RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH DANIEL CSONTOS

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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and
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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Molly Graham: This is an oral history interview with Daniel Csontos. The interview is taking place on March 19, 2016. We are in South Bound Brook, and the interviewers are myself, Molly Graham, and I am joined by …

Richard Allen: Richard Allen.

Daniel Csontos: Rich Allen.

MG: If you can just start by saying where and when you were born?

DC: Well, I was born in 1925, South Bound Brook, and I'm still here, ninety years. [laughter]

MG: Well, tell me a little bit about your family history, starting with your father's side.

DC: Well, my father was the last one to come over here during World War I. The reason why, my grandfather, grandmother was already here, and he brought my two aunts and my two uncles, and when he went to get hold of my father, World War I broke out and the Hungarian Army grabbed him. So, he had to fight against us at that time. [laughter] So, after that was over, then he got married and, let's see, 1924 they came out here, Mom and him. I was born 1925, right in South Bound Brook.

MG: What do you know about his growing up experience?

DC: They lived on a farm in a place called Veszprém. I don't know how to explain it in English. They were farmers, and when they came out here, even when we lived down there by the canal there, we always had a garden, so my mother, she was fantastic.

MG: What were the reasons your grandparents immigrated in the first place?

DC: Well, because everybody was here except him, my father, and so he got married over there after the war and came over here after World War I.

MG: His parents, how come they came over?

DC: Whose parents?

MG: Your father's parents.

DC: Oh, I don't know. They came over much earlier, you know. I don't know anything about that. Grandfather was here and he brought the other two aunts and two uncles over for him, and my father was the last one to come over.

MG: Do you know how he met your mother?

DC: How I met my mother?

MG: No, how your father met his wife.

DC: Oh, I don't know. That was started in Hungary. They were married in Hungary. A matter of fact, yes, that's why they came over in 1924. The war was over then, World War I.

MG: What about his World War I experience do you know about?

DC: All I know, he was what they call a *housard*. He was on a horse. He was on a horse and he was battling against the Russians, that's all I know. I got a picture of him, if you want to see it. [Editor's Note: *Housard* is a French word for a soldier in the cavalry].

MG: That would be interesting, yes.

DC: Yes.

MG: I do not want to make you get up though.

DC: No, no.

MG: Okay.

DC: That is all right. That's all right. I lost my sea legs; I got to take it easy.

RA: Sure.

MG: Oh, wow. Was he in the Army?

DC: Yes, he's like the cavalry, the cavalry, yes.

MG: What was his name?

DC: Alexander II.

MG: Wow.

DC: My brother was named Alexander III. He passed away.

MG: There you go. That's a great picture.

DC: Yes. That's Pops. Uniforms almost like ours, weren't they?

MG: Yes.

DC: I couldn't find those down below. Okay, what else?

MG: What is your mother's name?

DC: My mother's name was Tevse, Theresa Csontos. She spelled it different. We always signed it T-H-E-R-E-S-A. She signs it T-E-V-S-E, something like that. Hungarian. We always used her regular Theresa here. [laughter] It was easier for us. She lived until she was eighty-three, some woman though. Boy, I'll tell you how she took care of four of us after my father died. [laughter] He died 1939.

MG: Yes, he died relatively young.

DC: Huh?

MG: He was very young.

DC: Very young, very young, but cancer at that time, they didn't have nothing for cancer at that time. We used to come home from school, and you can hear him moaning and moaning and after he died it was a relief. It was too much. He went down from two hundred to the time he was about into cancer, he was about ninety pounds. Matter of fact, the day before my birthday, he called me in the room there. How he knew, he wished me happy birthday. That was on the 16th, and on the 17th in the morning, he died. He had everything out of him, blood was finally hemorrhaged out, that was the last of his body. He was buried in Bound Brook Cemetery with my mother, same place.

MG: What do you know about your mother's family history?

DC: Nothing. All I know is her, one of her cousins came out here for about four months, and we took her all over and every place like that. I gave her a pill, the capsule, I forgot what it was for, but you're supposed to swallow the capsule. No, you know what she did? She took it apart. I said, "No, you don't take it apart. You swallow the whole thing." [laughter]

I took her to New York. She met some of her buddies over there that was in that Russian Revolution they had there, and she had the address. So, I took her into New York, and she went there. Boy, a hard time. I didn't even think I'd get through New York like I did that day. Anyway, I was only about a block away, and I gave them the call. I told them where we're at, "Oh, it's just around the corner there." I said, "Oh, okay. I'll be right up." Then, she visited her friends that were over there during that time. She appreciated it. She was here about three months or four months with my mother, it was nice. [Editor's Note: The Russian Revolution began in March 1918 when Tsar Nicholas II was overthrown. This was followed by the Bolshevik Revolution, where Vladimir Lenin seized power. However, anti-Communist groups opposed this, and the ensuing Russian Civil War lasted until 1922.]

MG: Did she ever share stories about growing up?

DC: Who?

MG: Your mother.

DC: No, no. They only go eight grades there, that's all. Grammar school, there's no high school at that time, eight grades there. She's a smart woman though; I don't know how she did it.

MG: When your family immigrated here, did they come to South Bound Brook?

DC: No, they came to New York. My aunt, she came out here, my aunt and uncle, and they took them in there until they got them straightened out and that way they came out here because his younger brother was already out there, had a farm out there in New Brunswick, off [Route] 27. He did good. He had about eighty acres there, and he did truck farming. So, all them old people did farming. So, he made out pretty good. He passed away, too. There's not many of us left here anymore.

MG: Where did your parents settle when they came over?

DC: Right here, South Bound Brook.

MG: What did they do for work?

DC: Well, my father worked for Ruberoid. Do you know Ruberoid? Do you know those apartments down there by the canal? It used to be a plant, Ruberoid. They made asbestos material, like shingles and all that stuff. That's where most of the whole town, South Bound Brook, worked. That's where most of them got that disease, asbestos. They tore that all down; they put up all new apartments. If you ever go down Main Street, when you come off the bridge from Bound Brook, on your left, all the way down, that was all one property for Ruberoid, and that was English owned. It made the place look pretty nice now, got rid of that damn asbestos. [Editor's Note: Ruberoid was merged with General Aniline & Film in 1967. The company then became known as GAF Materials Company, which is based out of Parsippany, New Jersey, and continues to operate today.]

MG: Do you think that is how he got sick?

DC: [What]?

MG: Do you think that is how he got sick?

DC: Who?

MG: Your father.

DC: Well, he worked in Calco. It's American Cyanamid, first, and then he worked in Ruberoid. Do you know where Cyanamid used to be? Do you know where the ballpark is, Somerset Patriots Ballpark? The Patriots. You don't know that? [Editor's Note: The Somerset Patriots are

a non-affiliated minor league baseball team. They have played in TD Bank Ballpark since 1999. It is located in Bridgewater, New Jersey.]

MG: Yes.
DC: Well, Cyanamid used to be there. That was a big plant. There were over two thousand people employed at that time, and he used to walk to South Bound Brook, no cars, all the way there and back. He walked to work. That's a long walk. [laughter] We didn't have any cars them days. [laughter]

MG: Do you have a question? Yes, go ahead.

RA: Did your parents already speak English when they came to America?

DC: My father would speak a little bit. My mother couldn't. She had a rough time. She had a buddy on the next block and she was a Ukrainian woman and she couldn't speak English and them two got together. I don't know how the hell they made out, they did, it was amazing, two elderly people. One's from Ukraine and one's from Hungary. That whole block was all from the other side just about. There's only a few of us that, well, not me, I was born here.

MG: How did your father learn English?

DC: At work. That's how he picked it up, a little bit, pretty good. My mother, a little later on, she started to pick up. Then, my wife was Hungarian too, and when we didn't want the kids to hear anything, we spoke Hungarian. They used to holler at us when they grew up, "Yes, every time you talked, you talked in Hungarian. We couldn't understand." So, we got over that finally. They picked up a little bit from us, not that much, so. So, my son, I lost him. He was sixty when he died, prostate. How old are you?

RA: I am twenty.

DC: [What]?

RA: Twenty.

DC: Twenty. At forty, take a PSA [prostate test], will you? Take it every year. All it is a simple blood test. I had problems too when I was thirty-five. I had two roto-rooters, cleared it all up. My son, he was married and then he was married to this girl twenty-two years. She wanted to find her way, find herself, so she left him, went to Florida. Then, he divorced, and so he married another one, a younger one now. Now, whether those two women did to help to push him a little bit to take PSA because I used to go down there. I hated to go down there in town because I pushed him. One of these days I'd tell him, come down, grab you by your ear and take you over there to get a PSA. When he did take it, the reading was fourteen, that's taboo, and that was his urologist. So, he went to my urologist, same thing, fourteen, take it out. A year later, he was done, fourteen that's it. It started to spread. That little prostate gland is a [laughter] pisser

for a man. If you don't watch it, you get it. There's cures now. They're pretty good at it now compared to [years ago]. I've had no problems ever since. Hey, I'm ninety years old.

