RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH ALBERT J. KNIPLING

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

WORLD WAR II * KOREAN WAR * VIETNAM WAR * COLD WAR

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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and
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NEW ROCHELLE, NEW YORK
MAY 2, 2007

TRANSCRIPT BY

DOMINGO DUARTE

Geoffrey Yen: This begins an interview with …

Albert Knipling: … Albert Knipling …

GY: … Geoffrey Yen …

Shaun Illingworth: … Shaun Illingworth. Today is May 2, 2007; we are in New Rochelle, New York. Thank you very much for having us here today.

AK: It's a pleasure.

SI: I should also say, for the record, thank you to your son for putting your name in.

AK: Timmy, thank you for putting my name in. Today is my fifty-ninth wedding anniversary.

SI: Congratulations. Okay, so to begin, can you tell us when and where you were born?

AK: I was born August 7, 1923, in New York on Tenth Avenue.

SI: Can you tell me your father's name?

AK: It's Albert Knipling, Sr. He was born in Hoboken, New Jersey, I believe. … We moved from New York City to Mount Vernon, where I spent my early childhood. … Later my family was broken up and I lived in New Rochelle with my aunt. … She raised me. … I left New Rochelle for the service, but I was seventeen years old. My dad had to sign me in. … We went up to, I think, Waterbury, Connecticut, to the recruiting station up there and I was signed into the service, in the Navy. I went to Newport, Rhode Island, and trained there. I believe it was ninety days, it was three months. I come home on a twenty-day leave … went back, and was transferred up to the naval base in Boston Navy Yard. … [I] boarded the ship up there, the [USS] *Massachusetts* [(BB-59)]. … I was on board that ship for, in the service, … three years, fourteen days; in the Navy, … three years, five months, fourteen days.

SI: During World War II?

AK: Yeah. … I left the ship in Seattle, Washington and came home on some outdated train that chugged along the flats of North Dakota, … all through the West out there. … When we got into Chicago, the train was condemned. They wouldn't let it go any farther. … We got off the train and most of us were [dirty], we all changed our [skin] color. We were all [dirty] from [the] smoke. We were all, you know, we couldn't take baths on the train or anything. … Our mess hall was on the train. … When we got into Chicago, I think, the first thing we all did was run to a bathhouse to get changed. Then we left there and came into New York, then back home. .. I went back to high school. I left high school originally and I went back to get my diploma. … That's where I met my wife.

SI: When you had come back?

AK: When I came back, … went to school and we've been married, as of today fifty-nine years. … In the meantime, I joined the Naval Reserves and I was attached to the unit 3-69, which is the Third Naval District. … I went on a number of training cruises on the Eastern Seaboard. … Then I did get a notice, at a meeting one night, when the Korean War started, and I was activated, … I had to leave home. … I had a three-year-old son, at the time, so I had to leave home and report to the Third Naval District in New York City. … Originally, I was supposed to be in the shore naval gunnery but the orders were changed. … I was sent to Norfolk, Virginia and placed aboard the aircraft carrier USS *Leyte.* …, I was only supposed to be in a year and a half, in the service. … I spent, I guess, about twelve months, maybe a little longer, on board this *Leyte* … I got transferred to the Naval FASARON 3, which is Fleet Air Squadron 3, in Norfolk Naval Base. … From there, I was assigned to the USS *Palau*, a small carrier, *USS* [*Palau* CVE-]122. … I spent the remaining time on board ship before I got discharged. … Then I came home. … I had to get a job, so I got a job with Schenley Distillers, in their offices here in New Rochelle. They had their legal works and files up there and everything. … Once a week I had to go into New York City, to the Empire State Building. … [I had to] bring whatever was requested by our law department or personnel department or anything. … [I had to] bring down information, which we had up here in New Rochelle. After that, I got … [another] job. That job was too boring, so I got a new job with Empire Coil, which made units for televisions. … I worked there for a while and I got bored in there. … Then I went out and got a job, … took an examination, and got a job in the Post Office. … I was in there for thirty-nine years and retired there. [I've] been out now seventeen, eighteen years, retired. Now I just lie around the house and take it easy. That's all I can say.

SI: Can we go back and ask you some questions? Do you know anything about either your mother or father's families?

DK: Well, yes, I can. My grandfather, on my mother's side, came from County Tyrone in Ireland. … He came home here. … He came in through the Boston port, up in Boston, and he migrated into New York City. My grandmother, on my father's side, came in from Vienna, Austria. … They got married and they lived in, they also lived in Hoboken, New Jersey. … Then they moved later on to New York City. … Then they migrated into Mt. Vernon, that's where my early childhood was spent, too.

SI: Do you know how your parents met?

AK: Off hand, I really don't know. I think they met in Mt. Vernon, I don't know. If I had my son, Timmy, here, he has all this information on his computer.

SI: Okay, that's something we can add later.

AK: We lived in Mt. Vernon, too. My mother passed away when I was six years old. … That's when my Aunt Mame raised me until I went in the service.

SI: What do you remember about growing up in Mt. Vernon and New Rochelle, when you were a young kid and a teenager?

AK: Well, Mt. Vernon, the schoolhouse was just up the street from my house. … I get out the front door and go up the street and that's the school. [In] New Rochelle, I lived in [the section] which is known as Skidmore Park, it's in West end of New Rochelle, going towards Pelham Manor. … I lived up there most of my life, you know, for six years, until I was seventeen. It was a normal childhood, I guess. The kids and I, we had a football team and a baseball team. We made up games. We played teams from Pelham Manor and teams from New Rochelle at the Town and Country Club, on their fairways. … [We] played hockey, out on the ponds up there. That's it, it was a good life, I don't know.

SI: Did you have any brothers and sisters?

AK: I had two sisters. Like I said before, when our family got broken up, I went with my aunt and they went up to Port Chester, I think. They were living, I didn't even know where they went to live to tell you the truth. They were placed with my father, I guess, and they went up to Port Chester, New York and lived up there. … As years went by, and I got married and I found out that they lived up in Holmes, New York. So my wife and I we used to go up there and, you know, get reunited. … We went up one year, we left New Rochelle and there was a blizzard out. … We were on a train from the railroad station in White Plains, going towards Pawling, New York. The train got stuck on the track and we had to wait on the train about an hour, or so, until they brought in a snowplow train to clear the track. … When we get up to Pawling, which was about 11:30 at night, and there were no transportation for anywhere around that neighborhood. It was socked in with snow. So, we waited and waited and, finally, [the] guy says, "I got to close and go home." So, we said, "All right." So, we had Christmas gifts and we went trucking down the highway. It was about an hour, mile and a half, an hour, and three-quarters, [we] walked the whole distance from there in the storm. We finally got to their house in Holmes, New York. We had to walk through waist-high snow, [to] get into the house and, finally, we spent Christmas there with my brother-in-law, and my sisters and their children. Then we came home. How we got home, I don't know if my father-in-law came up and got us, or what? I don't remember how we got home. …

SI: So, you didn't have much contact with your sisters until then, after you were married?

AK: Yeah, yeah. Most of the contact came then, that's when you get taken over with one another. Getting backwards, my father did pass away. He remarried, because my mother died, like I said before. He remarried. …. What I didn't put in there was, I did go into CCC [Civilian Conservation Corps], yeah, I did go into the CCC before I went into the service.

SI: When was that?

AK: Well, that was when [I] left high school and that was prior to entering in the service. I was in the CCC camp for about a year, and I came back out. … I lived with my stepmother and my father in Tuckahoe, 29 Olinvilla Avenue in Tuckahoe. … I got a job with a company down in Mt. Vernon at the time, and I was there almost a year, I guess, working for this company and that's when I decided to join, you know, go into service from Mt. Vernon. But, when I was living up in Tuckahoe, with my stepmother, I just had to get out of that house because she was a mean person. I would come home and she wanted me to give her my money. … She would give

me an allowance. I said, "No way in hell I'm gonna give you all my money and get a dollar a week or something." So, I packed up and that's when I went to live with my aunt in Skidmore Park.

SI: You were pretty young when you worked at the CCC camp.

AK: Yes, I was really young.

SI: You were fourteen, fifteen.

AK: About fifteen years old, fourteen, fifteen years old, yeah. That camp was … up on the Teutonic Parkway, in what they called Tompkins Corners. … Our job, up in that area, was to … they had a blight up there, … we had to go in and go through the forest up there. … There was a bug up there, which was infesting all the trees. … It was like a yellow cluster, when they laid their eggs. It was like a yellow cluster, its shell. I was in the tree section. … In other words, I had to climb up trees, … you know, on ropes and everything, chip bark off the trees, [to]see if there's any growth up there. … If we found them, then we had to go in and clean the whole area with a solvent. We sprayed the trees and everything. We trimmed them all back down, dead limbs, and then we take them out of the trees. … Then I couldn't stand that fishy solvent, which we sprayed on the trees, [it] got me sick, so I got a job down there in the repair shop.

SI: Still in the CCC camp?

