading to Pearl Harbor to return and get loaded up again for we don't know, wherever. So, we're there for the whole month of July of 44'. During this time we're at anchor in the East Channel and we're told that the President is coming on the USS Pittsburgh. We are ordered for when the ship passes to be in dress white uniforms to man the railings all in a row next to each other and salute. He was so damn far away you couldn't even see him. Some ships were close enough. We were given liberty the next day to go into town and we were treated with President Roosevelt driving down the street in his convertible. One of four vehicles, and all you could see was his straw hat because he went by about 35 miles an hour. And so we're standing on the famous place of the neighborhood to go to bars, on Hotel Street, but what else was there to do but drink rum and Coke, that's all they ever had, there's nothing else. So you could get drunk drinking rum and coke, no one ever thought to do any sightseeing. We never had any money to speak

of. So we didn't get to see him driving by and we just finished our liberty. You're Port and Starboard, half the ship gets to go one day and the other half gets to go the next day and so on. There was various USO's which Felicia worked for 12 years, and they would give us free banana splits, cokes, that kind of stuff, games, billiards, pool, someone had movies and of course this is so jam packed full of sailors, soldiers and Marines you can't hardly walk without getting stepped on. And then they had photograph places where you could go and get your picture taken with a native girl and they could be Samoan, Japanese, or 32 of them were full blooded Hawaiians. And that was about it, they had an Army-Navy club run by the YWCA and but that's all the entertainment there was. And with a curfew you had to get back on ship by nine o'clock. So you had to take a bus back to Pearl Harbor. So, in all no one did any sightseeing, the thing to do was to go to town and get drunk.

Webb: Did all the different branches get along pretty well?

Lanz: Oh when you got booze going there are sailors fighting sailors, or Marines fighting. There was a kind of a competition between the Marines and the Navy, of course the Marine Corps is part of the United States Navy. And the resentment was the main gate at Pearl Harbor was guarded by Marines. So if you come back in any kind of bad condition, you got a billy-club or something and went to the Brig for a day or two. And that would happen but you didn't want to be any place where the Marines were in charge, because they'd like to use their billy-clubs on you. So some of that would happen, especially if a guy was irritable, he got mad too quick, he got

himself in trouble. So, that's pretty much what we did all that month. We're now ready to load up for the invasion of Leyte in Philippines.

Webb: Did you have more training in this period?

Lanz: Not a thing, not a damn thing. This costs money. We never thought about it, we didn't talk about it. It just never came up. You learned from day by day, and of course the older guys, the ship was built by Dravo Corporation in Pittsburgh on the island called Neville and there was that huge shipyard there, one of the first in the United States that built LST's, they built No. 1. In there were old men, all the able ones were in the military, and girls. About 12 years ago they honored two sisters that worked there, one was 19 and the other was 20, and they weld all these LST's together. They'd build an LST in four days! These things were put together like building blocks. They're made someplace else in sections and welded together, no rivets, cause' it's got to be flexible. How that did keep all those welds hold together, I never did, we did have one break open.

But that was our aim for the next month. We're going to take off in August for the Admiralty Islands which is north of New Guinea, the island called Makin, was the rendezvous point for the whole invasion fleet. The rendezvous point would be September, middle of September for everybody to be there. In some of our storage is 42 cases of beer for MacArthur's headquarters on New Guinea. Fun.

Webb: Yeah.

Lanz: I just covered that part in my book. We had a ship there, he'd come up there later quite often, a heavy drinker, he had a tattoo for every year, which was 15, that he'd been in the Navy, handlebar mustache, and his shop was inside the bow doors, first place on the starboard side, the right side, so if something went wrong with the bow doors, he'd be right there handy to fix it. He had a porthole window where he could look out over the ramp. Anytime we ever got near a destroyer when we left the island he would be after torpedo juice and it mixed with lemon extract for a good powerful drink. Knew his stuff, it was gutty, he was a tough guy, and he decided we should have some of that beer. So he said, "Now you guys get off the midnight watch come down and you can each have a beer, maybe two, we'll see how far it goes". 8 at a time would fit in his shop that was about this size. He had a wheel puller, I don't know if you've ever seen a wheel puller, but it's a bunch of claws, it has a shaft and a threaded handle, and you could pull a pulley off the shaft without damaging anything. The pin with a turnbuckle would fit into the shaft and pull it right off the shaft harmless, undamaged. He said he could take the caps off the beer cans with that without distorting them. We said, "Well, what are you going to do, throw them away?" He said, "We're not going to disturb them we're going to fill the cans with salt water and put the caps back on". I don't remember the exact number, but 30 some cases of salt water went to MacArthur's headquarters. We damn near died drinking the beer, though. All hatches are dogged, three on each side, one on top and bottom to make that hatch waterproof, so if you get hit by a torpedo or another ship you can isolate that compartment watertight. And that's

what happened, I got a picture here of a cruiser, lost 100 feet of its bow, I got a picture of that. And you can separate all those compartments and make them waterproof, they do it with ships, submarines, everything.

So, he's cooling the beer with a 50 pound CO2 fire extinguisher, which is about this big and it has a big funnel on the end to shoot CO2. After we're in there sometimes drinking the second beer, everybody's having trouble breathing. Well the next night one of the guys that was in the group drink was the Pharmacists Mate, we don't have a doctor, a Pharmacists Mate is like a male nurse. He says, "You damn fool, you been burning up the oxygen in here with the CO2!" So he'd go out on the tank deck, cool the beer and bring it back in. So the officers never got down there. Another trick he did one time when he was on the beach, a rat, jumbo rat came down, they were about this big. It ran onto the ramp and it's running around in the tank deck when we're getting ready to go. And he's got a Thompson sub machine gun and he's down there shooting at that rat. One of the officers happened to be, at the very end of the tank deck, there's two hatches that go into the area of the galley and the food line. And one of the officers in there happened to be checking out the galley and he heard the shooting and he looks in there and one of the bullets goes right over his head. He closed that off quick, but he got the rat anyway.

So, anyway we're at Manus Island and we're sitting there and we delivered our supplies to New Guinea, including the beer. Took 65 years to find out what

happened to that beer.

Webb: And what happened?

Lanz: Well, it's a little later, but I was invited to the Columbus, Ohio LST Association. I'd belonged to Wisconsin and then belonged to North Carolina where we used to live. And the LST Association you'd have meetings every so often, talk about the old days, some guys who had died and so forth. So we're kind of like a reunion. We're invited to a Pearl Harbor breakfast they would celebrate on December 1st of different years. At this Pearl Harbor breakfast the Governor of Ohio was going to issue 16 of us survivors from the West Loch disaster. I was one of them, I was invited by the North Carolina because I was one of them. There were more survivors than that, that's the only ones that belonged to the association back then. So with that I seen for the first time the aerial photograph of the disaster. Official Navy photo, I had never seen it before and I could pick out my ship. He also had the Navy diver that brought up bodies from those sunken ships. He gave us a talk. He presented us a certificate, I've got a diploma from the Governor, Taft, for being survivors of the West Loch tragedy. Somehow this freelance writer by the name of George Wilson from Memphis, Tennessee got wind of it. He wrote every one of 16 survivors for information about the tragedy and he wanted us to give him an exact death rate that was killed. These guys and officers are dead, gone, I can't prove it. I've heard lots of stuff.

So anyway, going back to Saipan after the invasion was over and we're in Pearl

Harbor and I'm on duty and I get a radio message I'm supposed to deliver down to the Captain, Captain Davis, his dad was Governor of Pennsylvania. He was talking with LST captains from the disaster, and one was the 480. I heard make a speech to each other while I delivered that message, that there was between 600 and 700 killed. That had to be more than what the Navy released because the Navy didn't want everybody to know, the Navy never bothered after WW II to tell anybody. I'd like to say that 85% of the nation to this day don't even know about the West Loch tragedy. However, George Wilson corrected that a little bit. I answered him what I heard in the wardroom officers talking about that tragedy and I sent it back to him. And he said, "My god, my bookkeeper read that and she cried" and he wrote me back and said he was going to put it on the History Channel. So in 2002 Memorial Day was on the History Channel. I've seen it once since on Memorial Day but it's been quite a while. So this was the whole story and the photographs. And he is the that got the information from us survivors.