MG: They spoke Hungarian in the home growing up.

DC: Oh, yes, because with my Mom. Well, Pop worked a shift, mostly nights, afternoon shifts, stuff like that. [We would] come home from school, he wasn't home. So, just us kids were home, that's it.

MG: How were you learning English?

DC: Oh, I grew up, grammar school, right here, down here where these apartments on Elizabeth Street, that was the grammar school there, Robert Morris. Now, they've got a new school right across the street, which is a brand-new school, and they say it is a pretty good school. It's pretty good, what the kids are learning there, so that's good. I try to get my granddaughter to come over here, but she's going to live in Bound Brook now. Debbie's got two grandchildren, so they'll be going to Bound Brook High there, I guess. They have a grammar school there too.

MG: Go ahead.

RA: Did you act as a translator for them?

DC: A what?

RA: Did you act as a translator or interpreter for your parents?

DC: No, no. They're always home. Mom was always home. She didn't go nowhere. I'm the only one that took her anywhere. She had a buddy, she went to school with back in Hungary, and she lived in Ohio. I was going to Oshawa, Canada on vacation, my wife's uncle lived up there, so we drove to Tremont, Ohio, drove to Tremont to the place where she was. When she opened up the door, "Hello, Tevese." How they knew themselves all [those] years? So, she stayed with her while we crossed over to Detroit, over to Oshawa, stayed a week out there, and then came back the same way and picked her up. [laughter] Then, we took her down to where my wife was born down below Pittsburgh, a little town called Clarksville, and so we stayed there a day and then from there we came home. So, she really enjoyed it. That's the only time she went anywhere. We always took her.

Another thing about bananas; my mother never had a banana in her life until she got on the boat. The first banana she ever ate, and she ate bananas until she died [at] eighty-three. They said, "When you get old, don't eat bananas, that's not good for you." Mom ate bananas all the time. So, every time I went down there, "Mom, you out of bananas?" She'd say, "Yes." We'd go, get some more bananas for her, so that was pretty good. That's why they call it the Banana Boat. [laughter] Mom, she got sick, I think the bananas must have helped her, got seasick coming over.

MG: Tell me a little bit about the neighborhood you grew up in. Were there a lot of other Hungarian families there?

DC: Ukrainians and Hungarians. We had colored people, we always called them colored people. We had Jackson and Brokaw, wonderful families. Jackson, he had a little orchard down the street there, on the same street. We used to sneak over and go up on the tree and get some apples. One time he caught us. He got the pole over there. He's trying to poke us down, but he was a nice guy though and his wife was really nice. The Brokaws, I grew up with the Brokaws. They were a pretty nice. A matter of fact, the one girl there, she was a pretty girl. I used to tease her, "You look better than Lena Horne," I told her. [laughter] So, that's it. Just those one, two, three, four blocks all along the canal. It was all on the canal down there. A good little section there, I missed it, yes. [Editor's Note: Lena Horne was an African American actress and singer. She lived from 1917 to 2010.]

MG: Would all the neighborhood kids play together?

DC: Oh, yes, we always [did]. We never had no problems. Most of them lived on the east side of the Main Street. To go across the Main Street, that was no good; the only time you went across was when you went to school. [laughter] Then, as you grew up, you go to Bound Brook to Friday night movie for ten cents. [laughter] Ten cents, you saw two movies. The guy that gives the sports and stuff, and the serial, ten cents. If you had ten cents, you got in, and that was it. If you had another ten cents, you went across the street and got a banana split for ten cents. I mean, the big banana split in them days. So, that wasn't too bad. Sundays were tough trying to get some money to go to the movie. Old Poppy was pretty shrewd. He almost forced Mom to get rid of us. So, she gave us the money so we could go to the movies. [laughter] Well, they were just like us guys now, "Get rid of the kids so me and Mom can stay home."

MG: Do you remember what movies you saw?

DC: Bound Brook, Brook Theatre. They had two theatres there, Brook, and then on the next block they called it the Lyric, Lyric Theater. They had a balcony and everything, so you had your choice to take which one you wanted to see. It wasn't bad.

MG: Do you remember any of the films that you would watch?

DC: Friday nights, they had the serial, the Flash Gordon serial every Friday and, like I say, two movies. As a matter of fact, the news, when I came back after the first year, after we got hit, I came back, and I went to the movies here and they had the news on there and they were showing Bougainville. I said, "Holy cow, I just came back from there." Everybody looked at me. That was when they invaded Bougainville; it's in the Solomon Islands. It was just as big as Guadalcanal. Guadalcanal was on the southwestern side, and Bougainville was the southeastern side. They were both big islands, but Guadalcanal was already taken, so we just got down there in time for Bougainville, yes. [Editor's Note: U.S. forces invaded Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands in August 1942. The USS *Braine* participated in naval support for the U.S. invasion of

Bougainville beginning in early November 1943. The Allies launched the Solomon Islands campaign to regain territories from the Japanese in the South Pacific.]

MG: What else would you do for fun?

DC: For what?

MG: For fun growing up?

DC: Oh, everything. Football and baseball. Ice used to freeze over there. We used to ice skate. Swim in the summertime in the canal. I lived in that canal because our yard ran right down into the canal. We had part of it fenced off from geese or ducks. We had a little gate there, and we always had a boat. Of course, we had to go down with the boat, go to the lowlands and get our wood. We chopped, my father and my uncle, they chopped down a tree about that big. There was enough wood there for two years. When they cut it down, they had to cut it there and this way and split it and carry it on their shoulders, up on the hill, put it on our boat and bring it back to the chicken yard and line them all up. Then, after school, when you come home, you either sawed wood or chopped wood. [laughter] It wasn't easy, but we didn't complain. We always had plenty to eat, even during the depression. We always had plenty to eat. Mom always did work on the outside. She did some washing and ironing. She washed and ironed for this family. The guy worked in the office, and he liked the way she did the collar. It wasn't hard and stiff, because they used something there to stiffen it up, don't they?

MG: Starch.

DC: Yes, so she didn't use any of it, and he liked it. Every week, ten, twelve shirts she did for him. It wasn't big money, but at that time, it was good money.

RA: Did your parents grow their own crops too?

DC: Oh, yes. Over here, yes, we had a nice garden. We helped dig by hand, and no roto tiller [laughter]. You never heard of a roto tiller. It was quite a piece, I'd say, from your car to that fence on the other side over there, all the way down to the canal. Mom used to have [huge] heads of lettuce like that. Out of this world. She used to fry it sometimes and sometimes use oil and vinegar. I liked the fried. She did a good job on frying lettuce, big heads, enough to give a lot away; you couldn't keep them all. That's what we did. We always had a pig. Pop would kill it, and two other guys would help him hold it. We had enough meat for sausage and everything we made out of it. Still the old-timers, from the other side. They knew how to do it.

MG: Were you cooking a lot of traditional Hungarian dishes in the home?

DC: Yes, well, whatever Mom made. She used to make chicken paprikash.

MG: What's that?

DC: That's chicken with paprika. You put it in a bowl there with onions and oil there and heat it up and put a lot of paprika on it and cook it up that way. It's pretty good. Stuffed cabbage. Our kitchen table, it was big like that there, and when she'd get done with the dough, that whole table would be covered in one piece and she'd cut her own noodles. Never bought noodles, she made her own noodles. She cut her own noodles and that was it. So, it was pretty self [reliant]. You didn't have to do much to buying on the outside.

MG: Would you have to attend church services on the weekend?

DC: Yes, yes. Protestant church down here in South Bound Brook. It's still here. It's been here for I don't know how many years.

MG: How did you feel about going to church every Sunday?

DC: They used to give us an envelope. You know how much Mom had to put in there? Just a penny. That doggone envelope was worth a penny. It's enough, I guess. My little sister used to go with me, and both of us had a penny each and that was it. Not like today, you've got to put in a hundred-dollar bill now. [laughter]

MG: You brought up the Great Depression earlier, and I did not know if you could see ways the depression affected your town or your family.

DC: You just grew with it. We always ate good. We always ate good. You couldn't foresee it at that time. The depression was in the '30s, and I don't remember. Just go with the flow, that's all.

MG: Go ahead.

RA: Did you ever share food with your neighbors?

DC: What?

RA: Would you share food with your neighbors?