AK: In CCC camp, yes, the repair shop. I didn't like that too much either, so, I got a job as an orderly with the commander in the unit, … I was his orderly. One year, his wife come up for, I think, it was Thanksgiving or one holiday. … I set his table up in the quarters that they have, you know, for the staff in the camp. … His wife come up and had dinner up there and he thanked me for doing an excellent job. I said, "Why?" He said, "Because you put the candy tray right in front of my wife and she thought that was terrific." … Then I left there and got back down to New Rochelle. I'm going back and back, that's when I went back up to Skidmore Park to live with my aunt. I went in the service.

SI: Was it your idea to go to the CCC camp?

AK: No. … I have no idea how I got there to tell you the truth. My father may have had you know his input into it, I don't know. I don't know how I wound up in CCC camp.

SI: Where did you live, can you kind of describe the living conditions in the camp?

AK: The barracks on CCC camp? Like I say, off the Teutonic Parkway, I think, it's Tappan's Cove, there at Tomkins Corner, and they were regular army barracks, I mean, long army barracks. The mess hall was in another unit where you had to walk over there. .. The headquarters was at the entrance of the camp and we're up on the incline, up on a hill. Yeah, up on a hill, that's where the camp was. The personnel that were in the camp came from all over Westchester County. Some of the fellows that were up there, one had wound up as a cop in New Rochelle. He didn't know that I knew him, but I never told him I knew him, you know.

SI: What was it like to meet all these men? Were they all about your age?

AK: Yeah, I wouldn't know, I was probably one of the youngest one in the camp. I mean, they were much older than I was, in some ways, way older. I mean, they were nearly men; I was only a juvenile delinquent, if you want to call it. We had our regular duties. We got up in the morning and you had breakfast in camp. … Then they load us on the trucks and took us along the highway up there. … They designated that they're gonna clean this section out or that section out. … Maybe they would bring our lunch out to the field, we had sandwiches that they would bring out and stuff to feed us for lunchtime. … In the evening you come back you wash up and go to the mess hall. … It was run like a regular army camp, I mean.

SI: It was very military.

AK: Yeah, actually, they had supervisors up there. We're all, I mean, men that were in that field.

SI: They were army officers or former army officers?

AK: I don't know if they're army officers, but they, it was strictly run by military rules and regulations.

SI: Was there a lot of discipline?

AK: Yeah, you had to be in your bunks at night. I mean, you couldn't walk through the camp, or around, you got to go to bed. There was a camp, which was down the road, which we got invited to. They had a dance down there. We went down there for a dance that they had in the camp.

SI: Was that a women's camp down the road?

AK: It was a regular summer camp for kids, you know, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, whatever they were, I don't know, the camp that they had. They had a party down there, they'd invite us down. We went down there for the night, then, at twelve o'clock, we went back to camp.

SI: What was it like to meet all these guys from all over the area, guys who were different ages?

AK: Well, some I wouldn't want to associate with. I mean, some of these guys they came from the Lower Eastside, down in New York. I don't know where they all came from but you would pick out your friends in the camp. I mean, who you want to associate with. You know, some persons you don't want to be with.

SI: Tough guys?

AK: Yeah, they were rowdies, I guess. It wasn't bad to be in there, I mean, the experience I got.

SI: Do you have to sign up for a certain amount of time, or could you leave whenever you wanted?

AK: That's one thing I can't understand is, who signed me up, to begin with, and who got me out of the camp? All I know, I went into the office one day and they told me "You're going home." Someone signed me up for a year, or whatever time it was. Next thing, I know, I came home and went to live in Tuckahoe, on Olinvilla Avenue.

SI: Do you remember the name of the officer that you were the orderly for?

AK: I won't even suggest a name. McMahon comes to me, but I don't know if his name was MacMann or not. But, he was originally in the Army.

SI: You thought he was a good camp director?

AK: He was excellent, yeah, him and I we got along fine. Namely his wife, we got along fine. But, like I say, I was his orderly. … The fellow that was before me, he got discharged, and that's when I moved into that spot, fairly good job at the time.

SI: What did you think of Franklin Roosevelt?

AK: Roosevelt, I thought he was an excellent president. … I think that he did a good job during the war and it's a crime that he didn't live long enough to see the results. But, I think he did a terrific job.

SI: Okay, so you thought the CCC camps and the New Deal programs were good?

AK: Yeah, he originated those CCC camps, to give personnel, people jobs. I mean, so the kids won't be running around rampant and I thought he did a good job with that. … I think they should have them around today, get some of these rowdies off the streets now. Like in Mt. Vernon, all them kids are being killed down there; seventeen, eighteen year old kids being shot. They should take a bunch of them put them up in the camp, you know, under supervision. Maybe, you'll eliminate some of that what's going on, territorial rights or whatever they're fighting about. The drug habits, that's one thing I never saw up in camp was any drugs going up there. At that time, I wouldn't know drugs … To my knowledge, there were no drugs in the camp. [laughter]

SI: So, you lived at home for a year and then you, or you lived with your aunt for a year, then you went into the service. Why did you choose the Navy?

AK: Frankly, I really don't know. It just struck me to go in the Navy. I couldn't see the Army. I couldn't see it. The reason I wanted the Navy, I think, was because there was a heightened crises at the time. … I think, I chose the Navy. I thought it would be a nice clean job, you know, the meals were there everyday. The Army, I couldn't see, I don't know why. I thought that the Navy was a better service.

SI: Did you know anybody who into the Navy?

AK: Yes. The fellows I used to hang around with, they all decided," Let's go in the Navy." Billy (Believe ?) and I don't know who, Tom Palmarosa. Those names I remember. I don't know who else. We all went down to the Third Naval District. They all took the examination, physical examination and we all passed. But, the recruiter down there told me to go home and chin myself, get some height, stretch my body. Next thing I know, I was the first one called up in the service, and that's when I left for boot camp, Newport, Rhode Island.

SI: So, when he said, "Chin yourself," did they mean like hang, off the bar?

AK: Yeah, chin yourself, drop your body down then go up, you know, stretch yourself. … I did, gained an inch. [laughter] Yeah, I got an inch and went up to Newport, Rhode Island, … training station up there. … When I was in the training station up there, I was put in charge of my barracks. … There was an instructor up there, he was [a] petty officer second class, at the time, and I got called out, because the guys didn't make their beds right. So, I had to get all, the whole section I was in charge of at that time, back in them barracks and straighten out that barracks and clean it up. … We did that and we passed. Then when we graduated, I had my first paycheck. The petty officers in the Navy, they have a sword and he was eligible. He was getting one so, we all chipped in and bought him his naval sword. … That was the last time we ever saw him. I don't know where he went, like I say. I went north and got on the *Massachusetts*, the Boston Navy Yard.

SI: Was it difficult for you to go from civilian life to military life?

AK: Well, actually in a way it was, I mean, you had different rules you had to follow when you're in the service. I mean, if you're told to do something, you don't question it, you do it and then you may ask afterwards. I thought it was good. It took some of the devilish side out of me, I mean, being told you got to do this and you got to do that, you know. But, like I say, I was running with a good bunch of fellows in the Navy. … When I went on the *Massachusetts*, it was a brand new ship. … We're going down along the eastern seaboard, Atlantic Ocean up here, training out of Casco Bay in Maine. We would operate the ship out of Casco Bay, where … they had a tugboat out there. [It] would open up the torpedo nets and swing it out, and we would come out, this destroyer escort was out there waiting for us. … Then we would travel up and down the East Atlantic Ocean looking, you know, general quarters, drilling and drilling and drilling, and all that stuff, until finally, I guess, we got to a point that we were all qualified. Everything was timed, whether you get there on time. You got to get there on that certain time and if you didn't, we did it all over again. … Finally, we got it all ironed out [to] where we get to our general quarters, you know, in that required time. …

SI: Can you describe for us what your job was?

AK: I was just gonna come to that. My first job on board ship, I was up in here, this is the top part of the ship. [Mr. Knipling is referring to a picture of the USS *Massachusetts*.]

SI: The superstructure.

AK: Yeah, superstructure, right, you know Navy talk.

SI: A little bit.

AK: A little bit. Yeah, I was up in this crow's nest, would be up in here. … I go up there at night and my job, and the rest of the personnel up there, where they gave us binoculars, … we had to scan the horizon at night looking for German submarines, periscopes. … We never did find any, because the vision up there at night, when the moonlight came in, it was like the water is all glassy. … You couldn't see nothing, you couldn't pick out any periscope but that's where I was stationed up in there, the first time. … Then I came down. I was in the Fifth Division, which is the 5"/38 [five inch, thirty-eight caliber], surface-to-air mounts, gun mounts. … I come down in there. … I was placed in Mount 9, the upper handling room, … that was my first battle station. … The next thing you know, we were on the coast and woke up one morning, and we were on our way to Africa with the invasion of Africa, Casablanca. [Mr. Knipling is referring to Operation Torch, November, 1942] … We went over to Africa, Casablanca, which was under Vichy France. … We engaged the French Navy. That's where we sunk the *Jean Bart*, [November, 8, 1942], right in the harbor, sunk her right in the harbor. … We sunk three destroyers. We got hit twice. Once, right to the left of the gun mount. The eight-inch shell come through and exploded. … There were partitions, two-and-a-half-inch steel plate, where the shell hit and where I was. … The shell went in there and exploded. … They got hit on the port side, forward of Turret 2. … It went down into the living quarters and blew up in there. The third shell went right through the American flag. Then when that was all over, we got an order, stand by to take torpedoes. … Three torpedoes were coming towards the ship and nobody made up left rudder or right rudder; we steered right in between the three torpedoes. They went on both sides of the ship and missed us. In fact, they may still be going. … Then we came home, got repairs, I got a twenty-day leave and the rest of the ship got twenty days. I mean, it was broken up in[to] port and starboard watch[es]. … Then, when we come back, after the repairs were done up in Boston, in the navy yard up there, we headed south through the Panama Canal.