Oh! In the second letter he answered back, he said, "I was a Commander in MacArthur's Headquarters in New Guinea". I said, "You were?", "Oh, yeah". So I wrote back and said "You got a phone number?" He gave his phone number, I called and said, "George, did you ever hear anything about the beer in MacArthur's headquarters?" "What do you mean?" "Did anyone say anything about the beer not being good?" "Yeah, I heard some guys talking one day that they thought the beer, well it could probably take four months to ship somewhere, was spoiled." "You didn't think it was spoiled, naturally?" And he said, "Why?" I said, "Well, we

drank it and filled it with salt water". I thought he was going to never quit laughing. Anyway, I didn't find out until 2001.

So, anyway we're down and we're loading up to get ready for the Leyte invasion of October 20th of '44. There was an ammunition ship in the harbor and it catches fire. They did get it out before it blew up, but that was another hairy one. Some of the stuff we took to New Guinea were oil and of course we were on water rations and we only had something like 200,000 gallons of water. Sometimes we'd have 500 people personnel on deck, Army, Marines, or whatever. So, we'd have to pick new supplies of our own and there'd be great big supply ships there. Now I never did see Chuck, Mr. Donald Duck, since we got ships I never did know where he went. But Bob, I know, went on another LST which was a different place than when we were so I never did see him again. But we're in small boat, Higgins boat, we had two of them on our ship, and the supplies are coming down from an opening in the side of the supply ship with a derrick, and all of a sudden a rotten orange hits me in the back of the head and I can hear Donald Duck talking up there. He was a Midshipman and he seen me and hit me with a rotten orange.

So, now we're ready to take off for our big excitement, we're going to cross the Equator. The Domain of Neptunus Rex takes over. This is a deep sea legend from the old sailing days, that's required by the Navy, everyone goes through an initiation, including officers. Everyone in the Navy crossing the Equator has got to go through that, if they're able to cause this initiation. And of course there were 36

of us that had never crossed the Equator. So, the uniform of the day is skivvies, that's shorts. No shoes, no socks, no pants, no shirt, no hat. On the Equator, 116 degrees and they shave your hair off your whole head, that's the first thing. Then they put you on a Navy metal stretcher, which are made of metal so you can transport bodies from one ship to the other. First they put you through a canvas 24 inch diameter tunnel, 20 feet long and you crawl through there on your hands and knees, three guys at a time and when all three are in there they hit you with fire hoses at both ends. You better be damned good at swimming under water to survive that, because I've seen a lot of guys scream, of course I thought it was fun because I was a good swimmer. And from there you went to the Navy stretcher and the Navy doctor, the Pharmacists's Mate was dressed like a pirate and he had a wooden sword, saber about this long with a copper wire in it going over to a hand cranked generator. Which cranked about 24 to 30 volts, but when you're wet its a pretty good tickle and they operate you with that thing. Then from there, the Pharmacist Mate has rotten potatoes they been saving up for two weeks and rub them on your gums with a rubber glove. We had a guy from Texas who played the guitar and he only knew four songs and everybody was sick of him. Listening to those four songs for months and of course one of them was The Yellow Rose of Texas and they tied him to the yardarm which is 45 feet up from the deck. The mast is 74 feet and the yardarm is below that and that's where you send up visual signals: numbers, pennants and flags, letters which I had to learn. And of course we had Signalmen, but the Quartermaster had to know it too. You had a big box called

a flag bag and that held all those flags and whenever the flagship signaled radio silence and put up a flag hoist giving you a message to give you a change in your convoy or whatever, you'd have to send back an affirmative that you got the message. And if you don't get the message, don't get the flag up you're going to get a shot over your mast. And so they tied him up there and "You play the guitar without stopping." and every time he'd stop they'd hit him with a fire hose. Needless to say, an LST in smooth ocean rolls from port to starboard about every two minutes about 30 to 32 degrees. Have you got any idea how much that means that mast is going back and forth? He puked until there was nothing to come out. That was pretty much it for the initiation, there were some other stuff, I can't remember all of it.

Webb: but you came through OK?

Lanz: Yeah. You're a Pollywog until you cross and then you cross you're a Shellback and I got a certificate here, Lisa said you wanted to see it? Am I going in the right direction, here?

Webb: I think so.

Lanz: Don't be afraid to stop me.

Webb: So, let me make sure that I understand. When you started you were a Second Class Seaman, but considered a Deck Jockey, you were just swabbing the deck and cleaning up probably doing all kinds of things.

Lanz: Anything that involved the ship, tying up, anchoring, or anything that took place of operating the ship, the seaman had to take orders from the Master at Arms to do that.

Webb: Ok. So what is a Quartermaster?

Lanz: In the Army it's supply, in the Navy it's navigation and visual signal. The helm that you steer the ship with is his responsibility, but needless to say, he can't be on there. We had two, the 1st class wanted a third one. To this day, I don't know why he ever asked me to come up to the bridge to be a Quartermaster striker they called it, that's to learn on the job. The striker is taught, that's first thing I was ever taught on that ship was to become a Quartermaster, the rest you learn by watching. He was a great guy, his name was Leon Bauer, we called him Stump because he was short, he was a general road contractor in Topeka, Kansas and he asked me to come up and I said, "How did you choose me?" he said, "I looked at your records and you knew semaphore and Morse code", and that was the biggest reason. So my Boy Scout training came through. So when you can't be the helmsman all the time, a Seaman is given that job and he's taught, and it's pretty easy to learn, however an LST it's very difficult to keep into position, because there's bow, there's no keel. It has an electro gyrocompass to one side, up in front of it is the magnetic compass and on the other side is the enunciator, which has two levers on there and it sends a message down to the engine room rings a great big bell because its noisy down there and they hook up the enunciator to the one in

the wheelhouse, one third forward speed, half speed, full speed, whatever. And you move those arms on the enunciator and it tells him down in the engine room. That's the Quartermaster's job. The other mean job is 42 charts, four foot square and a chart table, 6 - 7 feet wide with drawers full of charts. You are supposed to keep those charts up on all American magnetic fields in every harbor in the Pacific. Wherever there's a town, or a harbor, or a bay there is magnetic mines. This ship is given and that'll have to come up in a little later too, a copper cable that does the whole perimeter of the ship and it comes up to a device in the wheelhouse that you dial that to get the right magnetic setting that demagnetizes the ship. That was the other Quartermaster job and the steering by the seaman, all he has to do is look at the electro gyrocompass and the Captain has a four inch voice-tube from the conning tower right over his head and he'll holler down there, "Helmsman 27 degrees to starboard!" so, he's never done it before so he goes for 27 right away and the first thing he knows he's gone 15 degrees past. No keel, it's flat, you don't stop that on a dime, and we had lots of ramming of ships because of that. Partly because the OD, who quite often is not the Captain, it's some officer that's Supply Officer, Gunnery Officer, Deck Officer, other jobs but he's up there being OD for eight hours like the Quartermaster down below. So the ship goes on past, so the first thing you know you've got to give it more port left rudder to make up for it and you've to do that quick enough or you'll go past the other way. So you've got a board flat on the water and you're trying to control the board, so a lot of times we'd hit other ships, we hit the Enterprise in Pearl Harbor on the side one day, of

course all the sailors up there hollering and yelling, "You dumb bastards down there don't know what you're doing!" they called us a garbage skowie. The regular Navy had no respect for us. Without us they never would have won the damn war, they never would have gotten to the beach. So we were not very rewarded for anything we did. Who cares, it didn't matter. You didn't have any more questions there.

Webb: Well I'll let you continue. I was just curious, as to when you took over, got promoted I guess.

Lanz: Yes, by the way about this time made 1st class Seaman, which is not a petty officer. So I'm going to go another three or four months before I make 3rd class Quartermaster, that's the lowest Quartermaster petty officer, starts with 3rd, 2nd, 1st and Chief. So I became a 3rd class petty officer after that. About a \$9 raise in pay, that gives me about 91 bucks a month, and they take out \$6 for war bonds every month so you help pay for the war. You know I didn't cash them for 25 years so I got pretty good interest on that.