DC: Oh, yes. Mom and us, we made a fifty-gallon drum of wine every year. We had our grape vine from our house down to the chicken coop, up and down, up and over. The red ones we had. We had the dark ones we had. Then, if you didn't have enough, you went around and picked up a couple baskets. We had these containers there, you'd put it in there and you squeeze it like this here. Then, the ones we put in a drum, we'd get up there, me and my sister, with our feet, we would squash them down. Finally, they got that good container where you put it in and it squeezed down and the juice goes out into the thing and then we put that into a barrel, an open barrel. He puts it into a regular barrel, and then by Christmastime, it's ready. Then, he had buddies, my father and his buddies. That's when I had my first taste of wine there. [laugher] Mom made beer too. Pop asked her to make whiskey. Mom says, she drew the line, "No way, no more." [laughter] "You'll have the whole town here." [laughter] So, they were pretty good at

making that stuff. It was probably illegal, but it was all right. He wasn't selling it. He was just giving it away. We had enough wine there for quite a while, good wine, good grape wine. [laughter]

MG: Did you have certain responsibilities or chores you had to do around the house?

DC: Well, yes. Mom used to take care of the furnace. She used to bank it and everything like that, and then she'd send the ashes down there. Okay, I got the ashes, take it down by the chicken coop there, and the ashes there on the hill there and dump it all out and pick out the coals that didn't burn. We also had a stove, combination stove, in the kitchen, gas and wood. So, we always had plenty of wood there. Between those two, it was all right. With the furnace, we only had one opening. It was about this wide right in the middle of the house; I'd say it was like the dining room. So, naturally, on our bed, we had these *dunyha*, these *dunyha*, they're made out of duck feathers, they're about that thick. In the wintertime, without that, boy, you get in there, nice and warm. Then, in the morning, you'd get up, everybody sat down now over top that heater there to put your shoes on. [laughter] By that time, Mom had the stove going in the kitchen there to help get a little heat, so that helped. There were just two places to get heat, not like today. They've got one for every room now. [laughter] You guys getting hot or what? [Editor's Note: *Dunyha* is the Hungarian word for duvet, which means blanket or comforter in French.]

MG: I feel good.

DC: Good?

MG: Yes.

DC: Okay.

MG: Tell us a little bit about your siblings.

DC: All I had was Deb and Donald, that's all.

MG: No, your brothers and sisters.

DC: Oh, well, my brother, he was the first one. He was the first one. Then, what happened to him, one time, he was on top of a boxcar down there and he fell and he broke his arm. So, Mom would come down there across the street, right down there by the borough yard, and the guy who was down there with the motorcycle, Mom got on the motorcycle, the guy brought her down to--they had him in the house with a doctor. Then, as he's going to school, it's leaking all the time, leaking. So, he called our regular doctor that comes to the house, you only pay two dollars, and he took it apart. There was a loose bone in there, and that's why it made it keep leaking.

Then, the war was coming on, and I said, "I'll be in before you." He says, "Oh, no," because he was older than me. He tries the Navy, tries the Army, tries the Marines. So, when they check you out, you're all lined up in the nude. He kept trying to hide his hand like this here, kept

turning it around, says, "What are you hiding your hand for?" Every one of them, and he showed them his arm. The one arm was shorter than the other, so neither one of them took him. I said, "See, I told you I'd be in there before you." I did. [laughter]

MG: Do you have a younger sister?

DC: My younger sister, yes, she just grew up with me. Then, my older sister, she got married and she lived next door, had a house their next door. Pop had it built in 1935, and she lived there. My other sister got married, she moved out to Long Island, and then from Long Island, she moved to California and that's where she passed away there last year, a year ago, yes.

MG: Their names were Yolanda and Olga.

DC: Yes, Yolanda and Olga. Yolanda was the oldest.

MG: Did you ever take any family trips or anything like that?

DC: My family, oh, yes. I took, my family, son and daughter and my nephew, one time we drove them down to Key West on the east coast and came back up on the west coast and then come back. Then, another time, we went down to Florida, we took, as a matter of fact, here he is now. I'll show you this boy. I'll show you how he messed up, too.

MG: Oh.

DC: He was a state kid. We got him when he was a small guy, by the state. We took care of him, and he grew up with us. He was about the same age as Debbie was.

MG: You adopted him.

DC: No, we just took care of him until his mother was able to find herself because she was drinking and all that stuff and smoking like hell. He never did go back to her. He left here just to go on a trip. He ended up going to California, picking lettuce and all that stuff and trying out everything out. Then, he finally come home, and then his sister bought a camping grounds in Pennsylvania and she had two of them there. She was the only one in the family that made out. She's a millionaire right now. He stayed with her and worked at one of them, and then ended up, he started to drink too much liquor. He fell down, hit his head. He wouldn't go and see his doctor. Next day, they go in there and look at him, he's on the floor, he was finished. He was the same age as Debbie, my Debbie. He was a good kid. He was a kayak man, a real kayak. He had a nice kayak, too. Dennis, we called him Dennis the Menace. [laughter] He was fifty-six I think, yes, fifty-five when he died, yes, or maybe older than that, I don't know, I'm not sure.

MG: Tell me a little bit about the schools you attended growing up.

DC: Oh, grammar schools? Not bad, not a problem. You did your work, and that was it. I never got in a fight. No, I don't remember nothing, no incidents. We used to go out to play,

recreation. I tried to stop a guy, we were playing football, I tried to stop a guy and got down on all fours and he came with his knee and hit me here. I said, "Oh God." The teacher came over, she come over. [laughter] I thought he broke my ribs. I didn't go to tackle him; I just got down on my knee like this and he was the big kid. He was the biggest kid there. [laughter] It's all right.

I graduated from grammar school, went to high school, and I stayed there a year and a half. When my father died, I had to go to work. When I was sixteen, I had a job and I was working. I started my sophomore year. I only went a half a year, and I didn't go to school. As a matter of fact, I didn't go to sign up to be a sophomore. I'm home, and the truant officer came down and told my mother I have to go back to school. At that time, you stayed in school until you're sixteen, not like today, you quit sixteen, nothing, don't worry, right. So, I went back until December the 17th, I was sixteen. I didn't go back to school no more. I went back to the job [laughter]. So, I've been working ever since.

MG: What was the job you were doing?

DC: I was working in what they call Warwick Print Shop. It was over there on Railroad Avenue there, along the railroad. As you go down towards Middlesex, turn right on River Road, first left, I don't think the building's there anymore. They had the chemical plant before, and then they had the Warwicks. They had these long tables, and they had to print it for all kinds of designs. Then, they would take it to the wash room and wash it in a big washer, and then we'd put it in a steamer and steam it and then roll them up and ship it away. I was a youngster there. [laughter] I wasn't even seventeen yet.

MG: Before you left high school, what were some of your favorite subjects or teachers that stand out to you?

DC: They didn't say nothing. I never even got to talk to any of them; they didn't talk to you.

MG: Was your family paying attention to what was going on in with the war in Europe?

DC: I don't know if they did or not. The Second World War you mean?

MG: Yes.

DC: I try to make that a plan when I first got home, the first year, was home for fourteen day leave from California. I picked up a train in LA, seventy-eight dollars round trip by train, fourteen days. I had six days at home and the other eight was for travelling. You didn't have much. As a matter of fact, I didn't think I was going to go home. I went home anyhow because I didn't know if I was ever going to be back again anyhow. [laughter] I tried to get back some. They're pretty good there, Grand Central. When we got there, I said, "Look, I got to be back in LA this certain time. When do I have to leave here to make it in time?" Boy, I hit it right on the nose. I got there at eight o'clock the night before I was supposed to be back, eight o'clock in the

morning. I did a little farting around a little bit, and then I went back to the ship and go to sleep. [laughter]

MG: Did you have any relatives in Hungary?

DC: Yes, I had that one aunt of mine came out; that was the one I know. The rest, I don't know. I don't know anything. They're up in age.

MG: You were not staying in touch with them while you were growing up.

DC: No, nobody. I'd like to take that Danube trip down that river one day. Boy, that looks like a nice cruise. [laughter]

MG: Well, tell us a little bit about the years leading up to World War II.

DC: Well, I was working. I was working at that print place. As soon as I turned seventeen, I went down to New Brunswick, and I signed up. The guy gave me the ticket for New York, Broad Street in New York, that's where you have to go, give you a free ticket and you go by train and you go in there. I passed everything, except I had one cavity in my tooth. I said, "I just had it fixed." I passed everything else. I come back to my dentist. I said, "Fix this tooth right now and put the regular stuff in there." He did. I went back to New York again, I passed, that was it. Then, when I get off to boot camp in Newport, Rhode Island, you know what they do there? They took that filling out again and put their own filling, the Navy filling. I said, "I just paid money to put that in there." So twice, the one tooth. Isn't that something? It's amazing.

We slept in hammocks in boot camp. One guy there couldn't make it out; he fell. The next morning, you see him, he's going out, discharged because mobility, I guess it has something to do with that. If you fell out of it, you couldn't do it. So, it wasn't too bad. You just grab the pipes and pull yourself up there and get in.