SI: Can we ask you a couple of questions about Africa? Okay, you described how one of the shells hit in the compartment next to you. What was that like for you? What do you remember about that moment?

AK: Well, actually at that moment, I didn't even know that we got hit. I mean, you're in a compartment there, and we send ammunition up to the gun mount above us. … You're occupied and you don't think about it, with, you know, outside. You're thinking in that gun room, handling room, but, I didn't know that, after we, until we come out and looked at the side where the gouge; where the metal just shoots right off the bulkhead, shoot it all out. Then went down into this spud locker, down below, blew out the potato peeler, went into that area.

SI: Down in the galley.

AK: Yeah, down in the galley.

SI: So, you didn't hear an explosion, or you weren't thrown around at all?

AK: No, we weren't fooling around; we were very serious. …

SI: Thrown around, you weren't knocked off your feet by the explosion?

AK: No, no. It just happened so fast, that thing went through something like that.

SI: When you're in battle like that, is it pretty hectic, or are you constantly moving the ammunition up to the second floor?

AK: Well, actually you don't. Thinking nothing but getting that ammunition to where it's supposed to go. I mean, that's your job and you don't worry what they're doing on the, [what] enemy is doing. You're worrying about what you got to do to get to survive. I guess, I was all over. We left there and come home, took liberty.

SI: Were you shocked at how close the shells had come to you?

AK: Oh, yeah. I mean, you start thinking if it went over another six inches, it would have been right into that upper handling room where all those shells were in, powder and everything, and blew that part of the ship up. I had a piece of that metal, from that shell, but I don't know what happened to it. My son may have with it. I come home and I put things down; the next thing I know my son, Timmy, got it. He said," If I have to get [it for] us." Like I say, well, I can't find it now. Here, when I want to copy my discharge, I got to go through him; he's got the original. [Mr. Knipling is showing a copy of hid discharge papers, DD-214]. This is what I get, I get a copy of the discharge. These copies, I keep here because when I send away for stuff, you got to send your [DD]-214 and a copy of that, you know, to get any information. … Then this was the [DD]-214, which you know, list the time you enlisted in, your rank and all that stuff and medals that you got.

SH: How long were you stationed off the coast, in Africa?

AK: We were in there maybe two days, and then came right out. They drove us right out, right after we sunk the Jean Bart and the three destroyers. … We got out of there right away because they had other assignments for us. … That was to get back for repairs and get going to the Pacific. The first port of entry, when we went in the Pacific was down; we cruised all the way down through, we went to Hawaii, and that was our first port of call in the Pacific. … I got into trouble in Seattle, Washington, at Bremerton, Washington, which was the navy yard out there. Me, Roberts and Schindler went over into Bremerton, Washington and we had a little party, which we got out of control. We wanted to go for a car ride. So, Georgie Schindler, and Roberts and I, we saw a car. Georgie got in it and they started up and, the next thing, we're going down the highway. We went through a neighborhood and we wound up on someone's front lawn . … At the lawn, the car stalled, so we got out of the car. … We started walking down the street, that's when we said, "That's a nice looking car over there, too let's take that for a ride." … The next thing I knew, the neighborhood was cluttered with police, and we all got arrested. The car that we had belonged to Swift Packing Company, and it was a sales representative's car. So, we all got put in jail. I got put in one cell, I was in a cell with guys from State, Walla Walla State

Prison. He had taken liberty with a four-year-old girl, yeah, I guess a girl. The bathroom is over on the corner, it was all exposed. I mean, the beds were two inch strapping; metal strapping, that was your bed, no mattress, no nothing. They come in and feed you at five o'clock morning and the slops, I mean, it would … and I couldn't eat it. … The other prisoners there would say,"You can't eat it?" "No, I don't want it." Boom, it was gone, they would eat it. I never had eaten there. … Finally, the detectives take us out, they interrogate us. … I was the first one to go because I was the youngest one of the three, two. … They come in and say, "You want to sign a statement saying that you did this and you did that?" I say, "I can't sign any statement until the other two are, you know, want to do it." In the meantime, Roberts is trying to make a date with a prostitute, who's in jail, he's trying to make a date with the girl. [laughter] Finally, we got together. The ship officer came over and got us. We had to take the ferry, from Seattle, Washington, back to Bremerton. … On the way back, we were going to get breakfast. … We all sat down to breakfast and I went to reach in my wallet. … I got my wallet back from the officer in jail, and went to pay for my breakfast. … [There was] no money in my wallet, the cops took it. They stripped the thing. So the officer paid for my breakfast, and I thanked him, and got back to the ship. … We were put on restrictions and we went up before the captain, Captain Whining, I think was the name, he gave us hell. "What's wrong with you? You're all nice handsome boys, you find some girls, women they all go out with, you had to go out and take a car, blah, blah, blah." So, we got thirty-days restriction. The restriction, you couldn't get any liberty. Liberty only starts on the time, [when] we were in port. I was on that ship almost ninety days before I got ashore, because, we got to Hawaii and I didn't get ashore, I was restricted.

----------END OF TAPE, SIDE ONE----------

SI: Please continue.

AK: So, I couldn't get ashore in Hawaii. … We went all through the islands, I mean, we mainly operated out of New Caledonia, which was our main port in the Pacific. … We went from the Pacific, up the coast of every island I think (?), Marshall Islands, Gilbert, Islands, you know, where we engaged the enemy. I remember, one day I had to go over to the beach to get the mail, from one of the islands up there. … While we're waiting to get the mail, there was a bunker, a Japanese bunker there, so, I crawled in there. The next thing I know, creeping up the wall, there was a spider about yeah big. Big, big sucker and I got out of there fast. … Then I walked over to the water and you could see all these beautiful tropical fish down in the water, I mean, they looked beautiful. But then you saw something going like that, [Mr. Knipling is gesturing with his hand]. That was a sea snake and you stayed away from them. But I wasn't going to go in the water. … Then, we, finally, got our meal over there. … The cook forgot to take the dirt off the potatoes, because they boiled the potatoes with the dirt on them, so that's how you got them. … On the way back to the ship, our whaleboat broke down in the harbor. So we had to pull over to a ship and tell them that we were broke down. … Finally, we got the thing [started] and we got back to the ship.

SI: While you were in the Pacific, did you remain in the handling room on the *Massachusetts*?

AK: No, no. I got out of that handling room when I got out to the Pacific. … I got into the gun mounts, in the gun mount itself, and I was a hot case man. I had gloves that went up to here. [Mr. Knipling is showing the length of the glove, in relation to his arm.]

SI: All the way, up your arms.

AK: All the way, up my arms. … My job was, if the gun was elevated, say forty-five [degrees] or higher, the shells wouldn't be ejected out the back of the gun, you know, they wouldn't go out the chute. My job was to go in there, and get that shell, and take it and throw it out. One night in an engagement, it was a night engagement, a live casing went out onto the deck, and I was sent out to get that thing. … There were shell casings all over the place, and I don't know where to look. So there was a spigot there, and I turned the salt water on, you know, to flood the area out, in case the powder got out, and I couldn't find it. So, I went back in the gun mount and tell the gun captain, mount captain, that I couldn't find it. So, he sends someone else out and how he found it, I don't know. But then they threw it overboard.

SI: Do you remember where that was? Was it during one of the island operations?

AK: Well, it was during an island operation, yes, but whereabouts I don't know, where the area was. It could have been down around the Marshall Islands or Gilbert Islands; I really don't remember that part.

SI: Were the Japanese throwing large numbers of aircraft at you at that point or was it just …

AK: No, that was a night engagement. We were doing it by radar. … Whether we hit anything up in that sky, or not, we don't know. They may have been maybe fifteen, twenty miles away from us, because we were just shooting. At that time, we were using, the shell had a radioactive nose cone on it. That's the type of shell we were using at night. … We were using flash-less powder, in other words, it gave no flash. So, whether we hit anything, I don't know. But it had to be over on the horizon. Like I say, I don't know if we hit anything or not.

SI: How many men were assigned to each mount?