So now we're on our way to Leyte invasion, we're supposed to make the initial landing, which I have a whole photograph of the beach there which was Top Secret at the time. But after the war everyone(?). But it shows the beach head, which was supposed to be a village called Du Lag, and it had a Jap airstrip which was the main reason for us to land at Du Lag, cause' we landed the 24th Division of Engineers for them to work on the runway air strip. It's going to be a P38 base, which became very famous, Major Bong was the World War II ace in the Pacific and was from

Kohler, Wisconsin. And so we captured that on the first day, we were under heavy border attacks on the beach. The beach was pretty flat and innocent looking with the village and of course the Filipinos were treated terribly, took their good clothes away from them, everything, stripped the Filipinos to nothing, which will be another story later. And so we're getting his firepower from shore and it's so little they can't figure out where they're getting the range for these mortars. They just got lucky, some of them landed on the deck and didn't do a whole lot of damage because we had pretty much already, the tank deck was tanks, it was either LPT's or Sherman tanks. You could hold 11 Sherman tanks or 17 amphibious tanks. The main deck we have an elevator operating on cables, and that elevator was about 35 feet square and it traveled on three inch steel posts. They would take Army trucks up there command cars, officer's cars, Jeeps, every kind of military vehicle it takes to run an Army. All those poor bastards had to sleep in them, cause' on corridors on the starboard and the port side of our ship, minus the mess hall was room for 250 troops in three bunks high. All the rest had to sleep in the equipment in the tank deck or up on the main deck. So the stuff that was on the main deck was discharged by the time the mortar shells were landing. One did hit on the tub up on the bow, the officer in charge of the beach decided where stuff goes, which sometimes turned out stupid, they always put the ammunition in the same damn place as the gasoline. Who could be that stupid, I can't believe it to this day, one bomb set that sucker off and you'd have the whole beach on fire all night long. Anyway, the beach master said the Army and one of our tanks, Sherman tanks, had a bulldozer blade

on the front. He said, "You go over there and knock down the church". The range finder was in the church steeple, giving the mortars the range of how far they wanted to shoot, he was in the church steeple. So they pushed the whole church over with the bull dozer. The Filipinos got no church to go to. So that turned in to be a P-38 fighter base which gave us a lot of protection in Leyte Gulf because you realize in Leyte Gulf you've got one opening to the east by the island of Samar, one opening to the north which is not very easy for big ships, however the Jap fleet tried to come through there. So these southern openings that went down to the Surigao Straits, which turned out to be a savior, three openings to Leyte Gulf. So everything that's in there are amphibious ships, hospital ships and transports, troops and supplies. Anything in the line of an amphibious ship is a lousy target for big ships because the biggest gun they had was three inch. It was like a pop gun against 5, 8, 10 and 16 inch guns. This is a storage area for the next invasion to Luzon and Lingayen Gulf. Lingayen Gulf was the main place to attack back in the Philippines to get rid of the Japs because they took Corregidor, the Bataan peninsula and Manila. They blew the hell out of Manila, there was nothing left of that. That was the only the city in Luzon that amounted to anything. And so we're going back to New Guinea and the Dutch East Indies which was Dutch East Guinea of the Halmahera group of Morotai and Biak which our invasion people took two months before, just enough for the beach and an airstrip. The Japs still owned the rest of the island, and they could see each other, the ones that could see each other didn't have big enough guns to do anything about it. On the island of Halmahera

was Gamkonora volcano, known to be active at times. On the island of Biak was the United States 5th Air Force called the Jolly Rogers squadron that had B-24s. Their main purpose was to bomb the China coast, the Japs still owned all of China and they hit Shanghai and some of those places. They would save one bomb for the volcano and everytime they came back from a bombing run to the China coast, they'd fly over Gamkonora and try to drop one in the funnel. To my knowledge, I don't think it ever erupted one, but that was the story.

When we went to those beaches we were allowed every other day to go ashore. There was nothing to do but it was better than looking at that ship all day long. So we got to the airbase and sailors had been bumming rides on bombing runs but some of them had not come back so they stopped it. But we're talking to a guy in shoes, no socks, shorts, no shirt, no cap no insignia. And he's telling us all this stuff about the bombing runs and they can't take sailors no more, etc. Turned out to be the general of the base we found out later, the mechanic said "You guys were talking to the general." We said, "What general, you mean that mechanic we were talking to?" "That's the general of the base". That's the way the Air Force was, they were very close. In the Navy officers are up there to salute, because if you ever read any stories about sailing days and whaling days, discipline was very strict because they had a lot of goofy guys down below deck, and so they had to have that discipline and separation, and that was tradition carried through the Navy. We got to back Captain Davis, the Captain that was on the ship when I was there, prior to being the captain of our LST he was a Turret Captain on the battleship South Dakota

in the Coral Sea battle which was the first big sea battle of World War Two and that was the taking of Guadalcanal which was very serious. That was a disaster for the American Navy. During the night battle which was most of it after dark took place, the communications were so bad they couldn't find out where the South Dakota was so they called it the Battleship X. And they were communicating back and forth between carriers and cruisers and destroyers and one of the destroyers sunk was the one the five Sullivan brothers were on from the whole same family. They were lost in that, and he was a turret captain at that time. On our ship you only had to be a full Lieutenant, that's not a very big ranking on a ship because the ship was small. So, he was a JG at that time in the turret and it took a direct hit. He was the only survivor. So he always felt a lot of respect for living through all this, and so he had great respect for us guys cause' we're the ones helping him make the ship go, all he did was give orders so he had great respect. And so the one thing that impressed me with him was going back to Saipan we were loading the Higgins LCVP boat and we had a Jewish officer from Cincinnati by the name of Jenkins. Don't take this wrong about being Jewish. And Captain Davis never liked him for some reason. He was different. The Marines would eat in the same chow line as ours and from there back to officer's country where the officers had their own staterooms, two men to a room. And he came out of there one day and he was pushing his authority around on the Marines, of course Marines don't take that. They beat him up one night going on watch, the Marines, cause' they had the run of the ship except in Officer's country and he had to go outside to get up to the bridge to go on watch and they

beat him up. And the Captain, I heard him say when I took a message down to the boardroom, "Jenkins, what the hell happened to you, did you fall down last night?" He said, "Yeah I fell off the ladder going on watch.", he didn't dare say what happened. They'd have killed him. I know they would have killed him. Anyway, we got rid of our tanks and we're headed to eat, and the small boat comes back and one of the cables break and the crew falls out of the boat and into the water. One guy almost tore his nose off. And Jenkins is on the bridge looking down at this, just looking. The Captain heard about it and he was in the boardroom drinking coffee. He came out and looked up to the bridge and he says, "Jenkins, you SOB, what are you doing about this?" "Well, what am I to do?" He says, "I'll tell you what you're going to do. You're going to stay on that bridge for the next 24 hours, you're not leaving to pee, crap, eat, nothing!" He had never like the guy because got himself into trouble.

So we're back in the New Guinea area to load up supplies, troops, take them from New Guinea and take them over to Halmahera, Morotai, Biak, and you eventually, all these fleets get together and go as one great big 900 ship convoy to Luzon. 900! The last time I heard from my brother four months before, he was in New Guinea. He was with the 339th Combat Engineer Regiment, he ran a bulldozer. He was stationed up past Lake Sentani at an air base. They built the runway and they were stuck there. He had been there for eight or nine months, ever since they secured New Guinea. And I asked the Captain if I could go up and find him. So he gave me an order paper that cleared me the MP's, why a sailor all of the sudden is

going through the middle of the island with nothing but Army. Officers would go by and not pick me up. A truck load of Jap prisoners stopped and picked me up. I got a ride in there with these Jap prisoners. Now it's 27 miles up there to that air strip and so this guy is only going part way. And part of this is the 32nd Division from Wisconsin, they're National Guard from my home town. And so I get a ride with a guy in a jeep. He says I'm going up to the air strip, and I say I want to go up there to see if I can find my brother. He says, who is he with? I say the 339th Engineers. He says, "They're not there, they're in the Philippines" where I just came from. So, I gave up, start hitchhiking back and it gets dark. It's 8:00 at night. The guy says in the jeep, let's go for a swim. I say, "OK, yep I'm ready". So we're swimming and hear these women giggling. He says, "Oh that's a bunch of nurses. They're down there skinny dipping". I say, "Gee it would be nice to go over there". So, anyway we get back in the jeep and I ask him questions about different guys from our home town and he says, "Yeah, I know those guys". So, about the middle of the night he drops me off at the dock, where my small boat will pick me up the next morning at 7:00. And it's all full of mail sacks and I'm laying on mail sacks trying to get a wink of sleep and a command car goes by with officers and nurses. Now I've heard stories about the Viet Cong smelling after shave lotion on some of our troops and I've never doubted that because when that command car went by, I'd say it was at least 30 feet, I could smell the perfume. Now, I hadn't seen a white woman in 15 months, and I could smell that perfume. So, I get back on the ship the next day to load up for Lingayen Gulf. We cross the Equator again. No new men, no revenge. And we

crossed that six times and no new men.