We had six weeks there before we went up to Boston, waiting for our ship. It was a brand new ship. We put it in commission there in Boston. It came down from Bath, Maine. That's where it was built. A lot of destroyers were built there or in Kearny, New Jersey. A lot of destroyers were built there. We had quite a fleet of destroyers. They needed them, too.

Of course, we were expendable. Do you know what I mean by expendable? If we're going alongside a battleship or a carrier, there was a torpedo heading for that, we're supposed to intercept that and take the hit. Then, the invasions, all the invasions, the destroyers had to get as close to shore as possible and draw fire, so the big ships could see where it's coming from. That's how we got hit in Tinian, off of Saipan and Guam, in between. We went in too damn close. Boy, they opened up. The skipper turned that ship around so fast. Every time a shot was here, he turned it there, a shot there, he turned there. We got hit with only one. We only lost three guys, so we were lucky. So, that's what I mean about being expendable. [Editor's Note: American forces invaded the Japanese-held islands Saipan, Tinian and Guam in the Mariana Islands in June and July 1944.]

We did a lot of firing there, especially in Saipan. If you stood out of the ring of Saipan where you could see the island, it'd be all smoke. That's how many shells were going in there. Here, I didn't even know my cousin from New York was in engineers there. He landed with the first troops, and I didn't know until I came home on my first leave. I said, "Holy cow, I was there. We were bombarding the doggone beach," and he got hit on the beach. He got hit on the shoulder. He got discharged right after that. So, he was already home before I was. Yes, he's still living. He's ninety-four years old, California. He lives in California.

MG: Where were you when you found out about Pearl Harbor?

DC: No, I wasn't in Pearl Harbor ...

MG: I know. Where were you when you found out about it?

DC: I was coming home from the movies, Bound Brook, coming up from the underpass, and this guy comes up by the hill with a radio, "Hey, they just bombed Pearl harbor." Who the hell is Pearl Harbor? I didn't even know. [laughter] I said, "Oh, okay." Then, we found out the next day. We said, "Holy cow, we're at war." That was it. That's the way I found out. [laughter] The guy had it on the radio.

We had a radio. We had the best radio on the block. We had the one that stood up there like this, nice and tall, nice big screen and everything, nice radio. I don't know where it went to; someone got it.

MG: How soon after Pearl Harbor did you sign up for the Navy?

DC: Oh, well, Pearl Harbor is December the 7th, 1941. [I signed up in] 1943, February, because I wasn't old enough. See, Navy, you could get in at seventeen. In the Army, you couldn't get in. My mom wouldn't sign. So, I said, "Hey, Mom, I'm not going to go into the Army." I said, "I want to go in the Navy. I want to sleep in the white sheets instead of sleeping in the mud." Two weeks, I didn't talk to her, so she finally signed it, scribbles her name on there. They let me in; then, I got in. [laughter] Seventeen years old.

RA: Before Pearl Harbor, did you want to get involved in the war?

DC: Oh, yes, I wanted to join the Navy since I was a kid. We always had a boat, like when we had a little ripples [in the water] with the big wind out there and we'd push the boat out there and go rowing in it. Oh, boy, big waves. That's how we were. I always wanted to join the Navy, from the time I was a kid.

MG: You said you went to New York to enlist.

DC: Yes.

MG: Did you go with some other friends?

DC: No, by myself. Broad Street, that's where we signed up and then we got sworn in. Once you got there, you were sworn in, and they let you go home and come back that night. I said, "Where the hell am I going to go?" I came all the way home again, crossed the Hudson on a ferry and [took the train on the] Jersey Central. They said, "What are you doing here?" I said, "Well, I've got to be back." I left a little early and then went back. [laughter] My neighbor took me to the train station at Bound Brook there, so I'd catch the train to go back. Of course, I was already sworn in. I'll be AWOL, if I didn't make it in time.

Then, they took us that night. They took us up to Newport by train. They didn't tell us where we were going. They wouldn't tell you where you were going. We didn't know until we got there. That's how secret it is, at that time. We had all kind of banners around there, "Watch your talk," about anything. We got there, threw all of our clothes off that we had, put them in a bag in front of us and they shipped it home for us. Back to the old Navy rags, which wasn't bad; it was only two piece.

MG: Tell us a little bit about boot camp and what you did for the six weeks.

DC: Boot camp, well, you got up at five o'clock in the morning. You went in a big pool to swim. This way they want to find out if you can swim. Once you pass, you take a test, you could swim from one end of the pool, it's a big pool. It's five o'clock in the morning. Then, way after that, you get out and then you do some marching. I said, "Holy cow, it's February." It's cold up there. [laughter] Then, we went to chow. After that, I don't know what we did after that. Like I say, we slept in hammocks there in our barracks. We went out, fooled around a little bit I guess. I don't know what time we went to lunch. So, they'd line us up. I still think when they lined us up, in the inspection in the big hall and they'd come around and make you pull your pants down and look at your skivvies, inside your skivvy. If it was dirty, you'd get out of the line. I never got out of the line. I passed every one of them. I still think those guys that got out of line, they put them in the amphibious crew that went down to Virginia, and the other half, like me, went on a ship. I think that's the way it worked; I'm not sure. We had one guy there, he had a voice so loud, he got shore duty right there at the point. They had made him a squad leader because his voice was so strong. So, he's lucky. He didn't get any sea duty. He stayed right there in Newport. [laughter]

MG: Were there men from all over, there?

DC: Oh, yes, all over. You didn't get to know too much about them in boot camp, like on a ship, because I had a buddy in Plainfield. I had a buddy in Cranford. Both of them got killed, and I went to visit the families when I went there. That's what I was doing with my wife. The one from Cranford there, his mother kept thinking he was still alive. So, I got a hold of his brother, I told him. I said, "No, he's not alive. I'll show you exactly where he was when he got killed." As a matter of fact, they didn't even find him. I don't know if they found his tags or not. Actually, see that number two mount, up on the bow.

MG: Yes.

DC: One, two, the one sticking out, the guns. Right under there was where the first plane hit us, and I was right underneath the bridge right there. The plane created a hole where I was able to crawl out. Out of ten guys in the radar shack, only three of us got out. I was lucky.

Then, the other plane hit on the other side where that second stack is, right into the second stack. All in the matter of a couple of seconds. This first one, I was on the radar, I had it coming in. I gave him the bearing range, I said, "We just hit that one." I said, "Okay, well, let's switch over to the other target, the one on the starboard side." By the time I said that, boom, that other one hit. They didn't kill the pilot. He was able to guide it in. Those guys [kamikaze pilots], they had their own funeral before they left. They sealed them in their planes, and they had the captain take a bunch of them down. He comes down as far as Okinawa. He'll turn around and go back to Japan, and the other ones only had enough fuel to crash into any ship they could find. Of course, they didn't have no fuel to go back because they were sealed in. That's the way they are, the Japanese people were that way.

As a matter of fact, if they would had invaded Japan, that would have been murder. They had over three hundred to five hundred suicide planes in Northern Japan if they invaded to raid them. There was no way to have shot them all down without hitting any of those ships, the troopships, the battleships, the destroyers, no way. When he dropped the atomic bomb, that was the best thing that ever happened, the best thing ever. Truman did one good thing there. Otherwise, we'd have lost over a million people, more than that. Boy, they were tough. They didn't give up. That's the difference between the Japanese and the Germans. The Germans, when they got cornered, they gave up. The Japanese, when they got cornered from the Marines and the Army, they don't give up. They kept coming right at you, and if you didn't kill them, you got killed. That's the way it was. The difference in the two people that we fought. [Editor's Note: The United States dropped atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima on August 6, 1945 and Nagasaki on August 9, 1945. The Japanese announced their unconditional surrender on August 15, and the formal surrender took place on September 2, 1945.]

MG: Go ahead.

RA: Would you have preferred to fight in Europe as opposed to the Pacific?

DC: I don't know. There wouldn't have been much in Europe. All you've got is the coastline of France, and with the Pacific, that's real wide. I have been in battles. The first one, when we got out there, when we got to Pearl after our shakedown. Remember the ship that went through that storm with passengers in that hurricane?

MG: Just recently?

DC: That's what we went through. We were going, we were all done with our shake down cruise. We went to Bermuda for our shake down cruise. We couldn't go in because Bermuda wouldn't allow a warship to go in the harbor, so we had to anchor out. We stayed out there and

swam off the ship there for a while. Then, we came back to Boston, practiced a little on the guns, make sure everything's okay, so everything's checked out good and then we're on our way to the Pacific.