AK: Well, you had your pointer, you had your trainer, you had your fuse setter, you had your sight setter, you had a shell man, powder man, the hot case man. You had what they called gun captain on each gun mount. Gun captain, he was in charge of that crew. … Then you had your mount captain, which was he sat up above, upper level. … Then in the upper handling room, well, you may have maybe six guys in there. One at the hoist, and the one that passes that, and one taking out shells, out of the storage bins on the side. The captain will (?). … Then you had your lower handling room; they will send it up to the upper handling room. Down there, I don't know how many was down there. Down there, you probably had personnel from storekeepers on board ship, cooks, who knows what's down on that unit, down in there. I don't know, I never got down there. But I did have time up on the radar director, I did go up, sign up there one time. That was it; then I was brought back down.

SI: You were only temporarily assigned there?

AK: I was just filling in for someone else; I was up as a trainer up there.

SI: What did you do as a trainer?

AK: You directed the radar screen, you know. It would come up. … You just follow the dial and find out where they want to send you, with the director. … Just wheel her out or you could put it in automatic. … Then they would control it from the main radar, the main unit up here, around the ship, and put it in automatic. … Then they would have control, but all orders would come down from, you know.

SI: The bridge?

AK: No, not the bridge, down from the unit in the ship, CIC, Central Intelligence Center [Combat Information Center].

SI: Oh, the Combat Command Center.

AK: Yeah, Combat Command Center, yeah. … They would send orders up. Then whatever they relay from here, down to there, and then back up to you. That's how they do it.

SI: So, was there a job that you liked better than the others?

AK: Well, yeah. After that, I was a seaman at the time then, I had to go from apprentice seaman, seaman second class,[seaman] first class, then you go into petty officer. So, I went in to be a gunner's mate, gun striker. … That's why I got made third class petty officer and then I was a gun captain. I got promoted from the hot case man to the gun captain. I'm in charge of that gun crew, in Mount 7, and that was my battle station, Mount 7.

SI: Around what time was that?

AK: I couldn't tell you.

SI: It was still during the combat phase?

AK: Oh, yeah. We were still in the Pacific. I was out there for three years, the whole length of the time that the ship went out there. … The other times, I was in camp for ninety days, and Africa, and then back out there; three years out there I spent. I made third class and I went from there. When the Japanese surrendered, I was sent to, I was put in a special unit. If I could find the letter here. [Mr. Knipling is shifting through papers]. I was in Group Charlie, Third Naval Battalion. … My job was going with this unit for ordnance, naval ordnance and explosives, and stuff like that. … I got transferred at sea, that was it, the end of the war.

SI: Then you would have been in charge of handling ammunition?

AK: Well, our job was to go in there and we were at Yokosuka Naval Base. … Our job was to go in there and clean that base out. Any ordnance they had in there, dismantle their field guns and stuff like that.

SI: All right, kind of like a bomb disposal unit?

AK: Yeah, a bomb disposal unit. … While we were in there, they had a dry dock. … In the dry dock, there was eight mini, one-man submarines, in the dry dock, down in the basement down there, in the dock itself, which were being readied to be sent out. I guess, to come out and get the American forces.

SI: Those were the suicide submarines?

AK: Suicide, yeah. We were allowed to go anywhere, beyond the base, that was our area. … They had rats, I mean, rats. They were bad and big suckers. I mean, they were big rats in the navy yard. … We had no supplies, we had no food, no nothing. They just brought us there and dumped us. All we had [were] our rifles and belts with ammunition. … To sleep, we had [to go] where they had instructions, in the rooms. There were no beds there. You had to put two benches together to make a bed, across, to sleep at night. … We had no food. So I found a chicken, that was running around at night. I kept him and we were going to cook him, the next day. .. Someone robbed him overnight, another group of guys from the other ships. So that night, I went down with a friend of mine, I don't know who the fellow was. I was trying to think of his name. The two of us, we went down where the Marines were bringing in K-rations from the supply ship offshore. So, they were ten-in-one rations, so, I got one, took it back to the ship, to where we were sleeping. … The group back there, they went down. … They all got chased, they didn't get nothing. So, the next day we had, me and a fellow I was with, I can't remember his name, and the officer in charge, we had breakfast out of that K-ration. … Then next thing I know, they got orders to get us out of there. So, of course, the *Massachusetts* was on its way back to the United States, and we got out of there on a ship. … Then we got back out to sea, and they transferred us back from the ship to the *Massachusetts,* on the breech buoys. You want to cross down there on the rope, cross over the ocean, right over. Then we got back on the ship, and then we came back into Seattle, Washington.

SI: I know Jeff has some questions about the battles in the Pacific.

GY: Just going back, what was it like fighting in the Gilberts? Did you know that you were at the Gilberts or was it you're just there?

AK: Well, the ship, I don't know if I could find them in here, [Mr. Knipling is looking through some documents.] The ship would give you generally the area, which we're in; they would give you like a map of the islands. … We got a pretty good idea of the area we were in. This is when I first went in the service. They got White Plains, New York, but I didn't, they keep changing around, this is about at the African area, and this would be some of the islands we're on. [Mr. Knipling is referring to some more documents.]

SI: This is some of the battles you participated in?

AK: Yeah.

SI: So, they brief you on what kind of air opposition they expected.

AK: Well, they wouldn't brief you on that. You just get into your gun mount and the directions would come down from the director. … You took it from there. You start firing, "Commence firing." Then they would give you the order, "Cease fire," but like I say, you don't know who you were shooting at, or nothing. [laughter]

SI: Could you see the planes coming in or was it too far away?

AK: Well, no, there's one up there. I don't know, one area we could see planes coming in, going after the carriers. You see them diving at them, or went up, where they were missing, shells hitting the water. But the carriers were in the middle and then carriers, battleships, cruisers and stringed as far (?). Our main orders, were to give support to the carriers and we would be firing five-inch 38 and the forty millimeters.

SI: Did you ever know if you have ever been credited with any aircraft, your gun mount?

AK: Not that I know of. It didn't work that way. We wouldn't know; they were miles away. We wouldn't have no way of knowing what you hit it, or didn't hit it. I guess, I don't know.

SI: Do you remember any instances where planes did get through and attacked the ship?

AK: Not the ship I was on, no. We would get orders, or something over the airway, that the *Saratoga* got hit or the *Wasp* got hit, or one of them aircraft, got hit. Then that's the only way we got it, because, I mean, our unit was stretched out for miles around. ... You know, it would have to come from the admiral's ship, who was there; like, when we went into Africa, we were the flagship, the admiral was on our ship. … Generally, in operations out in the Pacific, the admiral was always on an aircraft carrier, generally, most likely. Some were on cruisers, you know what I mean, whatever flagship they decide to go on. You wouldn't know until you got orders from that main source of what they're doing.

SI: How did your responsibilities change when you were the captain of the mount?

AK: You would be given orders and it's up to you to carry them out. I mean, tell them, assign the men what to do. Other than that, I mean, you're on your own on the gun mount. I mean, until the orders came down from the radar director, because we routed it up to them and then down to you.

SI: How did you feel being in charge of the men on your gun mount?

AK: Yeah, it had some responsibility, but when you made petty officer third class, it puts you a little above them. You give your friends an order and they may resent it, you know, because you're directing them. At times, they would resent it, you know. "Who is he to (?)," that

attitude, you know. But I got along with them all. … This fellow, … there was a group of us, when we were in Bremerton, Washington, we would … Art Campbell, he lives in New Jersey. … I was in starboard watch, he was in port watch. … We had this hotel, we would go over on liberty and we always had a room for overnight, because he would pay for one night and I would pay for another. When he went over on port liberty, that room would be ready. If I went over on starboard, my room would be ready. We had always … we had that agreement to have something for us to stay. … One night, I was in Seattle, Washington, I got back to my room. I couldn't get in the room, they were all over the floor, the crew was in that bedroom, the room I had, they were all over the place. I got in bed, I had a little place like this. [Mr. Knipling gestures to indicate the size of the room.] There're bodies all over that bed. But that's the way it was. The crew I was with, was very sociable, very friendly. I mean, we looked out for one another; it was, I think, really nice.

SI: So, that gun mount crew was very close-knit.

AK: Oh, yeah, very nice. We all trained together. Before I made third class petty officer, there's what they call a five-inch loading machine, which was a section on the ship where you go up there and the gun crews would train. … We had a brass shell, and a normal shell would weigh about fifty-four, fifty-eight pounds, I guess. Brass shells, I mean, weighed about sixty [pounds]. … They would use that. … Then they had a dummy case made out of wood, and they use that for the gun crew and the powder men. … They go up there and trained. … My first job was to take care of that unit, and that's when I made third class petty officer. There was some resentment when I made third class. Wheirheim, I think was the name; he lived in New Jersey; he was the gun striker, you know. … He was in that unit and they were training for God knows how long. So, when the time come up for third class examination, I went in and took it. … He went in and took it. … I come out with the third class rank, and he resented that even to, until the day he died, I think. We were up in Boston, my wife and I, we went to a ship's reunion, which we had in Fall River. … He was at the dinner, and I got the cold shoulder. I had a cold shoulder that I thought I was in the North Pole. Boy, he wouldn't even speak to me and he resented that I got the rank over him.

SI: When you made third class did they move you out, were you put in different living quarters?

AK: No, you're still in the same area. No, the Fifth Division I was in, is assigned in the ship, a certain part in the ship, which was closest to your battle station. I mean, the quickest area from that area to your battle station. No, we all bunked in the same area.