Webb: That doesn't seem fair.

Lanz: No! And anyway we meet, rendezvous with hundreds of ships going to Lingayen Gulf in Luzon. We pass Mindoro, Mindanao, all those islands. We get just about straight out from Manila and here comes a huge air attack, including kamikazes, suicide. A lot of ships in those days, liberty ships, a man in Washington learned how to build supply ships very quickly. Well like LSTs more welding than riveting, and they needed supply ships bad out in the Pacific, many, many places to go, you know. And one of them got hit by a Kamikaze, supply, no troops. And the second one got hit, a troopship, that was the second Kamikaze, and there was a third one that hit a carrier, I got it in my book, a carrier, I can't remember. A carrier, it was a baby flattop, not a full sized one that got hit. And then one comes down strafes at our ship. We had a man named Felix that was starting lose it mentally and he was afraid he'd be trapped in the waters during the night and he wore Army OD shirts, wool shirts, in that hot climate because he was afraid he'd be in the water. When you get on the water at night it's cool. So they gave him a job of passing ammunition up from below up to the gun tubs. He heard it on the earphones, they had earphones when they want him, that there was all of this air attack, suicide planes, they'd never seen them before. So he comes up to see what happens. He got shot in the hip and legs by strafing. Now these three guys, one of my friends was a Mormon from Salt Lake City, and he was a little overweight Dean Minchoven.

He was a character, and they had another Mormon who was very strict, and they wanted to kill each other. He could never get through one of those round hatches on the deck, around 20 inches in diameter, and they've got a threader that you seal it shut, and below that is the straight steel ladder, not steps, a ladder. And both are going across the deck, and he takes one dive at that sucker feet first and he went through there like this all stretched out, all the fat at on sides and everything, barely scraped anyplace. And how he got past that ladder and those rungs and all without getting hung up nobody will ever know. Anyway he did this dive down there, he was going to run up to tell the Captain we're being air attacked, but he already knew it. And when he heard it he saw the bullets come up behind him he dives down that hatch so he was clear of that. So, anyway we got through that air attack and we got to Lingayen Gulf and we're supposed to hit the beach with our troops and tanks and...

Webb: What was going through your mind as you were being attacked like that?

Lanz: God forgive me but you know it was truly exciting, to see all these bodies coming aboard, pieces of bodies, missing this and that. I had my 19<sup>th</sup> birthday up there at Lingayen Gulf, because the 15th of January we were getting ready to leave. There was a story going around to the Captain, that you better have watches at night because Jap swimmers were coming aboard ship and killing crew. Of course, I got out my eight-inch commando knife, they didn't issue us any pistols or nothing, so you know for defense I had this commando knife out. I thought, "Jeez I'm not going

to be able to know what to do”, I never was trained to use a commando knife. We'd swap with Marines for stuff. I gave a kid on Saipan my turtleneck sweater because I always got chilly at night and he gave me his Marine Corps jacket which I still have. He drew a picture of himself in a mirror, I got it, beautiful, the guy should have been an artist, never made it. You got to stop because my mind wanders.

Webb: OK, I can't imagine all that experience and the different kinds of emotions that...

Lanz: I don't remember ever being particularly stressed. I often wonder, you know I have a nephew that was in Iraq, a Marine, and he come home in bad shape, post-traumatic stress. Last fall, he got into an argument with his wife and got drunk, driving down the road, hit three kids changing a tire and killed all three them. He's in prison for 30 some years. When he come home I could see it in his eyes, just like he was looking right through you. And that's the way this guy on our ship was that got strafed. He lived through it.

Anyway, we're told to get off the island of Luzon, there's a typhoon coming. You don't want to be nowhere near a beach on a ship when there's a typhoon coming. South China Sea and we left and we got caught in that, our bridge was 33 above the water. The bridge had wings, port and starboard so when we were going to the docks or pier the Captain could walk out there and watch what the ship was doing and control it by looking from that. Waves were coming over them, 33 feet above the deck. The wheelhouse and the conning tower was another 12 feet. Sometimes the waves would hit almost the top of the wheelhouse, so they had to be 40 feet.

We were in a convoy and when you went down into one of those swells, you couldn't see the mast of a destroyer escort 1000 yards away. You were in one trough and he's in another one. And it split one of the wells on the starboard side two feet above the normal water line. We were empty, were're high out of the water or we probably would have had a bad leak there. Well guess what Gatcomb, a ship-fitter did? He went over the side with a welder in a Bosun's chair, with its two ropes, a seat and a strap and welded that seam shut, not during the worst part of it, but still while it was stormy, and welded that seam shut. I tell you that guy's something else. I got one more story about him. Like what I told you when you go on the beach you got to drop the stern anchor out about 200 yards. We're going to make a beachhead, not under combat. I'm the Captain's talker big earphones and a big steel helmet over the earphones and a microphone strapped here to your chest, and you take the orders from the Captain and send it to whatever part of the ship he wants it to go. We're on the conning tower, we're going to hit the beach and he's talking to the OD about letting go of the anchor chain and I thought it was a command and I pushed the button and said, "Let go of the anchor chain". "Oh, no, no not now!" We lost our cable. 2-1/2 inch steel cable down there in the water, we're on the beach. That could be a court martial offense to the Captain if he gets on the beach and he's got no anchor. That's an understanding and they're supposed to know. So, this is not combat, we're just picking up supplies to go someplace else. While we were not in combat, we're constantly ferrying something back and forth from islands. That's the only way to get there, without us I don't know how you

would have got supplies, combat or not. Anyway, he tells the Captain, "I'll dive down and get it". He had this gas mask meant for gas not water and he dives down and come up and said to the Captain, "I'm shivering, it's cold down there". So he knew the old man had some Seagram's 7 in his cabin, so the Captain goes and gets one of those Navy water glasses about this big, about half full of that. That was about equal to 10 shots and he poured that down like a drink of water. And he worked him for that twice. Later on he told us, he says, "I found that cable the first time. I wanted to get a drink from the old man". So he had to take down a smaller cable, attach it to the bigger cable in order for that winch to pull that up. And still it's embedded in the bottom someplace to help us get us off the beach. Snapped. The small one broke, couldn't hold it. So they had to get the LST 66 over there and attach on to our winch and pull us off the beach.

Webb: What kind of trouble did you get into, any?

Lanz: I never got disciplined for it, just a green kid don't know any better, you know? When they made you a Captain's talker, there wasn't any instructions, they just did it. If they had sat down there for 10 minutes and told me what the procedure is and what it can be and so forth. One day I got the message when I was on there rendezvous. I didn't know how to spell rendezvous? I kept saying Ren-dev-es, something like that, and he said you mean "rendezvous"? I had never heard of the word before, let alone how to spell it. That was another stupidity. The said part of the Captain's talker, I skipped over the biggest sea battle in the history of the world.

October 23rd started after three days of the initial landing. The Navy, Jap Navy came from the south, from the north and from the east. They're going to get all of us in Leyte Gulf, amphibious ships, sitting ducks. So they're going to destroy the whole landing fleet. Waiting at the mouth of Samar was a cruiser, two destroyers and a destroyer escort, the USS Johnson. The other two was the Adam and the third one I can't think of the name of right now, it was a short word. We're waiting, outgunned, 50% of what the Jap fleet had to offer. Those destroyers took on cruisers so close that the cruisers couldn't lower their guns low enough, I'm talking point blank type of battle. This is a suicide run, by our destroyers. They sunk two cruisers, and two destroyers would have come into Leyte Gulf and butchered our fleet. There were only 320 some survivors from all three ships. I got a whole printed letter on that one. So if you need any of this to read or to look at I can supply it. Any part of it or whatever I can back it up with my keepsakes.