Then, we hit that hurricane off Cape Hatteras. I said, "I'm seventeen years old. I'll never get to see the Japs." [laughter] I've never seen water so high. One time, you were up in the sky and the next time it was down in the trough, and when you're down in the trough, the waves, both sides are like this here, and the destroyer, that's why they call it a tin can, it just shook like that there. As a matter of fact, one of the ashcans [depth charge] went down the deck, and the guys were lucky. They just grabbed it and hit a stanchion and it held them from being washed overboard. When they went up on top, you were even with the ocean. The next time, when you were down, you were down in the hole. The gun one, one wave pushed the wall of that gun mount in. That's how powerful that water is. That's very powerful. One guy we had, we had to keep an eye on him. He wanted to jump overboard. He was sicker than a dog. [laughter] I never got sick. I was too scared to get sick. [laughter] That was something. They says, if you can make it to the galley--see, I lived back aft, [near the] number four gun mount, and there's a doorway down below there. When the ship would go up like this here, you'd open up the door quick, close it quick, get up on the next deck. Of course, when that fantail would go down, it'd be a wall of water that would wash right there. If you're on the deck, it would wash you right off. We were lucky no of us got washed over one. That was my one experience in that hurricane. I didn't think I was going to survive that.

As a matter of fact, we were escorting a cruiser, they said, "Where were you guys?" I said, "When you were up in the sky, we were down in the hole there." That's the way it was. [laughter] We met them down there in Trinidad. Well, anyway, this boatswain comes over to me, and he says, "Hey, there's a guy on Trinidad who wants to swap. You want to swap with him?" I went ashore there once. I said, "No way." It was hot. "I'm staying aboard the ship." So, I didn't swap. I don't know if he asked another guy. I don't know if he took it or not. I wasn't going to stay down there for the duration of the war. I went through the Panama Canal, out to Pearl Harbor. That was our start.

Then, we got to Pearl, and then the one destroyer was disabled. They were going to go have a raid on Wake Island, try to retake it, take escort carriers there and planes and bomb them. This one destroyer, something was wrong with it, so our captain, he volunteered, "Oh, we'll take its place." Okay, big shot. We went and we went with the carriers, we were escorting them. Now, we didn't see any action there, but we got so close we were able to launch the planes, bombard Wake Island. It was a small island. It got bombarded so damn many times, and then we finally did it and then we came back. [Editor's Note: On October 5-6, 1943, the USS *Braine* participated in U.S. operations to bombard Wake Island.]

When we came back, from there, then we went down to the Solomon Islands, we went back to Pearl, and then we went back down to the Solomon Islands. Then our squadron guy said, "Where the heck were you guys? We've been waiting for you." Well, we were lucky. We missed the big battle off of Savo Island. My buddy was on that *Juneau*. Did you ever hear of the *Juneau*? Did you ever hear of the five Sullivan Brothers? Well, they were on the *Juneau*.

That was built in Kearny. My friend, I grew up with, only one block away, next street, Franklin Street, Ernie Holbrook, he was on that. He got lost. He got it there. They were in the battle there, and they're on their way to Espiritu Santo to try to repair it a little bit. They couldn't do much. Here the Japanese sub was waiting in a slot over there, one torpedo, finished it off. Of course, it was pretty well mangled from the battle down there in Savo Island. So, Ernie never did come home. He went ahead of me. Of course, he was a year or two older than me. Ernie Holbrook, he lived on Franklin Street down here. [Editor's Note: The Battle of Savo Island occurred on August 8-9, 1942. It was the first naval engagement of the Guadalcanal Campaign. Over 1,000 Americans were killed and it is considered a Japanese victory. After being damaged near Guadalcanal, the USS *Juneau* was heading for Espirito Santo, an island of Vanuatu, for repairs. On November 13, 1942, the damaged ship was hit by a Japanese torpedo and sank in twenty seconds. Only ten sailors survived. On the ship were the five Sullivan brothers; all of them died.]

We had quite a few of them here. As a matter of fact, the five boys that lived on that street of mine, we were all in the service. A matter of fact, me and another guy are the only two still surviving. Johnny (Raznack?), I don't know if you've heard of him, he lives up in the mountains there somewhere.

MG: Do you have a question?

RA: How long would a battle last?

DC: The Battle of Leyte, that was a miserable one. We were lucky we missed that sucker. We brought the troops in in the initial invasion into Leyte. We stayed there a couple days. We made smoke, so the planes couldn't see the ship. Finally, they told us to go back down to New Guinea to pick up some more troop transports and bring them back. Halfway down, that's when the big battle was going on. I said, "Uh, oh, I think we're going to go back." No, we didn't go back, but we were lucky. Who knows, we might have been in it. [Editor's Note: The Battle of Leyte Gulf occurred in October 1944 between U.S. and Japanese naval forces during the Allied invasion of the Philippines.]

As a matter of fact, the one ship from our squadron, they run out of oil, so they figured they can make it to the tanker to fuel. Before you do that, you should've balanced the ballast with water. He didn't do that, and [there was a] typhoon, they were dead in the water. That's the only destroyer lost in our squadron. We had six destroyers in our squadron, and they were lost by a typhoon. Thirteen guys survived. The only reason why they survived, one destroyer captain said he's going to go back with his destroyer. They told him not to go; he went anyhow. He went back there, picked them up. They were all on a raft there. I met them at the reunion in Washington, D.C. when they had the six-destroyer reunion down there. I talked to a couple of them. We had a pretty good time. Bull Halsey was the speaker. Do you know Admiral Halsey? Man, I didn't think he was ever going to get off that microphone. He could talk a mile and two hours. They almost made him stop. Those guys can really talk. [laughter] [Editor's Note: William Halsey lived from 1882 to 1959. He was a fleet admiral during and after World War II. He commanded the Southwest Pacific area and the Third Fleet in the Pacific during the war.]

MG: Did you go to advance training after boot camp, or did you get an assignment right away?

DC: No, I went right to the ship.

MG: What was the first ship you were on?

DC: That was it.

MG: What was the name of the ship you were on?

DC: *Braine*. I still wear the old thing [a hat]. [Editor's Note: The USS *Braine* was a Fletcher-class destroyer. It was commissioned in 1943. After World War II, the ship remained active until 1971. It was then given to the Argentinian Navy and then used as a target and sunk in 1983.]

MG: The USS *Braine*.

DC: Yes. That represents the Beaver Squadron. That's the Beaver Squadron; that's the beaver.

MG: Okay, a beaver with a bow and arrow.

DC: Yes, that's the Beaver Squadron, Desron 23. [Editor's Note: Destroyer Squadron 23 was formed during World War II on May 11, 1943 as part of Admiral Halsey's Third Fleet. Its mascot, Little Beaver, is a Native American with a bow and arrow. Little Beaver comes from the Red Ryder cartoon strip.]

MG: Can you say what that means?

DC: Just the name of the group. I tried to get a new hat made and have them broad it, instead of on the seam like this here. Nobody knows how to do that, but knowing this is so doggone old.

MG: It has character though.

DC: Once in a while, I wear it. I belong to the senior citizens, we'll go someplace sometimes, I'll wear it, because I might meet [someone and] talk. As a matter of fact, they have a reunion going on in Philadelphia. I'm not going to go. I can't go to those things anymore. It's too much, get on a bus, too much. My legs can't do it no more. I'm trying to go to the Philadelphia casino there in April, so that's closer. It's only fifty-two miles. Me and the wife always went to Atlantic City though, resorts. As a matter of fact, I had a card from them, the offer, the prizes they're going to give out, always under her name. So, I just rip it up.

MG: When were you given the assignment of radarman?

DC: In Pearl, when we came back to Pearl, after we got hit. I went to the executive officer, I said, "I'd like to be a radarman." He says, "Okay." He says, "You better be a good radarman." I said, "Oh, yes, Sir." He was a little guy. I think he was in the Navy all his life. So, that's when I started. I started striking.