SI: So, you would have to give them orders during the day and then, when you're off duty you would be with them

AK: Yeah, sociable, yeah. You go to eat with them in the mess hall. But when you made third class petty officer, someway or another, they designated an area on board ship for petty officers. … You went down a certain hatch and that was your area to eat, you were segregated from the rest of your shipmates. You were given that privilege. The other privilege is, as you went up in rank, say up to first class, they had night buffet, or the first class would go in there at night and have coffee, cake, or whatever.

SI: Like a wardroom-type thing.

AK: Yeah, in the mess hall, but only first class petty officers would go in there and that was some of the privileges you got as you went up in rank.

SI: Do you think anybody resented those privileges?

AK: Well, I really don't know. My unit was here and over here was warrant officers. … The fellow in there was a Negro, and he wasn't allowed to associate with the white personnel on the ship. I mean, at that time, [there] was segregation. Someway or other, me and him hit it off. He would, at night, come out and give me a sandwich from the warrant officer's mess and give it to me. We used to talk . … Then he was on edge, he's afraid to get caught. He'd be disciplined, you know, so after a while I didn't see him. I mean, he kept his distance.

SI: Was he a warrant officer or a mess man?

AK: He was the mess man, mess boy; he was one of the orderlies they had to serve them officers. He disappeared, I don't know. He was afraid of getting reprimanded.

SI: The only African Americans on the ship would be mess men, mess boys, cooks, etc.

AK: Yeah. All the cooks on the ship were white personnel. Anyone who was a chef in with the officers, they were segregated, at that time, until they got the order to discontinue that.

SI: Were there any Filipino stewards on the ship?

AK: Actually, I couldn't tell you because, I mean, they were in another part of the ship. Their quarters, you wouldn't know who's what; all I know is that the colored were separated. The Philippines, I don't know, I couldn't tell you if there was any. I didn't go that far, you know snooping around.

SI: I mean, the battleship is one of the biggest ships that the Navy has got.

AK: Yeah, we had about twenty-eight hundred men on the ship, maybe more, I don't know.

SI: So, you really only stick to your area and the places you have to go?

AK: Yes, you stick to your own area and whatever area you were assigned to, that's where you stayed, unless you're on a working party. If you're on a working party, then you had to go through their area to get to the storage area. That's probably the only time that you ever go through that area. Like, I had a friend of mine, Nanny Demarco, he was a machinist mate, … His was on the portside, his living quarters, and his machine shop was on that side. … The only way I ever got to know him is, I was on a working party. He was apprentice, second class, or whatever. We were taking on supplies. … We had to walk down through his area to get into that storage place, and that's where I met him. I didn't know he was on board ship. Then, when

we took on supplies, the old Spam; we would take on supplies on the starboard side and you walk down the walkway on the side. … Here is your gun mount level up here, and you'd be walking down there, with a can of Spam in your hand, on your shoulder. … All of a sudden, you feel light, someone took the Spam off your shoulder, disappeared. I mean, you walk around and then all hell broke out, because it sure is a surprise. … Then they had inspections, looking for that Spam. At night, we would have Spam sandwiches. We'd get down there and get the white onions. Someone, they would finagle bread, and at night, we have our little snack, Spam sandwiches. But they come up, and they were looking all over the ship for the Spam sandwiches. We had them hidden down inside the gun mounts. [We] took the plates up, and put them down in the hole under there and put the plates back on. That's where we kept our supply, sneaky. I tell [you], you had to connive.

SI: There are a lot of places on a ship you can hide things, little nooks and crannies.

AK: Yeah, if you look around. I was on duty with a master-at-arms and I had to go down in the ship's brig. They had guys in there making booze out of grapes. They had a distillery in the brig, yeah. They got caught. I even had a fellow in my division. I can't think of his name, he was drinking Vitalis; the alcohol contents. He drank Vitalis. How he drank that stuff is beyond me. That's when they were out there. Oh, getting back to when I was training, my job was also to take care of 180 proof alcohol, that was used to clean the optics in the gun mounts, you know. … They always try to hit me up to get a little snip and I had to turn them down. I had to guard that jug, 180 proof alcohol there. That's how desperate them guys are.

SI: Did anybody try to sneak alcohol aboard?

AK: That I couldn't tell you. I mean, you come aboard, they check. If you're carrying a package, boy, they want to know what's in it, I guess. I don't know, I never had that duty.

SI: Would you say that your being out there in a war zone and just being in on these different operations, was it stressful for you, being in combat, being on duty all the time.

AK: Not especially. You get used to it, your physique gets used to it, your mental attitude gets used to it, you're there to do a job. I mean, either do the job or don't do it. If you don't do it then, you're in trouble. You're there to do your job.

SI: Were there people who couldn't handle the stress or refused to work?

AK: No, I never saw any occasion where anybody refused work. I mean, that's really a no, no, then you'd be up the captain's mast. … Then you will be in the brig. You can't refuse, if you're told, "Go wash that wall" or "Scrub that deck" or whatever, you do it. You couldn't, you know, say, "No, I'm not doing it." No way. No way. You're ordered, you do it.

SI: Did you see the pressure of combat get to anybody like they had a mental episode or breakdown?

AK: No, nobody had any amount of breakdown. We had a storekeeper, who went up to the forward hold, up in the bow, up in here for, the storage area. … He was storekeeper second class. … The rules were you don't go down there into that compartment, until it's aired out. They vacuum there and draw out all the air. … He went down there too soon and he was asphyxiated. He died from the fumes, carbon monoxide. … That was the only casualty we ever had on the ship. He was buried at sea. That was the only casualty we ever had aboard ship that anyone died. We all came back safe.

SI: Did the ship go through any kamikaze attacks?

AK: Yeah, when we're on, up in the Mariana Islands. … We got under attack and that's what we were shooting, got away and (?)

SI: All over the place?

AK: Yeah, all over the place.

SI: Could you see the plane coming in?

AK: Well, the carriers were here and we were here. … We were in a distance, I mean you can see them in the far distance. You can see the planes going down, you could see planes going, but never that close. Because they were only after them carriers, stuck to the carriers. You may get a stray trying to get in; you know, something on his own.

GY: Just moving away from the battle part, were you there when the ship sailed in the typhoon?

AK: Yes.

GY: Both typhoons?

AK: I was in that ship for three years and (?) when that tycoon [typhoon] off, I think it was off Okinawa, if I'm not mistaken, all right, is it Okinawa?

GY: I think so, yeah.

AK: When we hit that typhoon, I think it was Halsey, was in command, and he made a mistake and took us into that typhoon. … Crew members were walking around with buckets. If they regurgitated, they went in the bucket. You see them walking into the mess hall, holding a plate with bucket. Fortunately, I didn't get sick. I was nauseous but I didn't. Of course, I was very fortunate. But them waves, I mean, they were huge waves. Twelve, fourteen, fifteen [feet], maybe higher, I don't know, coming up. … We would go along and catch a wave, and, boom the ship would roll. We were fortunate because they gave us orders to lock down; we closed all the hatches on board ship. We lost three destroyers and they lost all personnel on destroyers. [A typhoon sunk three destroyers on December 17,1944: *USS Monagan* (DD-354), *USS Spence* (DD-512) and *USS Hull* (DD-36). Seven hundred ninety men were lost in the typhoon.] Destroyers, they were like matches, floating, bobbing all over the place. They would go into a

wave, they were gone. Water would go down the smokestack and into the engine room and flood everything out, and they were gone. We lost, I think, three destroyers in that typhoon. It's an experience. You don't know how the winds and the water can come up. One of the aircraft carriers, I don't know which one it was, the water come up and slapped the deck and broke it, lapped over. … They went back to Pearl Harbor to have it done. They were in Pearl Harbor [for] about a couple of weeks, they were back out.

SI: Were any men washed overboard?

AK: That I couldn't tell you, not on the *Massachusetts*. What happened on other ships, they could have been washed overboard, I don't know.

SI: What would you say was your most frightening or vivid moment of your time in the Pacific?

AK: I guess, I wouldn't say it was in the Pacific. Most likely, your first engagement. We were in Africa. You didn't know if you're gonna come home alive. I mean, when you start seeing, hearing them shells whizzing by you, you know, outside, you don't know whether you're gonna be alive or not. I mean, you hope for the best, I guess. I don't know. But out in the Pacific, the first episode carries right over to the rest of your life, in the Navy, because then you get used to everything. Everything is normal that goes into, your way of thinking changes good. You're there to fight and that's it. You don't worry about anything but survival, I guess.

SI: Before the first combat experience, in Africa, did you think about how you would react in combat?

AK: Well, I don't know if I thought about it. But once you get into it and it starts happening, you forget about everything around you. I mean, your first thoughts are, "Do what you have to survive," I guess. … From then on, it becomes normal, you know, whether you're gonna survive this battle and you're gonna survive that battle, or that battle, you don't know. But you get used to it. It's a common thing after that.

SI: Do you recall anything about the Battle of Leyte Gulf?

AK: Leyte Gulf, yes.