Lingayen Gulf, the next trip we go all the way back to the Dutch East Indies and then take more stuff up to Lingayen Gulf. We're anchored out in the harbor and there's news about Jap suicide swimmers. I told you that's why I kept the knife in case they somehow come aboard. One swam out and put dynamite in our sanitary hole, which is about that big around, empties the toilets and all waste water. He blew a guy clean off the toilet stool. The big damage was he destroyed our degaussing cable which went all the way around and de-magnetizes the ship. So, that was our out for Iwo Jima, that kept us from going to Iwo Jima, cause we went all the way back to Leyte, had to go in floating dry dock and they had to replace that

degaussing cable, and one of the screws, one of the propellers, we had twin engines, they had to repair one of them.

So, that battle was so misleading to pull Admiral Halsey and his Third carrier fleet, they were going north toward Japan. That's where they thought the Jap Navy was. They didn't know it had split up in three. And I told you about the east one, the south one was Surigao Strait, they had a battleship heading up in the Strait. And when the Jap fleet came around the corner they had it out down there and we won on that one. There was another that came from the north, forget the name of the bay right now, and by that time Halsey has decided that there's nothing up there by Japan so he started coming back down. He sent off some search planes and they found the Jap fleet from the northern group, and they had it out and destroyed the Japs. That sea battle was the very end of the Jap Navy. Basically, it was worthless, there wasn't enough left anymore for the Jap war in the Pacific, but those three battles were the biggest sea battles ever known to man in the whole world, ever, and there's never been anything or ever will be anything that big again. Battleships got to be obsolete on the islands because all the old admirals were battleship admirals, and that's all they had in their heads. Well after making mistakes in Tarawa and the Gilbert Islands and all them islands down there and lost all those Marines, they finally decided well we do have an Air Force, and they started using carrier planes and that shortened the war tremendously.

How much of this stuff do you want to see? My son gets this all back.

Webb: So if you don't mind me asking, how do you feel, are you thankful you didn't have to go towards Iwo Jima, do you count that as a...

Lanz: Yeah, at the time we didn't even really know much about Iwo Jima, because we were on the move so much, and the only contact with the outside world was with a 508 radio and a lot of that was Tokyo Rose, which you could never believe. So it was such a big thing that it's kind of beyond your comprehension other than what's going on with your own little area.

Webb: So this was probably about the time that you were done then?

Lanz: No, I haven't got to Okinawa. That's where we got hit, ended our war. After two more trips to New Guinea and the Dutch East Indies for supplies and troops, and so on and so forth we started loading up in the Philippines for Okinawa. During this time, a bad thing happened. The crew quite often are singled out for Captain's Mast. That punishment is dealt out by the Captain. We call it Kangaroo Court. Insubordination, bad behavior, I mean you got all this combat conditions what your question just asked, and it did take its toll. Netsall had a phonograph with five records, played it over and over, always stopped at midnight, torture me if I ever had to hear that again. And so, tempers are getting short. Poker games, a knife fight and a gun fight. One guy shot and another one stabbed fighting over poker games or shooting dice. I never got in any of that because I didn't even know how to play cards as a kid anyway. So, that got to be really, really bad. So, your question there does war, gets an answer. The answer was it was taking its toll. We had 34 states

represented in our crew, which was from all over hell. City guys, gangs, toughs, come from tough life, some simple life, easy life, don't know what tough life was. That kind of stuff. So, that was bad. But being we were in that floating dry dock then of course that's when Iwo Jima was taking place. And by the way, I've been to the Marine Academy in Texas where they erected a statue, a sculpture. The third guy on that pole I think was from Antigo, Wisconsin, his name was Bradley. And his son wrote the book, Flag of Our Fathers, you may have heard of it. He's done another one since, but I can't think of the name of it right now, it's a newer one that's out.

Whoever did the penmanship on that had to be in Honolulu, because we didn't get this for almost a year after it happened. They didn't have the means aboard ship to make this out. They didn't even have them. So the King Neptune was our Italian cook from Brooklyn, who was a character. He had a bluebird tattoo on his neck and over his chest he had sweet and sour. And his mouth never smiled, so they made him King Neptune and the last thing we had to do was kiss his ass, which he enjoyed immensely. That's signed by our Executive Officer, John J. McKenna. Oh that was the other job the Quartermaster had, go out with him at night with a sextant and he would shoot the stars for navigation. And I would have to record whatever he gave me for his reading on a clipboard and we went on a chart with a parallel set of rulers to chart our course. That was part of my job.

Webb: Did you have training for that, or was that just you took down the numbers...

Lanz: No. The two Quartermasters, stump from Kansas and Ray Parella who was half Filipino from Chicago, he was born and raised here, and he moved out here probably about the 1970's, somewhere in there. His wife had a baby, couldn't get her to a hospital, he had to deliver that baby in his own house himself. So he said he'd never have another one. They would take care of teaching me stuff, and they'd give me books. I'd have to spend a lot of my off time reading a navigation book about this thick, cause' I didn't know anything about navigation, you know.

Webb: That is really very pretty, very detailed...

Lanz: This is the exact location, there's the back number, USS LST 34 on war mission, it was 154 degrees and 12 minutes East and latitude of course 000. So that was the exact location of where it took place. And this is the Executive Officer's signature. Who did the art work, I don't know who did it, somebody that was very good at it.

Webb: I've seen a couple of certificates come through here like this I'm sure, but they aren't anything like that. I don't know...

Lanz: Really? Well I'll be darned. I wish I had the one for the Royal Order of the Golden Dragon for crossing the International Date Line, I crossed that three times. So, I don't have it, I don't know what happened to it. My son doesn't have it, so that's disappeared somewhere. We're going to go out for lunch and I'll see you in a minute?

Webb: Sure.

Lanz: This is bad shape, but it's so old I had to take it apart.

Webb: Let me just stop you and make sure you're doing OK. We've gone a little bit longer than I said we were going to, I wanted to make sure that you're OK.

Lanz: Yeah, I am a diabetic, holy moly I do have to go to the bathroom, from the coffee hour. Is that beyond where you want to go with this?

Webb: I want to go as far as you want to. You've given excellent stuff so far. I just want to make sure you're all set and comfortable because I couldn't believe two hours had gone past.

Lanz: I was afraid that once you got me started. . . (muffled sound with background noise, sounds like street traffic and Elevated train)

Sounds like Webb conducting a tour of Medal of Honor alcove, Citizen Soldier Exhibit, 2.32.16  
noise stops, then silence, and counter stops advancing at 2.32.23.

**(Interview resumes after the rest break)**

Webb: Alright, I'll just make a note that this is part two after lunch break so that people working with us on files know what is going on. So you said that you had a story that you wanted to tell that you,

Lanz: No questions so far huh?

Webb: No, not yet.

Lanz: Ok. We had to look for something humorous once in a while, needless to say,

because it was partially getting pretty bad. My best friend was a six-foot-six Kentuckian radio operator who took his radio training University of Wisconsin Campus and that's kind of what put us together, he and me from Wisconsin. So the other radioman, one of the other two, was from Texas and he was 38 years old, he was the oldest guy on the ship and we called him "Pappy". So my friend was being relieved by him for the 8 o'clock watch. The day before, or a couple of days before, my dad had sent me a box, he was in the sheet metal business and I was too for 44 years. So he put it in a box and soldered because that long a trip, in four months cardboard wouldn't be in very good shape and in there contained cheese and landjaegers which are flat summer sausages made in Switzerland, they're about this wide, and they're made in pairs and he wanted this to keep. Some of the cheese was limburger, have you ever smelled limburger? Can you imagine going down the equator in a metal box for four months what shape the limburger was in?

Webb: (Chuckles)

Lanz: Anyway, Pappy from Texas of course had never seen a piece of limburger, or much any kind of cheese for that matter. So we rescued the sausage and the landjaegers but the limburger cheese was going deep-six so we thought we'd have a little fun. The conning-tower on top of the wheel house was the control center for the operation of the ship, which wasn't very big it was about 10 foot squared. In the middle of the conning-tower was a four inch steel tube that came right down over the helmsman's head and won him to the radio shack, which is where he copied

FOX. FOX is a code sent out by San Francisco Navy Headquarters to all the ships in the Pacific. You have a code number, that is your call sign, he has to sit there with ear phones for eight hours and copy every code that comes from San Francisco.