I'll give you a moment down in the Admiralty group. You don't know where that's at anyhow. That's below the Philippines, Admiralty Islands. It's a bunch of islands there. We came in, anchored. There's an ammunition ship there. We had to get some ammunition, what we used for bombarding, and I had the watch. All the ships set up their screens to watch a movie on the bow. I'm watching; I had the aircraft radar. The surface radar was behind me, the guy who was on that one. I pick up the thing over the beach. You've got to watch the beacon a little bit and just keep your bearing on there. This sucker looked like it was moving. At that time, our radar wasn't good over land like they are now. I said, "Son of a gun, I've got something." I told my buddy, "Tell the captain I picked up a bogey." So, he went over there, and I picked up the phone and I said, "To all ships." I picked it up, the phone, by myself, nobody told me to, I said, "I picked up a bogey bearing So-So, bearing So-So." When I said that, they got three calls from different ships. They all picked him up, too. Everybody shut the movies down. It was all lit up. So, the captain comes up, "You sure you picked it up?" "Yes, Sir, I picked it up and I got notified by the other ships. They got it. They picked it up too after I gave them the bearing and range." I felt good there. [laughter] Those radars, at sea, they're all right, but over land, it's hard. If you find a pit for something, you just keep an eye on it, it will move back and forth. If you see it moving, then it's something, it's a plane. They say his name [the bogey] was Crazy Charlie, used to come over around there and inspect to see what's down there and then report back. Once the other ships got it and the lights went out, Charlie was gone. He was gone. [laughter] Yes, that was pretty good, Admiralty Islands, Manus Island, that's it. That's where we had to load [ammunition]. I helped load the ammunition because I didn't do much work, on the radar, like the seaman. After watch, you had to paint and scrape paint and clean and all that. I used to do that. That's why I wanted to get the hell out of there. I wanted to get into radar because those guys got double watch. You sit out there and play checkers and cards and everything like that, and that's what I wanted. That was pretty good there.

MG: Well, tell us about your first tour.

DC: Well, my first tour was the island, I told you, the one we escorted.

MG: Near Bermuda?

DC: No, that was a shakedown. We took a shake down, down there.

MG: Okay.

DC: See, when the ship comes down from where it was built, you've got to go out what they call a shake down, try everything out, the guns and stuff like that. As a matter of fact, they pulled a sneaker on us. They picked up a submarine out of Boston, so we had to go to General Quarters, so it was only a fake. They wanted to see how the guys reacted, so that was pretty good. Then,

we went down to Bermuda and came back and everything was okay and then on our way over and that was it. That's when we went through that hurricane.

MG: When you were called to general quarters, where would you report to?

DC: At that time, I was at gun mount five, the last gun on the right there. I was on that one. I'll tell you about that one now. We were going to Bougainville, escorting troop transports for the invasion of Bougainville. Torpedo planes were picked up. One torpedo was dropped right underneath this fantail. As a torpedo drops, it sinks, and our fantail went up at the time and the torpedo went right under it.

Now, between the two stacks, our chief of the boat was on the deck. That was his position, chief of the boat. Another plane came and dropped a torpedo; he dropped it so close, it went right between the stacks and landed on its side. We were lucky. We had to call the ships that we were escorting, "Watch out for torpedoes heading your way." They was pretty far, but they didn't make it anyhow. They didn't hit anything. We were lucky, but it was dark. Boy, I'm telling you, it was really dark. They knew the weather, how, when and where to go all the time. That was a close one there. If they would've hit that one on the fantail, they would've blew the whole tail out. I would've been gone right away. [laughter]

RA: Was there one gun in particular that was your main gun and most important gun on the ship?

DC: No, after that, then I got on the radar shack.

MG: What were the other weapons on board?

DC: Well, we had five five-inch 38s. They call them five-inch 38s, the ones sticking out. Then, you had 40mm on each side of the bridge, 40mm on this side, mid-ships, and 20mm on the fantail. Then, you had two 20mm on the port side and two 20mm on the starboard side. Now, that's the gun that one ship there, the *Edwards*; they shot down, I think, twenty-some Jap planes. I saw movies later on, Japanese ships, with the small guns like a 20mm, there's always a guy with the cane there directing them. Of course, you can only see so much because you have to handle it yourself. We should have had it on our ship, somebody alongside those 20mm, and they could've blasted those souped-up, doggone Jap planes right out of the air. "Move it over, up, down, south." Just a thought. I would've liked to get on the 20mm.

MG: Could you give us a sense of the chronology, where you went first and then where you went?

DC: Well, after Wake Island, we went down to Tulagi. That was our port. Then, we prepared to take minesweepers along Bougainville, escorted there and laid the mines and then came back. Then, they got ready for the Bougainville invasion, and then we went on that, that was second. Then, after that, there was islands between New Guinea and Bougainville. One of them was named Green Island. That's where we shot our first plane down. Then, there was another island,

I'll tell you about being expendable. It was called Emirau. You never heard of Emirau. They told us, "Get as close to the beach as you can. See if you can draw some fire." No fire. The guys weren't sure; we already found out the only thing they had on there was a little radio post, the Japanese had there. [laughter] [Editor's Note: Tulagi is an island of the Solomon Islands. It was invaded by American forces on August 7, 1942 as part of the Guadalcanal Campaign. The Green Islands are a number of small islands near Bougainville. They were invaded by Americans in January 1944. Emirau Island is part of the Bismarck Archipelago. It was invaded by the Americans on March 20, 1944.]

Let's see, Emirau and Rabaul. Rabaul, that was a tough one. We went up there at night time, dark as all. It's almost like, the size of the river going up there, went up there fast, bombarded quick. We saw flames shot up; we must have hit an ammunition dump or something like that, turned around quick and got the hell out of there. Boy, if they would have found us, they would've wiped us right out, but it was so damn dark there. We got back to Tulagi there. I was happy. We did pretty good there, around New Guinea. [Editor's Note: Rabaul is a port city on the island of New Britain. It was taken by the Japanese in January 1942 and held until Japan officially surrendered in 1945.]

Then, our hearts dropped a little bit. We went around New Guinea there alongside the shore. It was already taken by us, and they had WACs [Women's Army Corps]. You'd see the WACs on the beach. I go, "Holy Christ, they make us feel like hell." The women, you can't get near them, so I think we just went there to patrol a little bit and then we came back.

MG: Did you pull out the binoculars?

DC: No, I didn't. We had big binoculars. Boy, I wish I could've gotten one of them; the Navy binoculars are good. See, I was inside there. I didn't need any binoculars. Only the guys that helped out on the bridge, they had binoculars. The guys back aft, they had binocular. It helped.

The only trouble, one time there, before the Turkey Shoot, I don't know if you ever heard of the Turkey Shoot. That was the Mariana Campaign; that's Saipan, Tinian, and Guam. We're going up there, and a torpedo surfaced. They saw in the periscope. They saw it, and they hollered, the lookouts, "How come you guys didn't pick it up?" Of course, radar, we couldn't pick it up that low. We stayed there. We bombarded Saipan. Tinian, we got hit by the shore battery, buried our three guys right there at sea, and then we came home for a while. That's when we went back out ready for the Philippines. That was the big battle. Actually, the biggest battle was Okinawa. We lost more Navy personnel at Okinawa than they lost in the two wars. When the ship goes down, you lose eighty on ours, 115 wounded, but we got back though. That was it. [Editor's Note: The Battle of the Philippine Sea, nicknamed the Marianas Turkey Shoot, occurred on June 19-20, 1944. Days earlier, on June 15, U.S. Army forces and Marines invaded Saipan in the Mariana Islands. While American ground forces fought against the Japanese to secure Saipan, the Japanese Navy counterattacked by launching its carrier planes. The U.S. Fifth Fleet counterattacked with its carrier planes. In the ensuing "Marianas Turkey Shoot," American planes shot down 346 Japanese planes at the cost of thirty American aircraft. The Battle of the Philippine Sea was a resounding naval victory for the Americans. In July 1944, American forces

invaded Tinian and Guam in the Mariana Islands. The Battle of Okinawa occurred from April 1 to June 22, 1945, during which time American forces invaded Japanese-held Okinawa and American naval forces engaged in simultaneous operations. It was the costliest battle of the Pacific War.]

MG: After battles, where would you go to repair the ship or resupply?

DC: We came all the way back to Boston on one boiler, and they took that fire control thing that sits up on top of the bridge at Pearl Harbor and put it down on the main deck at the bow for balance so we could go back. I said, "Oh, we're going back to Boston like this." All we had to do was hit a storm off of Cape Hatteras on the way back up, but it was all smooth sailing. We pulled into San Diego for three days, and then from there went down to the canal and went up to Boston.

RA: Was Boston the only place you could repair?

DC: No, no, Boston, Long Beach, California. As a matter of fact, they repaired us when we got hit the first time with the shore battery there. The final, when we got hit with the suicide plane, we came back home. I thought for sure they were going to scrap it, but they fixed it all up and then they put it in the graveyard down in Charleston. They had destroyers lined up; you could walk on every one of them and go across the bay. That's how many were there.

Then, Korean War opened up. I said, "Oh shit, they might call me back in." I was married then. So, they didn't call me back in. It was in the Korean War. So, then, the Vietnam War opened up. It was in the Vietnam War. Then, after that, they sold it to Argentina, and it was in the Falklands War in Argentina against the British, remember that? Do you remember that? The Falkland Islands off of Argentina, all the way down? Then, after that, they were using it for going to Europe, say hello and all that stuff, all the good stuff. That was it. Then, Argentina, they sunk it for practice, and it's down there now in the South Pacific. That's their home now, down there. The skipper of it, the Argentinian skipper, came up to one of our reunions we had in Florida, and he brought his wife with him. What a pretty thing she was. Everybody marveled, "Wow. How'd he get a pretty thing like that?" [laughter] He was good. He gave us all this news about how he had it and all like what he did. It was all right. [Editor's Note: The Falklands War between Argentina and Great Britain occurred from April 2 to June 14, 1982.]