SI: Did anything about that stand out, or was it the same kind of thing where something was happening in the distance that you were part of?

AK: Yeah, Leyte Gulf is, actually, we were on the out of bounds of it. I think that was in around the Philippines. …. I think, we were going through, we were cutting through at night. … Everything had a hush, hush, no lights on the ship, no nothing, everything. We were streaming through San Bernardino Straits. We were getting over to where that action was. … Then we were cutting through the Philippine Islands to get over to Leyte Gulf. … Then we got over there, and, like I say, shooting at airplanes.

SI: Oh, from a distance.

AK: Off the Japanese carriers. Then we had liberty in the Philippines. We were in Luzon. Anyhow, I was in town. I went up out of town, up the top of the hill. There, down in the valley, it was a water buffalo. I guess, he's just waiting for me to come down and engage him, because I was going no way near him. He was a mean looking dude. We had liberty over there in Luzon.

SI: Did you interact with the natives, the Filipinos?

AK: I didn't have much interaction … with them. I mean, in fact, I don't remember seeing Filipinos around.

SI: Did they ever get special areas set up just for servicemen?

AK: Yeah, in town they had a USO, or whatever that thing is. I think, American Red Cross was running, ran … the thing. … I think, I'm not sure, I'm just saying, I think the Red Cross was trying to charge American personnel money to get a can of beer. I'm not sure, that's just a rumor I heard. They were charging a dollar a can, I don't know what it was. But, the rumor was that they were charging, you got to pay for them refreshments or whatever. But other than that, I didn't hear anything about anything else.

SI: When you're on a ship and you're on duty, and if you are in a battle it was pretty busy, but what did you do when you weren't on duty?

AK: Sun bathe. You would have the after part of the ship, near the catapults. You pick out a spot. …. You put a blanket down or sheet, or whatever, lie on the deck and get sunburned. That's it.

----------END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO----------

GY: This continues an interview with Albert Knipling on tape 2.

SI: Okay.

AK: You were asking about the action around the Philippines. Now, this is all the dates in there. [Mr. Knipling is referencing some documents.]

SI: Okay, yes, these are all the operations you participated in.

AK: Yeah. And this was in the North Africa operation.

SI: So, when you would, you mentioned earlier that they would hand out maps in places you would go to?

AK: Yeah, well I saw brochures. I don't have any [of them] any more, I guess Timmy took them too. … You know, they would give you idea of the area you were in, which was good.

SI: Would they ever tell you, like, why you were doing something?

AK: No. They won't tell you why you were there or who's attacking, you go.

SI: I mean, in some of these operations you were supporting landing forces, regular Army.

AK: No, mostly it was Marine operations. Iwo Jima, and all through there. We went in and shelled, ground support, and Okinawa, Iwo Jima.

SI: So, in those operations, would you actually see the forces going in or were you farther out?

AK: Oh, we were out beyond the forces going in. We were lobbing them shells over them. The sixteen-inchers, we could go eighteen miles inland, twenty miles. … We just lobbed them over their heads. They would call out, for a certain area to be bombarded, and then we start throwing the shells in. If we were close enough for the five-inch mounts, we'd operate on, we'd shell them too. We would get our support, you know, from what they required on land; if they wanted hit here, here, there or over farther. We would get the directions.

SI: So, in some of these operations, I've read that the battleships would shell for days sometimes.

AK: Yeah, we would go in and shell for two days, three days whatever was required. You know, to soften up the operation and the landings. Then, you would come out, and supply ships would come by and you reload at sea. They bring you the shells over, and five-inch mounts, on pallets, over to the ship and you resupply.

SI: So, during all those operations you would just be in your mount waiting for directions?

AK: No, no, they had, like, in the Fifth Division, … their duties were to operate the cranes. We had a boat crane that would go out and they had crews that were to … operate them cranes. … Then to bring supplies in, on the starboard side. Our division will do that. Each unit on the ship had a certain area when it came, like, if we refuel at sea. Well, our division was again designated to hook up them oil lines and everything, to bring the lines from the tankers across because they had the crane there. … They could access to the fuel lines, which were there.

SI: So, what would you be doing during those types of operations?

AK: Watching. It wasn't my job. That was the crew in the division; they had the laborers, peons. [laughter] Yeah, it was the deck crew that would take care of that; the seamen, first class, second class.

SI: So, you never had other duties besides your duties in the gun mount.

AK: My duties were in the gun mounts, handling ammunition and (?) stuff .

SI: So, when you weren't on watch or in combat, you would just be waiting around basically?

AK: Yeah, we wait a while. You had your other routine[s] in the gun mount. You had to go in and check everything, clean the optics. … After an engagement, you had to clean out your barrels … You know, your five-inch 38, you had to get, like a big brush, Brillo pad, a big brush like that. … [You had to ] pass it through the barrel and clean it. … Then, they had to put a coating of oil in there, you know. That was your duty. You just take care of your own gun mounts, just like the way they had the crew doing the deck work, with scrubbing the decks, whatever you have you to do with working parties.

SI: Did you ever find yourself bored?

AK: No, they kept you pretty well busy.

SI: They kept you pretty busy.

AK: Yeah, they kept you busy chipping paint. I mean peon[s], the lower ones, they would chip paint on the outside of the ship, go overboard and down along the hull, chip paint, and scrub the decks working parties; they kept you busy.

SI: What did you think of your officers?

AK: I thought they were very good. We had a chaplain, a navy chaplain, a Catholic chaplain, Father Moody. He came from New Rochelle. … He was good. He had good service, good services. He taught at the college in New Rochelle, he's a teacher, taught some college in New Rochelle. The Monsignor, up in Blessed Sacrament Church, I don't know where it was. We got into a conversation and Monsignor, I don't know his name right now said, "Monsignor Moody was his teacher in St. Joseph's Seminary in Yonkers." … Monsignor Moody finally left the ship and he passed away. In fact, … in here they dedicated the book to him, I think he made commander, he was good, good Joe. I mean, very friendly, very, very sociable. But according to the Monsignor of the Blessed Sacrament, he was a son of a gun, yeah.

SI: How was morale, in general, among you and your friends, the people in your gun crew?

AK: I guess it was all right, I didn't hear any complaints. At least the division I was in, I mean, we got along fine. It seemed like a good group, I don't know. When we had the ship's reunion, you sat with your own division. Your table was made up by your own group. I mean, they had, I guess, you would call them cliques. But you always stayed with your own division. You may have friends over here, but actually, your best bet is over here with your own division.

SI: How did you get the news that the Japanese had surrendered? How did you feel?

AK: We felt delighted. Just before that, when we got the news, we were cruising along the Japanese coast. … Word came over, I thought there was a destroyer, Japanese destroyer, on the other side of the hill. So, we sent up the OS2Us, that was the aircraft that we were carrying, and observation plane with pontoons. He took off and flew off over and gave us the directions, and the altitude, and the distance to the target. The Japanese submarines, destroyer, sunk right in that

bay, lobbed them right over, and sunk him right there. … That was the last time that a sixteen-inch shell was fired in World War II. We were the first one to fire a sixteen-inch gun in Casablanca; we were the last ones to fire a sixteen-inch shell in Japanese War. We were first, at the beginning and at the end. We got the privilege of shooting first here and last there. That's what they told us.

SI: And then you got the news.

AK: Then, we got the news of the surrender. Then that's when they started organizing all these landing forces on board ship, where I went into Yokosuka Naval Base.

SI: Were there any celebrations on the ship?

AK: There's a lot of yelling, but that's, just the yelling. I mean, no celebrations, just a lot of yelling.

SI: Were you surprised by what the Japanese had built up in this base and the capabilities they had?

AK: Yes. When I went into the Yokosuka Naval Base, they had these caves dug into the mountain, there at the base. … In these caves, one cave I went into, me and my friend were snooping around; it was canned salmon, you know, canned salmon packed in there, labeled for shipment to Germany. In other words, they wanted to load the submarine and run them out, over to Germany. But the caves were so darned big; it's so dark, we were afraid to go in there. We didn't want to go where they would be waiting in there for us, or what. But, just like I say, then on the shelves they had jars. I don't know what they were in the jars, looks like chemicals, or some darned thing in there on the shelves. We didn't want them either. Up on top was a Japanese tank, looks like a little (?) thing that they left in the base.

SI: Like a tank.

AK: Regular, on tracks and everything. It was sitting on a hill there, you know. … Right behind it was a cave, you know, boarded up. We were restricted, not to go exploring these things in these caves. Although we went into shore emplacements, where they had bunkers along the shoreline, gun emplacements. [We] went in there and looked out over the bay. … They had bunks in there, where they would bunk in there, but other than that, they cleaned everything out before we got there.

SI: Were there any, did any Japanese personnel help you in your duties?

AK: In the base? No, no. We were on a, I guess, their parade grounds. It's Japanese personnel, all these Army generals, and whatever; they were coming in with their swords on them and medals. … The officer that was leading them was a former Marine commanding officer aboard ship. He made captain, he went to major. … He was the major, bringing the units from that town, or that area into the base to sign the peace treaty, I guess. … We were Raggedy Ann, on

the side and they went marching by us going to wherever they were going down to some place, I don't know where. We just went on our way, looked around the base.