Webb: That sounds like fun.

Lanz: If it's ours he better get it or he is in deep do-do. In that radio shack which is about one-fifth of this room under extreme heat from the equipment, it is well over 108 degrees in there all the time or worse on a sunny day, has one porthole 18 inches in diameter and we decided we were going to drop some of the limburger down the four inch tube on a string and about this far from the end stop. We can hear him down there and he's going on and on about, "What the hell stinks? What the hell died?" And he was starting to get it bad, cussing, and he comes from a tough country in Texas. The Captain happened to be up in the conning-tower to talk to the OP for the night shift and we told him what we wanted to do and he says "Yeah go ahead, I could use a good laugh", and he had a pretty good sense of humor. He said, "Can I watch from a distance?" "Yeah you can get as far as the conning-tower will take you", I said "It's about five feet". And we dropped it down there and of course old pappy was going crazy. And this must have gone on for about an hour and pretty soon he got up and stuck his head out the porthole and threw up everything he had in him, two trips for sure and there was nothing more to come out. The next day we told him what it was, because we had to get a little bit more of a laugh out of it. And he looks at me and he said, "That was yours?" I says, "Yeah

my dad sent it to us". Monroe Wisconsin at one time was the Swiss cheese capital of the United States and when the Swiss, my great-grandfather was one of the founders of New Glarus, Wisconsin, he was a blacksmith and he left Switzerland in 1847. In the 1840s Switzerland was in bad economic trouble, the factory that kept the town alive was a lace factory, made fine clothes and tablecloths. These people decided that they were going to come to the United States, so the whole community took a collection and sent 97 people to the United States on a sail ship. Three died in the voyage including one child, and when they got, my great-grandfather and the banker came ahead of time and they bought the land from the United States government for 50 cents an acre. And these lace factory people became farmers, but they didn't know didly about milking a cow. That eventually got so big because no trucks could transmit the milk, he couldn't go far, in order to preserve the milk so they had the spring water and milk houses and put the milk in those tanks to keep it cold until they could make it into cheese. So every sixth farm had a cheese factory, well there was 400 and some cheese factories by World War One, by World War Two there was over 600 in one county. Then it wasn't long after the war Kraft Cheese come to town and made 90 pound blocks instead of 250 pound wheels and that put everybody else out of business. So anyway, Pappy, "Yeah I ate limburger cheese", he said, "From the way that smells I think you'd eat shit with a dirty spoon". Kind of vulgar, but very funny.

Webb: Yeah

Lanz: Uh...where did we end up, getting ready for Okinawa I think?

Webb: Yeah, just uh...

Lanz: Did I cover the 14 court marshals?

Webb: No

Lanz: Ok. We're waiting to go to Okinawa, everybody's getting sick and tired of running back and forth, Leyte Gulf and the islands of whatever and this and that, quite often they would use us for water, fresh water was very precious and we could haul 200,000 gallons of fresh water which was rationed when you went to sea. You could allow one fresh water shower a week you left, after that no more showers except with salt water and you might as well stay dirty. So we're on the beach one night, army trucks going on and off with supplies, 15 men decided they were going to jump ship, they're going over to the beach to look for pom-pom, you know what that means?

Webb: Mhmm

Lanz: What they ever found I never did know. I was on duty as the quartermaster, the executive officer starts missing men, so we go with him to the crew's quarters which is at the stern. 109 men slept in one room with a 36 inch square hole in the deck for ventilation, you think that didn't stink? They found 15 bunks empty, so post a guard on the ramp so they have to come in the way they went out with the exception of Gatcomb and my friend the big six-foot-six Kentucky radio operator,

they decided to swim for it. Now the ship is 328 feet long so they've got to swim against the surf and crawl up the stern anchor and try to get in their bunk, or say that they were on the ship someplace. A third one, Bobby-Joe Raymond, from Arizona later found out his father was his grandfather in the Ozarks, a nice looking kid, he didn't look weird. He tried to swim for it and I heard him holler for help and I was up on the conning-tower and I had the blinker light handy because when I knew the executive officer was doing a bunk check I sent a blinker message over to my friend the radio operator, "Curtains, the bosses know you're missing you'd better get back on ship". Now they would've had to hide in an army truck, well he had guards and he searched everybody that come back so twelve guys get caught. This kid is drowning, I threw a life-ring out, hit him on the arm and the undertow took him away and didn't bring his body back for about four hours, and so he's gone. So we got Joe and Gatcomb coming up the stern anchor, the executive officer knows that they were gone, he didn't know how they got back but he assumed that's what they did. Anyway, two days later there are 12 deck court marshals, first you have a captain's mass, punishment by the captain or you can have a deck court marshal and you can have an attorney from his own staff. So that's why we called it a kangaroo court, the shaft, you ain't going to get out there with a lower class officer than the captain and then go against him. So those guys take their punishment, three months' pay and we didn't have a brig so we couldn't put them in the brig so they fined them three months' pay and some were broken, one rigged. So now we've got Joe, the radio operator and Gatcomb are asking for

summary court martial, which is very serious, it could be prison and god knows what, but they are allowed an attorney from outside, anywhere in the Navy or in the Marine Corps. So I get elected by Joe, who is confined with Gatcomb in the chain locker. No brig so they put them in the chain locker on bread and water. The chain locker is you've got to sit in there and talk with an anchor chain, which has practically no ventilation. I'd sneak them food at night, when everybody's in their bunk. So I go over to the village the next day, which is a Marine Corps base, and I go to the headquarters and I ask for an attorney and they have a man that could act as attorney, but who wasn't an attorney, but when they can beat a navy court martial that's a promotion for a Marine officer. And guess what he was, he was a major, he came aboard the next morning, saluted the American flag, "Permission to come aboard?", "Sure". And the captain's mouth was about this low, "Where in the hell did he come from?" Well they didn't know I had found him, so he's going to represent Joe and Gatcomb in a summary court martial. It convenes for about 15 minutes and here comes a radio message; we immediately got 18 hours to pull off Okinawa invasion which had already started. So that cancels out the trial. They are put in the chain locker on bread and water going to sea, I would sneak them food once in a while at night, but this is a court marshal offense for the captain to have anybody under lock and key in a combat area, combat zone, which all of that was, that's only 150 miles from Japan, Okinawa. There was a hospital ship attacked by a Jap airplane that night called the Comfort, USS Comfort. A hospital ship has got red crosses all over it and lit up like a Christmas tree so there's no doubt as to what it

was, and they didn't bomb it they strafed it and left. With that we knew that we were in a combat area so they had to let the guys out. So we go ahead and we make our landing at Naha which is a big village in Okinawa. Okinawa is very mountainous, there was no resistance on the beach, they were in caves hiding and waiting. They hung out for months, you couldn't find them, they were like rats they could live on rice, a handful of rice a day and sometimes raw fish, you couldn't find the enemy most of the time. So one end of the island was Marines and the other end of the island was Army. We would transport ammunition, supplies back and forth and we have another part of the island on the other side called Nakagusuku-Wan Bay. I've got this in my book, and we had air attacks, air raids, about every two to four hours, all night long, never quit. I'm on duty, I've got a helmet on and the wheelhouse hatches on both sides were open and the plane was coming from one direction and I ran through the wheelhouse to get to the other side and I hit the captain on the nose with my helmet and cut his nose open. The smoke machine in the day time during an air raid caught on fire, so we're a target, everybody else is in a cloud of smoke but us, we're on fire. So in the meantime we're trying to get the fire out and this Jap plane spotted us and he come down strafed us and was out of bombs so we didn't have anybody out in the open so he just hit the main deck and took off. So we're there for several days getting unloaded, when I'm off duty I'm laying on top of an ammunition box on my back looking straight at the sky, it was completely clear, and a phenomenon took place, I've never seen since or heard anybody seen it. I could see the reflection of the ocean in the sky. Reflection of the

water rippled against that sky just like a mirror. Every time I tell that story somewhere they just, they can't comprehend it and I couldn't either at the time I seen it.