MG: When you would go back to Boston for repairs, was that a chance to go visit home or see your family?

DC: When? The first time or second?

MG: Whenever you would go back to Boston for repairs.

DC: Oh, no, that was it. That was it. I got discharged from Boston.

MG: Okay.

DC: In fact, I got discharged in the hospital there, the Navy hospital there in Boston. On November the 22nd, '45, I got discharged. I put my bags and everything and had it shipped home. I wasn't going to carry it home, sea bag and all that stuff. I shipped it home, and I got on the train and came back home.

MG: I wanted to ask if before Green Island you had any registered hits or kills of submarines.

DC: One time there, I thought we hit one in the Lingayen Gulf. That's in the Philippines. We invaded there, and they had the big prisoner camp there, all our prisoners were up there. The mouth, going into that bay, we were told to go back and forth, to keep watching it for submarines. I was in the sack. They must have picked up one, and they dropped an ashcan right away. I said, "Holy Christ." I thought the damn fantail blew apart. I grabbed my pants, you get up quick, and you go to your general quarters. It wasn't a sub at all. I don't know. They may have picked up something. It was pretty delicate, those sound waves. The one kid, he was from New Mexico. His brother was a prisoner right there, and they allowed him to go see him. They were bombarding the place, and they allowed him to go ashore to the prison camp to see his brother. Can you imagine after four years seeing his brother? [They were] from New Mexico. That was all right. [laughter] He was still alive, but he was in bad shape. New Mexico. I know when I went to New Mexico, I always forget his name. I was going try to look him up, but I always forget his name when I got through. I used to take that Route 40 going to Las Vegas or my sister's out there in 'Frisco [San Francisco]. I could never remember their names.

Three of the names in my radar shack, they came aboard in Pearl Harbor on our last trip out. We lost all three of them. Isn't that something? They got transferred to our ship. I remember Wilcox, Snyder, and (Deziano?). The first two [were] from the Midwest. The other one was from Connecticut, (Deziano?), little guy. Isn't that something? They were all in the radar shack with me, the three of them.

Oh, Vinny (Burnabuci?), he was from Boston. He's the one that had the trumpet, and sometimes when the fantail was anchored, he would play the eulogy, not the trumpet.

MG: The saxophone?

DC: Yes, the sax. Pretty good there, that's all we had to do there, a squad like that there.

MG: Can you tell us a little bit more about life on the ship, what you would do for fun and how you would pass the time?

DC: Not much, not much, just go sit out on the deck a little bit. I don't think we were allowed to smoke down below. I'd go down, we were so close to the fantail, I'd go sit down there by the fantail, watching there, look around, watched.

One time, we went to the shore there in Tulagi, and they had beer that we picked up from Australia when we were down there, for us. They allowed us two bottles, and a dollar each. So,

we got on Tulagi, and I'm drinking beer. I see this guy over there drinking beer. "Archie." One block away from my house. He says, "What are you doing out here?" I said, "Well, I'm seventeen." He was nineteen; he was a couple years older. We went around trying to buy the beer the guys didn't want to drink. With that heat and the few beers that we had, we got loaded fast, and then we watched a boxing match. This young guy was from another ship, another cruiser, the *Columbia*, he was there anchored too. He was boxing, taking anybody on, and this one guy, he didn't like him at all. He kept coming at him and coming at him; this guy just jabbed him, jabbed him, jabbed him. Finally, he went down. He got too many jabs; he quit. That was pretty good. [Editor's Note: The USS *Columbia* was a *Cleveland*-class light cruiser. It was commissioned on July 29, 1942 and served in the Pacific during World War II. On January 6, 1945, during the Philippines campaign, a Japanese kamikaze crashed into the *Columbia*, killing thirteen. It was scrapped in 1959.]

At the island, you couldn't go inland because the natives were still there. They didn't want us to fool around. After that, we went back to the ship, and that was all right. Archie told me to come on over and see if I could get a pass to go over to his ship. So, I went over there, and I met the lightweight champ over there on that cruiser there. I forgot his name now, too. We had a nice little stay, and then I went back to ship after that, just for the day. That was the only togetherness we had. It's amazing, to meet somebody so far away out there. [laughter] A lot of people from around this area, a lot of people. Out of the five guys that lived on my street, there's only two of us left that was in World War II. Paulie Bohay, do you remember the Bohays? They had the Hi-Tams Ice Cream Parlor on Main Street.

MG: I am not from here.

DC: Where are you from?

MG: Maine.

DC: Maine?

MG: Yes.

DC: Our best friend is from Maine.

MG: Not far from Bath.

DC: You're from Bath.

MG: Not far from there.

DC: No, I'll be darned. Debbie didn't tell you about our friend up there.

MG: I am not sure.

DC: She was just here a couple weeks ago. She was working for the University of Maine for a long time. So, she finally retired. She has two homes up there. She's got two homes in Ohio. She's trying to get rid of all of them but one in Old Orchard Beach, Maine. It's like a shore home. Hell of a sweet girl. She was originally from Maryland, and that's where we wanted Debbie to go, to college there, because she graduated from college there. She met Ron, and that was it. She could've stayed with those people from Maryland and go to college there. They lived in College Park. It's right there, University of Maryland. It would have been ideal. We couldn't force her to go. Now, at least Donald went. He graduated from Seton Hall, but Debbie, we couldn't get her to go.

MG: Would you ever tune into Tokyo Rose on the radio?

DC: Yes, we had it once in a while. We used to laugh, yes. Once in a while, they'd put her on for us. Not too much, not too much, maybe put our style down or something. Tokyo Rose.

MG: Do you have a question? Go ahead.

RA: Did your commanders keep you informed as to what was happening in Europe, or did they want you to focus on the Pacific?

DC: No, we didn't get none. I did get a letter from my buddy; he was in the Army over there. You can't say anything. They read your letters before they mail them out, no matter what you put down. That's why I had a little thing going with my brother. I didn't keep up with him. I didn't want to let them know where I was at. Well, [in the] second line in the second paragraph, I put down the number, and that number would represent where I'm at. We looked at the map before I left and I said, "This is going to be this." I wasn't sure we were going to be there. I did it once, and then I didn't do it anymore. I didn't want him know where I was at. Of course, he would've told everybody, and Mom would've found out. Mom didn't know anything about fighting a war like that. She didn't even know we got hit by a shore battery or a suicide plane, I don't think. I never told her.

I didn't tell the kids anything until I was about--I was discharged when I was twenty--I think sixty before I started telling them. They said, "How come you didn't tell us this before?" I said, "I don't know. It just wouldn't come out." Then, when it did come out, they couldn't stop you, just like I'm doing to you people right now.

MG: It sounds like you encountered a lot of combat everywhere you went in the Pacific.

DC: Well, I got my medals in there if you want to see them.

MG: You could tell us about them. You earned eleven battle stars. I was curious about how you got the Purple Heart.

DC: At Okinawa, at our last battle. I belong to the DAV [Disabled American Veterans]. I belong to the VFW [Veterans of Foreign Wars]. I belong to the Purple Heart Club. I belong to

VFW Naval. As a matter of fact, they keep calling me here, DAV card next meeting. [laughter] I don't go. Most of those guys there are the young guys that were in Vietnam and Korea. Not many in the Second World War there anymore. They're all gone. In fact, I only met one guy, and he was much older than I was. I used to sit with him. I don't even see him anymore; maybe he passed away. I don't know.

MG: Can you say how you got the Purple Heart?

DC: Yes, I got flash burns on my back. When that plane hit, the flash, it stood me up. The radar exploded, stood me up, and held me up with wires. When I came to it, I didn't realize what the hell I was doing. The flash burn, my buddy was alongside of me. You always had a relief guy on radar, because you could only be there so long because it's so dark in there. In the afternoon, when you come off the twelve to four shift, in the afternoon, in that sun, you go down like this, you can't see. We should've had tinted glasses, like they have today, sunglasses, that's what I meant. They didn't have any sunglasses. It took a while. You had to stand back and hold on a little bit until you got your eyes adjusted to the sun again. It was dark in that damn little radar shack. It's little. It's about the size of my bathroom, that's about it and that's small.

MG: When was that?

DC: [What]?

MG: When was the Battle of Okinawa?

DC: That was on May the 27th. That's when we got hit, 1945.

MG: What happened after that?