SI: Did you go off the base?

AK: No, no, no, you were restricted right to the base. You couldn't leave; you couldn't go out into town. But when I went over in Korea, on the aircraft carrier *Leyte*, the first port I hit was Yokosuka Naval Base, the base I left in World War II. I went right back to it … When I went back to it, the whole port was all redone. They had beautiful docks and moorings, and everything, beautiful. … Then that's when I got into going to Yokosuka Naval Base, into town. The whole base was refurnished. In fact, they had the Japanese coming aboard as laborers. They were handling the supplies, coming up and doing, working aboard ship. … They were getting paid for it. But like I say, the first port I entered, went back to Yokosuka Naval Base. That was a surprise, shocking with them caves, … so lit up I could see them from the ship. You want to see some pictures of them? Let me go get them.

SI: We're looking now at his scrapbook.

AK: Yeah, this is the scrapbook. You look through it.

SI: We have some …

AK: This is when I was in the naval reserves, down here in New Rochelle. This is my son's kindergarten thing.

SI: Kindergarten graduation. So, this was like a little newsletter that they give you on the ship.

AK: Yeah.

SI: That has news from all over the world.

AK: This is all Korean, This is Korean, November 20, 1950.

SI: This is a plane that crashed off of the *Leyte*?

AK: Yeah, we had on *Leyte*. We had a pilot, little short pilot; he piloted a jet fighter. … We were one of the first, you know, to handle that ship, that aircraft. He told me, to a group of us, "If I land in the sea on take off, and land on the sea, I'm gonna get my little raft and row like hell to get away from that SOB over there," meaning the ship. Wouldn't you believe it, the next day he went into the drink. He had malfunctions on take off, and he went right into the sea, but they brought him back aboard ship.

SI: Was that in St. Kirkpatrick? Was that Kirkpatrick, the guy you went out with?

AK: No, no.

SI: Okay, because the guy in the articles, it says, "St. Kirkpatrick."

AK: This is when I was in the naval reserve. I was training down in the reserves. You want to look at it, open the page and go through it, or what?

SI: Sure. So, what stands out about your time in the reserves?

AK: Oh, we had a good time down there in the reserves. We had military balls, where we invite the admiral from the Third Naval District and his family. … His staff would come down, have a military ball, and have a good time. The group I was with in there, we had little affairs. We'd go down to the armory, in there, and they would; we have a dinner down there, spaghetti dinner down below in the armory, with our wives. … We have a good old time. Then they would have a clambake, in the back of the armory, where we had lobster and the works, in the back, you know, beer and soda and everything for the families in there.

SI: It was a pretty active unit.

AK: Oh, yeah, we're very active, yeah.

SI: And you continued to train in gunnery?

AK: In (?) gunnery, yeah.

SI: I mean, did you expect Korea to happen?

AK: No, I had no way of thinking that I was ever gonna get called in the service. I had no way, I never thought, I think most of us thought that we wouldn't be called up. Like, I was called up first. I was gone two weeks before they notified, that, they put in the paper, that the unit was called up. I was gone for two weeks. I was the first one to leave.

SI: So, you didn't go over with the unit.

AK: No. I went separately, my orders came right down to the Third Naval District, you know, report in there. That's when I was supposed to go naval gunnery. … I sat there for a day and, the next thing, you know, my orders were changed. I'm going to USS *Leyte*, in Norfolk. … I got shipped down to Norfolk, and went on board ship in Norfolk.

SI: So, no one else from your reserve unit was on the *Leyte*.

AK: No, I was the only one from that unit. They all got shipped to; I don't know where they got shipped to; I was on shore patrol in Norfolk. I did meet Angelo Sofino, who is a friend of mine, we went to school together. I met him in town and he was on a repair ship. Then, I did run into an air gunner from the New Rochelle unit. He looked me up and he come over. … My wife was down at the time, staying with a family, retired naval officer in Portsmouth, Virginia, which is on the outskirts of Norfolk. … He come over, and me and the family I was staying with, we went to the bay and got crabs. [We] brought a whole load of crabs home and we had a crab bake that

night. Then I invited that fellow to come over for, you know, for a cookout. But other than that, that's the only two guys I ran into. Like, I think they deployed everybody else around.

SI: Well, it must have been difficult to leave your family behind, you know, you had a young son then.

AK: I had a young son. He come down to Norfolk with my wife, my father-in-law and my wife's uncle. … That was the last time I saw him for the year and a half that I was in the service. Then they took him home and she stayed down with me. We stayed with a retired chief warrant officer and torpedo man. … He worked for the railroad down there, I forget the name of the branch it was, but he got a job with them. … We had a room, you know, in his private house, which was nice.

SI: What were your duties when you joined the crew of the *Leyte*?

AK: I was in charge of a gun mount. My gun crew was on the *Leyte*. … The word got around; I can't find that. They put out a ship's paper and in it they say, "Stay clear of Knipling's crazy gun crew." These guys would play tackle football on the steel deck. … I let them do it to get some of that energy out of them. But you know, not to worry about it. … They were playing tackle football on a gun deck, so the word got around to the whole ship, on *Leyte,* that, "Stay clear of his gun crew, don't go near them, they're lunatics." [laughter]

SI: So, you were in one of these gun emplacements here. [Pointing to a picture of the USS *Leyte*.] Were you down by the superstructure?

AK: No, my gun mount was down over in here someplace. Later on, I got transferred up to this gun mount here.

SI: Okay, so your first mount was underneath the deck.

AK: Yeah, it's along that crack, that walkway down there.

SI: So were the men under you, were they pretty young?

AK: Yeah, yeah, they were all young. They were all young kids; I mean they're really young.

SI: So what was it like? You know in the last war, you had been the young guy and now you're in charge of giving these guys an order? How did you take to that?

AK: Well, that's the division I was in, Second Division. Can you find me in there? [laughter] I'm in the second row sitting down, in this row here. You can't find me. Let me show you where I am. That's me right there. That's the gun crew, that's the gun mount I was in charge of at the time.

SI: We're looking at pictures of the gun position. So had the job changed much between World War II and Korea?

AK: No, it's still the same job. But I will say it's completely changed now, because all these gun mounts now are all automatic. In other words, they're fed by upper handling room and the shells go up, and they're all loaded automatically. There's no gun crew up above no more, they're all automatic.

SI: What rank were you when you joined the *Leyte*?

AK: I was second class then, I was promoted.

SI: Was it the same kind of set up as in the *Massachusetts* where you had, some areas just for second class?

AK: No. On that ship, they had it strictly for first class on that ship. They jumped it up a grade. The first class had night refreshments, the second class didn't have nothing. We didn't have a mess hall like that in the *Massachusetts*.

SI: So it was a much smaller ship or smaller crew?

AK: Where?

SI: On the *Leyte*.

AK: *Leyte*, you had over, between the air group, ship's personnel, about, maybe, 3,500 men or more.

SI: Really? Okay.

AK: You had your air group on there and plus your ship's personnel; you have about over 3,000 men on there.

SI: What kind of planes were they flying in the beginning, before the jets?

AK: I don't know, we had the jets on there; they were assigned to us when we went to Korea.

SI: Okay, but like the planes that I see on all the pictures

AK: They had TBS on there, dive-bombers; they had fighters, Corsairs. Douglass was a dive-bomber, I think. Douglass dive-bombers, Corsairs, F9Fs were the jets. This one they were bringing five hundred pound bombs; they were bringing on board ship. I don't know where that one was taken, Norfolk maybe. They're loading the ship up with planes.

SI: So how long were you stationed in Japan, before going over to Korea?

AK: Well, [when we] went to Korea, we were already engaged in action, I mean. We were going to Sasebo, Japan, was another port of entry, went to for liberty. … Then, like I said, we went to Yokosuka for liberty, too.

SI: Okay, I thought when you came from the United States, I thought you went to Yokosuka.

AK: Well, we did. We went straight from the United States to Yokosuka, but then we went into engagements in the China Sea over there.

SI: Okay, were you in Yokosuka for very long?

AK: No, no, we would operate out of ports. Those were liberty ports that we went into. In other words, we'd go out for thirty days and then come in for a couple of days or whatever. But they were operations rather than either Sasebo, Japan or Yokosuka. We'd go over, you know, bomb, on bombing runs; Chosen Reservoir and all through there.

SI: What do you remember about those first operations off of Korea?

AK: Well, actually the only thing I remember, we were over there one time; and it was in the winter, around November, I guess, December. … They had to go up and shovel snow off the flight deck, to get the aircraft off.

SI: So it would get pretty cold up where you were.