So anyway we leave there in a few days and then we go back over to Naha to take more troops because the south end of the island was secured, the north end of the island was Army and the Marines said, "Well we've got to go help them". So we're on the beach unloading, there is a Kamikaze raid going on, 287 in a three week period hit ships at Okinawa, sunk 34 ships, navy ships, suicide dives. One crashed, he was alive, they took him in and he was 16 years old, taught how to take off but never to land because they're not supposed to come home. It's called the Brother of the Wind is what Kamikaze means, and they were trained just to dive into ships. One 500 pound bomb, that's it.

Webb: How do you fight something like that? You just...

Lanz: Uh, everybody shooting at it with all the guns and firepower they've got. The radio operator, Joe, called me in and he said, "There's a message coming in here you've got to hear", that was from the USS Laffey, a destroyer, and now sits in Charlestown South Carolina Harbor, at Patriots Point, with the first atomic powered cargo ship and a submarine but the name fails me right now, had 21 Kamikaze attacks, misses, fact. I've got the articles. They were hit by bombs from the Kamikaze's before they did the suicide dive, they survived and it's sitting down there in South Carolina Harbor right now.

Webb: That's amazing.

Lanz: They beat off and survived that many Kamikaze attacks, some of them just learned how to fly so they weren't too good at it you know. So anyway we're on the beach and this is going on and the cruiser USS Birmingham is out in the harbor and we can visually see because it's about 10 miles, something like that, the Laffey radio situation had ended and that was no longer, couldn't hear from them because they lost their radio control, and this Kamikaze is coming in to make a run on the Birmingham. They had the new 40mm pom-pom's that's got several barrels and it keeps going, as opposed to one single barrel, single shots, and they nailed him out at about we estimated 1,500 yards and he blew up and a piece of it landed on our bow and killed 11 men. Wiped out all three of our 40mm's on the bow and damaged our bow doors, we could not operate our bow doors, we couldn't get across the beach because we wouldn't be water proof. They took two bulldozers and pushed it shut and welded her shut, the ramp went up first of course because that's what makes it water proof.

So we got orders to return to Saipan to get repaired, which is about 1200 miles, we get to Saipan they've got no dry dock, no floating dry dock. We go to Guam, they've got no floating dry dock, so they turned us into a Commodore's office, and they start building offices in the tank deck, and this guy would sleep until 9 o'clock in the morning or whatever and we're so disgusted with everything we've just about had it, it very close to mutiny. Men in troubled water would disrespect an

officer's orders, that was terrible, captain's mass about every day. So we're sitting there on Guam and were supposed to electric chisels, air hammer, the whole main deck and the superstructure of rust, bubbles or rust like this and like this. And then he's moaning and groaning we're making too much noise which we enjoyed making it miserable for him because he's still sleeping in his sack. So in the meantime summary court marshal's back up, so I go over to admiral Nimitz's headquarters and I find me a Marine officer, this time a colonel, lieutenant colonel, for a lawyer for Joe and Gatcomb when he came aboard next day, permission to come aboard, the captain about lost his jaw, but now we have a different captain by now his name was Cain and we'd call him Killbird because they would sit up in the conning tower with the rifles and try to shoot seagulls. So Captain Cain says, "Ok we're have court tomorrow morning it's going to be at 0900". So the lawyer comes aboard, he's got a clerk lieutenant with him and they convene.

Now in the early part of the marshal islands war Joe was able to acquire from a Marine a Japanese machinegun, 30 caliber machine gun, it was illegal to contain an automatic weapon that didn't belong to the ship, and sold it to the old man for a hundred bucks, the captain, and the captain's still got the machinegun. So the trial was over with, the marine officer got them off in 10 minutes, 11 minutes, because they were kept under lock and key in a chain locker in a combat zone, which could have turned the court martial on the captain, so they're free. Joe had picked up jungle rot on the back of his hands on different trips to the beach and so the old man transferred him to the hospital. We got orders to return to Pearle Harbor for

repairs and maybe the States and he transferred Joe over to the hospital so he couldn't go home with us. Joe calls up the Navy Intelligence and reports the captain has a Japanese machinegun. They came and took it away from him, Joe's still got the captain's hundred bucks, oh he'd probably spent it by that time. Anyway we returned to Pearle Harbor, had dry docks, been in there once before for a paint job, didn't have bow doors and they were not repairable because it was mostly the hinges that was damaged, and so we've got a one-way trip back to the United States. This is July 20<sup>th</sup>, and we arrive at San Pedro California at the navy yard on the 29<sup>th</sup> of July, 1945. We are immediately put into 30 day leaves for port and starboard, so we had to take turns. Oh we were pretty much released at one time, because once you're in dry dock there's very little to do on the ship.

So we're all sent home. We're on the train, the troop train, for nothing but military personnel of all branches from Texas to St Louis. In between the atomic bomb was dropped, which we did not know what the hell an atomic bomb was. We stopped at one of the stations and the conductor come and said, "This happened in Hiroshima", so we decided on the next stop we were going to go around a liquor store so at St Louis we had a 22 minute layover and everybody ran for the taxi cabs and we went to the closes liquor stores and everybody's running, arms full of whiskey bottles and the train's pulling out and we're running down the tracks trying to catch the caboose dropping whiskey bottles all over the place, eventually we got on the train, everybody got drunk. Women, nurses, WAVES, women organizations and all branches of the service on leave going home. By the time I got to Union

Station Chicago I was so damned drunk I don't even know where I'm at, and I'm supposed to go to Freeport, Illinois to my aunt's, I had an aunt living there and I was 22 miles south of Monroe Wisconsin because the border was in between there. So I was supposed to go to Freeport, Illinois and while I'm lying on a bench trying to sober off and I got the shakes because I hadn't been drunk like that in my life, ever, you know where in the heck would I ever get that drunk? I'm still 19 years old. I feel something tapping me on the foot, I'm sleeping on a seat there in Union Station and it's a SP and he said, "Where the hell do you belong?" and I said, "I don't know, where am I?" He told me and he says, "Where you going?" and I says, "I'm supposed to go to Freeport Illinois" and right to this day I don't know who paid for it, nothing, he put me on that train and I ended up in Freeport, Illinois sober (Chuckles).

Webb: That's not a bad deal.

Lanz: So that's pretty much it. The Navy, of course the armistice came on the 14<sup>th</sup> of August, I'm home, my best friend from high school had just been released from the Air Force in Germany because the war was over, over there, so we're home and we're in the process of getting drunk again, celebrating. The town, everybody is out, it was the county seat the courthouse in the middle of the square, and everybody was basically up on the sidewalk, the square part with two rows of parking was vacated because of the celebration, the band and all of this and that going to go on. And we're sitting in the bar and one of my buddies from school was

in the navy, discharged, medical discharge, come in and he says to us in the bar, “You guys got to come out here and ride that bicycle around the square, Jerry’s out there arrested the other two” Jerry was the chief of police, was a jerk, bad reputation, a real jerk. They did gambling up on the second story of one of the buildings and he wouldn’t allow it to go on, they had poker games and he probably was part of it at some time or another.

Anyway the two boys, high school boys, rode a tandem bike around the square and they had tin cans on the back and he stopped them and said that they were going to have to go to court the next day, they were disturbing the peace. High school kids, I mean he could have just gone out there and pat them on the back and said “Just go home”, which they did. Anyways the story came in by my x-buddy in the bar and he said, “You guys got to come out and ride this bicycle” and I said, “Well, what the hell for?” Well he told us the story about the chief and nobody liked him so we got out there in the ally and got on the bike and I’m on the front and my buddy’s on and, we’re in our uniforms he’s in the Air Force and I’m in Navy and we paraded around the square, all the people were up on the sidewalks by the buildings and they’re starting to cheer, you know they’re all getting the message because no one liked him, everybody had something against him, he was a real jerk. Anyway he comes running off from the courthouse and grabs the handlebars and my brother, my buddy, his name is Rodney, Rod said “Push him away” so I gave him a shove on the chest and he lost his balance and he fell over on his butt. So we went around for the second trip and on the second trip he come out again and he

grabbed the handlebar this time I didn't move I didn't want to hit him. And he said, "I want you boys to get off that bike." And I said, "Boys? What did you say? Did you call us boys? We just got done fighting a f-fricking war and you call us boys?" And he says "I'm glad the war is over I've still got one brother who was in the Battle of the Bulge and my other brother brother was in Luzon in the Philippines, I don't know if they're still alive or not." I says, "I'm happy", he says, "I am too. I was in World War One" I says "Oh yeah ok", so we hit it off and we broke it up and I reckon to this day I don't know who took the bike, I guess the original kids took it.