DC: After that, they towed us in. Well, we abandoned ship, and they lowered the captain's gig. We lowered the captain's gig, so I was on the back and the other guy was on the back because you have to unloosen the lines. So, the guy in the back part of the boat, he got his unloosed, and the guy in the bow didn't have his loose, so we're going like this with the ship because the ship is still moving. I said, "Holy Christ, get that damn line off." So, he finally got the line off, and we dropped like this here, in a spurt around the back there, as we went down there, the spurt hit us like this here, and the water's coming in. Good thing we had a guy that worked as what they called a snipe in the boiler room. They were called snipes. He knew where the hole was because when you bring that boat up, they open up the hole and drain the water out that's in there. The hole was there but he knew where the plug was. So, he was able to plug the hole up. In the meantime, we're throwing all the rations off because the water is coming in there. We've got about five or six guys in there. So, he stopped it off. Meanwhile, back there, I'm the coxswain; I don't know how the hell I got to do the job. We're steering around, steering around. The ship is going towards us. I had to move away from [it]. Finally, over there, I heard a whistle blowing. I looked over there. There's a guy over there in the water, blowing the whistle. We went around and got him; it was Lieutenant Johnson. He was blowing the whistle. His lifejacket had a whistle. So, he came aboard. From then, he always kept saying to everybody I saved him. I

said, "I didn't save you. I heard the whistle and I just turned the boat there." [laughter] He was a nice guy. He was the head of our squadron too in the radar shack. He was the officer of those two groups. He jumped from the bridge. Of course, he couldn't come down the ladder. It was all in flames. That's high, that bridge. I don't know how he survived that sucker, wow, especially with a lifejacket on. Well, if you came down feet first all right, but any other way, he probably would have broken his back.

The LCIs [landing craft infantry] was out there, three LCIs. They were mostly gunboats. They had the small 50mm on there. They picked us up there and towed us. I don't know what the hell they did with the boat. They took us aboard and put us in a bunk and then took us back to our ship. Somebody stopped, because one guy you had to dress up in a special suit to go down below and to stop everything, because it was going on this slow right turn all the time and they couldn't control it. They finally stopped it. Then, the tug came out and towed us into some kind of bay, where all the ships that got hit. They towed us in there, so we stayed there for a while.

Then, they put me on a big transport to go down to Guam to the hospital down there. Down below there, they put me in a cot to raise me up in a cot. I said, "I can walk." "No, you're going to stay there." Then, they take me up there, about ten stories high, the big transport, finally got in and then they put me down below. I'm walking around like a champ, but I wasn't bad. All they were doing was giving me penicillin, that's it, and I was talking to the guys. I was talking to one Marine. All I could see from him was his eyes. Boy, he was bandaged all the way up, and I was talking with him a little bit. A lot of wounded guys.

Then, from there, we got down to Guam, and I stayed for two weeks there. That wasn't too bad there. That's the first time I had ever seen an open-air theater. When we came back, they started opening them up, theaters, you sat on that hill and the big screen goes way down there and they showed the movies there. It was pretty sharp. I had no clothes at all. I got a pair of shoes from--I don't know where I got them from.

I gave it to that guy on the LST when they took us back from Guam to Okinawa, loaded with high test gasoline. I said, "Oh, shit." I told the guys, "Boy, you guys get under attack, I'm going to be the first one to go over the side." High test gas, but we made it to Okinawa. We anchored, and then they put us on a boat to go ashore. In the meantime, it was Jap planes coming in. They were heading for the ships and they saw this one on the dock unloading and they turned in on it. I'm watching. It was the first time I was on a beach when there was a bombing or any kind of action, the first time I was on a beach, all that time, three years. He turned that damn plane in there and hit the bow of the LST, and they had just got done unloading it and it crashed, the suicide plane. The first guy to leave that truck was the driver. [laughter] I have to laugh. Of course, he had to take us over on the west side because that's where our ship was. So, we get down there on the west side; our ship was gone. "Now what?" Me and my buddy, a red-headed guy, I forgot his name. So, they flew us down, down to Guam. It was a C-54. That wasn't too bad. They had the nurse woman, WAC, assist the pilots. So, she comes over to us, she says, "You guys want a tuna fish sandwich?" I said, "What the hell is a tuna fish sandwich?" I never had tuna fish. "Yes, yes." So, we had it. It was good. The pilots didn't want it. We got down to Guam, and it wasn't even Guam. We found out it was in Saipan.

They put us on another small plane to fly us up to Saipan. That thing rattled. I said, "Jesus, is this thing going to make it or not?" That was an old beat up sucker. So, we get to Saipan and we got to see some of the big bombers [B-29s] there that was bombarding Japan at the time, before they dropped the bomb, big ones. You'd see some of them, there were really holes all around them when they went up there. It was closer, for those big bombers. The fighters could only go so far. They made it up there, bombarded, came back. The *Enola Gay* got there and took the big one there and that was it. Now, I'm home. [Editor's Note: The B-29 *Enola Gay* dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945. The *Enola Gay* resides at the Smithsonian Institution's National Air and Space Museum.]

MG: Where were you when the atomic bombs were dropped?

DC: Where was I?

MG: It was August that year.

DC: Oh, we got hit then. We got hit then. We were on the way back home. Yes, we were on the way back home. They had to go to Eniwetok in the Marshall Islands, and then from Eniwetok, to Pearl, and Pearl to San Diego and then San Diego to Boston, a lot of miles.

MG: You were discharged in Boston.

DC: Yes, Boston Navy Hospital.

MG: I wonder if there is sort of a command chronology for the ship you were on.

DC: The dates you want.

MG: Yes.

DC: Oh.

MG: I am curious about that.

DC: I don't remember the dates. I just know about the time, that's about it.

RA: Were you happy to be discharged from service?

DC: Oh, yes. I was thinking about going to PBY [flying boat], but I had to go to Texas to go to a school there in order to get on a [PBY]. I always enjoyed that. As a matter of fact, we had a PBY that picked up a couple of guys that were thrown off the ship when we got hit. They were picked up by PBYs. A buddy of mine from Ohio, he was in the water at the time and he says, "They're shooting, they're shooting, what in the hell are they shooting at?" "They're shooting at sharks, you dummy." He didn't know it. The PBY came in and picked him up. A couple of

them got picked up by PBY and the other ones got picked up with those smaller ships, the LCIs. That was one of the experiences he told me about. He was a nice guy. He became a teacher.

The Philippines, those small islands I told you about Emirau, Green Island, Bougainville, Wake Island, Saipan, Tinian, Guam. Guam, there was a seaplane there that was so loaded with material that the Navy wanted, it was so heavy it couldn't take off. They told us, we were the closest there, to sink it. The gunnery captains, they liked that, so they lined up 40mm on it. The first shot, they sunk it. I don't know what they had on there. Of course, they didn't want the Japanese to get a hold of it. They could have got a hold of it anyhow because they were getting beat there, right there, Guam. The only rough area they had was Okinawa, boy, a lot of soldiers killed there. That's where Basilone got killed, first [Marine] Medal of Honor winner in World War II. He lived in Raritan. Did you ever hear of him? [Editor's Note: Marine Gunnery Sergeant John Basilone was from Raritan, New Jersey. For his actions on Guadalcanal, Basilone was awarded the Medal of Honor. He was brought home for a war bond tour but requested to return to the Pacific. He was killed on February 19, 1945 in the Battle of Iwo Jima. He is buried at Arlington National Cemetery.]

MG: Yes.

DC: Basilone. I used to see him drive around in the laundry truck, Gaburo's Laundry route. I was working for a guy that sold vegetables off of a truck, fruit and everything. Raritan was one our stops, and that's where I used to see the Gaburo's Laundry truck. That's where Basilone, he worked for them, before he went in the service, into the Marines. Isn't that something? As a matter of fact, his sister worked at Bakelite there at Union Carbide, where I worked, and I talked to her a couple times. She passed away, too.

RA: How difficult was it to shoot at a plane with the guns on the ship?

DC: How is it?

RA: How difficult was it?

DC: Well, I'll tell you. You see that thing up on top, that bridge. When I pick up a plane coming in, I'd give them the range and bearing, and give it to them and they lined each gun up, simultaneously, the whole five five-inch mounts. If it's coming on the starboard side, they line them up, through that unit there, and they'd all shoot at the same target, so it wasn't bad. They could even do that with that 40mm, but usually the 40mm, the guys did it themselves. One guy was on one side, what they call a pointer, and the other guy was on the other side, did the elevation. There they didn't have anybody saying, "Move it up, move it left, move it right," and the guy was just feeding with the shells, and that's it. Those two guys had to do everything on their own there. It was all right. [laughter]

[TAPE PAUSED]

MG: Well, I think I want to read a little bit more about your ship and come back with more questions. I will conclude for today and look forward to when I can come back again. Thank you so much.

----------END OF TRANSCRIPT----------

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