Anyway we break it up, we go to my x-girlfriend's house for a house party and that was getting boring that wasn't much going on and the crowd follows into the police station and they tip the squad car over on the railing and start tearing off the antennas and it's getting out of hand. So while we're at the house party the head of the police and fire commission who was in the cheese business he says, "Boy, have you guys been in jail?" I says "No, we haven't been to jail", he says "Well you better get down there a whole mob's going to lynch the jail and get you out, the mobs going to break in there and get you out of the jail." Well I said ok, so we go down and show our face and the crowd starts to break up, buy they follow him home on foot and they're throwing eggs and tomatoes and anything they can throw at him and he gets in his house and they start breaking windows, now it's out of hand, and so the mayor called the governor or lieutenant governor and asked for the national guard to come down and protect him or get him out of town. Well the National Guard was nothing but a whole bunch of guys, old guard, all the rest of them were

overseas, so that time they dissipated broke it up.

And the next day I got Rob Meyers stayed at my house, his grandparents were divorced, so he didn't really have much of a home. So seven newspapers come to my house and the local newspaper didn't send anybody, and I got a copy of the newspaper, they made it look like we were rowdies, that's the way it was written up and he called us both sailors, that' show little the guy knew, he didn't know one was an Air Force. So that made us mad so we went to the publisher and editor of the newspaper who we used to pester as kids during Halloween because he was jerk two, him and the chief were two jerks (chuckles), so he did print a retraction the next day and told the story the way it really happened.

That's it. I went back to my ship, I couldn't get, I had enough points for discharge but I couldn't get a relief. I was the senior quartermaster at the time, all the rest were discharged, I couldn't get off the ship. What do we got to do? We've got to go to Long Beach and maneuvers, after five invasions I've got to go to maneuvers? Oceanside, California the Marine Corps at camp Pendleton had Marine training of how to make a beachhead from an LST. When that's over with we get transferred to Pearle Harbor and I'm back there again. My communication officer, as nice man from St Cloud Minnesota Lieutenant Shallow said, "Well, we are getting in shape with the LST 733 to take it to Okinawa and give the ship to the Japs." I says, "Well I won't be on that SOB" Well he says, "What else you going to do?" I said, "If my papers ain't come I'm swimming out of here." And my papers came eight hours

before they shoved off, eight months later that ship sunk in a typhoon on a reef off of Okinawa, that's where it's at.

Webb: And how does that feel?

Lanz: Uh, insult, that the enemy got my ship and then sunk it.

Webb: Yeah.

Lanz: Yeah... and all the guys that are gone, yeah it's a... yeah it was a terrible insult. I feel like it destroyed your whole memory, you know?

Webb: What was the reason that they did that? Gave it...

Lanz: Uh, Japan was so stripped of navy, and they need supplies. Okinawa is Japanese control, and they had other islands and they could use these for ferrying cars, trucks or whatever, all kinds of supplies, which is all right, they made 1160 LSTs and I got a list here, around 40 some were sunk. Three, 332 or something like that was restored in Muskegon, Michigan which is still floating, and uh... the LST National Association wanted to redo one of the old LSTs owned by the Greek Navy, permission was granted by a representative in Texas, president Clinton signed the paper and the ATF got involved, alcohol and, alcohol armed associa... something like that by the government.

Webb: Yeah, Firearms and Tobacco.

Lanz: There you go. They went over and investigated and said, "It's got guns". Come on! I

mean we've got battleships on the west coast, got battleships on the east coast, we've got the USS Missouri in Pearle Harbor as a memorial with 16 inch guns and they're worried about a three inch cannon on the stern that has no ammunition and the other 20mm, 40mm shells which aren't made anymore, give us a break! So that finally got over and the Coast Guard says, "Well we've got to over and ok it" so the Coast Guard went over and found "Not Seaworthy". Needed to go into dry-dock and have the whole hull repaired, so that was off. They found another one, the LST 325, was brought over by 72 X-LSTers, average age 74, the captain was the youngest because he was in the Vietnam War, and he was 62, lives in southern Illinois by the way, can't think of the name of the town right now. They brought it back to the United States and the men are training off of Gibraltar, lost their starboard engine, they crossed the entire Atlantic Ocean with one engine, flat bottom ship through a storm that sunk a transport ship, but not that flat bottomed tub. Through the Panama Canal up to Mobile Alabama, come in the main harbor, a lot of pomp and circumstance being greeted by the government and the people and so forth.

I happened to be in Gulf Shores Alabama spending the winter, so I went over and worked on it, it was a terrible mess, just a terrible mess. It needed a whole new paint job and then cleaned up, because the Greeks didn't use it anymore and they just let it sit, and so we worked on it for months and it did not have a permanent berth at a very good place in Mobile Bay Harbor and so Evansville Indiana says, "We used to make them up here during the war, you bring it up here you'll have a

permanent home free of charge.” And that’s where it’s at. And every year it makes a trip and right now it’s at Peoria Illinois on display. It’s a floating museum for history, it’s 10 bucks to go through it, and whenever they make a trip some oil company donates the diesel oil. I volunteered my time on it the year that my wife passed away, and my whole family come down I took them through the whole ship and told them a lot of the stories (chuckles).

Webb: That’s really cool.

Lanz: So they are at Peoria, there’s just a small town below I can’t think of the name of it. Wherever the Illinois River can take them. Now Seneca, Illinois built them during the war and they were going to come up here to Seneca and have a reunion three years ago but it was too much silt, the Illinois River had been filled up with too much mud, and that little baby normally can go through 38-40 inches of water and they couldn’t get up there so they did never come there. That’s about it Thom, I’ve got stuff, literature to no end, you’re welcome to read it, look at it, but I would like to have it back.

Webb: Ok, can we make copies of the photographs, would that be ok with you to make?

Lanz: Sure, yeah. And when you’re done with it you can give it to Lisa and Lisa will give it back to my son.

Webb: Ok. Well, I, you know it’s a fascinating story, I mean what other story involves volcanoes and typhoons and Kamikazes and... it’s a wonder.

Lanz: Yeah, there's a lot more there than you're going to be able to absorb.

Webb: How did you, I mean, how did you get letters from back home when you were out on the ship?

Lanz: I've got a copy of one or two in there; it was a cable-gram type of thing. Regular mail we got a discount, I think it was two cents something like that, like cigarettes you could buy cheaper, discount, that kind of thing, but the mail was pretty ridiculous, sometimes it's four or five months you know, and by that time nobody knew what was going on, you know? I've got to cut that scotch tape...

Webb: Were you ever able to find your brother that was in the Philippines?

Lanz: Nope. Never went back to Luzon after I found it out, we went and straight to Okinawa. He never knew it until we got home and talked about it after the war.

Webb: Yeah, it's kind of frustrating to be so close and then miss each other like that.

Lanz: Yeah, it would have been limited you know, permission to go and see him one day you know wouldn't have amounted to much anyway, but I hadn't seen him in over three years because he was the oldest in the family he was the first one to go. The other brother was three and a half years older than me, you know as soon as he got done University of Wisconsin ROTC he was commissioned and he was sent over to Germany. He had one funny story, being a combat engineer as they had to blast their way through a lot of places for the troops and his captain one days says, "I want to go over" and so help me I don't know what town in Belgium this took place,

but the Germans had occupied it and he wanted to go and blow the bank, get the money. So they went in a jeep, they got hit by an artillery shell going over that destroyed the jeep and they survived and they got their way back to the base and got another jeep and explosives and they blew the vault and the NAZIs had already emptied it, so they didn't get nothing.

Webb: Well I'll probably stop the recording here in a minute, but before I do I just got to ask and maybe end this on a lighter note. Between you, Bob and Chuck, who lost the bet? Who was the first person to get seasick?

Lanz: Oh!

Webb: Or do you even remember?

Lanz: Uh, Bob, I hit him in the gut and he was knocked down there, according to him throwing up, however we don't know, so we assume that he was the one that got seasick, but we never exchanged money because there was no proof (Laughs).