AK: Oh yeah, they went down into zeros. I mean it was, I felt pity for them soldiers there on Chosin Reservoir, you know. … That's where the guy got a medal, Congressional Medal of Honor. We had the first Negro pilot in the history of the United States Navy on board ship … Jesse Brown. … He was on a Corsair and he got shot down. … There he is. [Mr. Knipling is looking through a book]. [Thomas J.] Hudner, [Jr.], yeah, he's the one, who went down. He got shot down over near the Chosin Reservoir. … He went down to get him out of the plane, but, he was pinned in the plane. His legs were pinned in the fuselage and they couldn't get him out. …. He was bleeding profusely, you know, he crashed his Corsair. To get him out … finally, they sent a helicopter. … They get him out and they had to leave him. The Communists, Koreans, were coming in … he had to get out. … He reported back from the helicopter that they were bayoneting him. He was already, you know, he couldn't move. … He died there and he got the Congressional Medal of Honor. [Editor's Note: On December 4, 1950, Captain (then Lieutenant, Junior Grade) Thomas J. Hudner, Jr., earned the Medal of Honor for crashing his VF-23 near the site where Ensign Jessie L. Brown's VF-23 crashed after being shot down in an attempt to rescue his comrade. Ultimately, Ensign Brown could not be removed his aircraft and succumbed to his wounds there. Ensign Brown received the Distinguished Flying Cross for heroism in combat during the Korean War.] … When I went to the ship the last time, he was up there. He was the guest speaker, he's a captain now retired, Navy captain. … Here's other crew members that got lost over there. [Mr. Knipling is looking through pictures of a book]. Lieutenant Commander Bagwell, he was a dive bomber. He got shot down, he's missing in action. They never did find him.

SI: So what effect does it have on the crew when you hear about pilots going out and not coming back?

AK: Well, it's a deep emotion, plus, you see, the guys taking off the flight deck, you know, you see them taxiing down off the flight deck and you're hoping they all come back. There is a moment when they're no longer with you. But they took a collection up on board ship, on the *Leyte*, for Jesse Brown's daughter. … The first collection, they got over $10,000.00 to give to his wife, for his daughter's education. That's what they did for, you know, to show their appreciation for him being there. But, I mean, there is a moment when you hope these guys all come back. In fact, we were off the coast of Korea and there was a stray pilot up there. … When we ran at night, there's no lights on the ship, afraid of submarines. … He was lost; he couldn't get back to us. He was running low on gas supply, and we were out there yet. So they radioed to him, you know, "We're gonna light the ship up, come in as soon as you can." So when we got on the coast, we lit the ship up, all the runway lights, on the aircraft carrier, on the flight deck. … This guy never made a landing at night, never made a landing on an aircraft carrier. So he's up there circling around and come next approach; .. He come in and hit the deck perfect and he was spared. …. If we weren't there, he would have to ditch in the ocean and God knows he'd never been found. But they got him on board ship; and they refueled him and sent him back to his own ship.

SI: Were you ever in a situation where you got to fire your guns?

AK: Over in Korea, no, no, the situation never did arise over there. We never fired anything at any attacking aircraft, because the Communists over there never come out, they wouldn't come out. In fact, our crew was going in there after them, shooting them down. We were never under attack. No one approached us, so, I guess we felt pretty safe.

GY: Was it similar to what it was in the *Massachusetts*, when you were on board?

AK: I would say it was more quieter. I mean, there was no engagement with the enemy. … The only engagement was with the air group, that they were flying inland, I mean, they were fighting. We never saw any Korean navy ships or had any engagements. No planes, never saw any planes come out after us. We felt pretty safe, that they ignored us or they were scared to come out, who knows. But our attitude was that we're there to do whatever we had to do, I guess, I don't know.

SI: Were you able to socialize with the air group at all?

AK: Yeah, you had a relationship with the air group. I mean, I was bunked up here, but they were bunked in the back. I mean, like I say, you're in your section and we're in our section. But everything is focused around the air group. I mean, they got first priority. What the pilots were eating, we're eating. We were getting raisins and carrots and fresh vegetables, whatever they were getting, you know what I mean? We're getting top of everything, pilots, you know, whatever needs, they needed. When I was on there [the *Leyte*], they gave us inoculations. … You just walked down and you got hit on this side, that side, this side, that side. You were getting cholera shots. … I don't know what I got, all I know is I got seven shots going down that runway. That's how they did it. You went down that runway and, boy, corpsman on this side,

that side and [they] hit you with a needle. You don't know what you got. But I know I got cholera. Cholera shots, yeah.

SI: Cholera shots.

AK: No, I didn't get cholera, no, but you got that shot. That's the way they did it. Like I say, that air group was, you know. (?) I mean, you get to know some of them. But they, you know, they would come on the ship for a tour of duty. … Then they would get transferred, you know, some place else.

SI: I thought they would rotate them.

AK: Yeah, like, you know, when we come to the United States; the whole shebang got transferred, like I did. I got transferred in Norfolk and got put in, how I got into fleet squadron, I don't know. I got in FASARON 3, which was Fleet Air Squadron 3. That was in Norfolk and then I got put on *Leyte.* … On the *Leyte*, I mean on the *Palau*, I was put in the F Division. Now, the F Division on the *Massachusetts* was the radar unit. Now, on the *Palau*, F was the gunnery department. I mean, each ship had its own system. … On the *Palau*, I got friendly with the yeoman and the gunnery officer, like a secretary yeoman. I got friendly with him; he lived in Connecticut, some place along Merritt Parkway, that's the Merritt Parkway in Connecticut. … He had a car and I get friendly with him. … We would leave the ship on Wednesday, come back on Sunday; leave the ship on Wednesday, come back on Sunday. Wednesday, Sunday, all the time I was on the ship. I spent more time home then I was on the ship. We would come in and he'd drop me off on the North Avenue. It's the north end of town here, drop me off. Then he'd go on continue up the Hutch [Hutchinson River Parkway]. Sunday, he'd come out around twelve o'clock, eleven o'clock; pick me up and back down to the ship again. I spent more time home than I was in the ship. So I couldn't tell you what kind of duty it was. All I remember, I did get one duty one time. I had to go over with the supply officer, go to the bank to get the payroll. They gave me a .45 automatic sidearm. They didn't give me no ammunition. The guy says, "If we're getting robbed, getting robbed, give them anything, don't resist them, give them anything they want." I went over there with an empty clip, into the bank, to get the money. I laughed, really laughed at what they did. Like they said, "You're getting robbed, give them anything they want." Forget it. That's the only duty I ever had done on that ship. Other times, I just danced around on the ship, because I think the ship was going into mothballs. There had to be a skeleton crew on there. The personnel like one of my person, I had on *Leyte,* he was getting discharged … When I went down to the bunk quarters, he was the only one down there. No other person around there. So it had to be a skeleton crew. … They were going to put that ship in mothballs. … I was put aboard ship, of course the guy that was there, the first class gunner's mate I was introduced to him. I didn't see him no more after that. He was gone. They probably transferred him out too. Like I said, I was one more down there.

SI: Now how soon after that were you discharged?

AK: I was on there twelve, maybe thirty-sixty days, something like that; just a short period of time, because my enlistment was running out. That's why they transferred me off to *Leyte* in Norfolk. … Put me into the air station there; naval air station there, FASARON 3, because the

ship was there just temporarily. They off load[ed] all these personnel. I wasn't the only personnel, there was a whole bunch of us being, up for discharge, I guess. That's where we all transferred off the ship. … I think the *Leyte* went back over into the Mediterranean. That's where she came from, Mediterranean, to the United States, then back into the Pacific. Like I say, I don't even remember eating meals on the *Palau*. I don't think I know where the mess hall is, I never ate there.

----------END OF TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE----------

SI: So during the Korean War, as opposed to World War II, in the Korean War the military was integrated, you had African Americans serving in all these different areas. Did you have any African Americans that you worked with on the *Leyte*?

AK: Yeah, and that picture shows them. Did you see them, notice them in the picture?

SI: The Second Division picture?

AK: Yeah, in the Division picture. They're in there, where did I put it? I try to keep this stuff separated, so I know where it is. Yeah, you could pick them up there. They're in the first row, wherever, but it was all integrated. There's one down there, one there, then another one down here, I mean, it was integrated then.

SI: Did anybody have any problem with that; was there any strife?

AK: No, see, on the *Leyte*, we had, the gun crew had their own quarters separate from the deck crew. We had our own compartments and everything; that was our area. … We had our own coffee pot up there. … You know, we could make coffee anytime we wanted. But we didn't interact with the deck crew, they were separate branch, the gun crew was by ourselves.

SI: So the black sailors were only in the deck crew. There were no black sailors in the gun crew?

AK: Gun crew, no, none whatsoever. No one complained, I mean.

SI: There were no fights.

AK: No fights or no nothing. I never heard of them. Like I say, we, the fellows that were our crew were all white. The deck crew had colored boys in there. … They ate in the mess hall with us, and everything, but there was no friction anywhere. We got along fine.

SI: Had there been any African Americans in your reserve unit in New York?

AK: Down in the armory? No, there wasn't no colored person in there. To tell you the truth, no, now that you mentioned it, I never thought of that.

SI: When Truman ordered the desegregation in 1948, did anybody talk about that in your unit?

AK: No, no, they didn't.

SI: Nobody said it is good or bad or indifferent?

AK: No, I never heard any conversation about bad or good. In fact, I didn't hear any conversation about anything about it.

GY: Just to go back to World War II for a second; I don't know if you mentioned this or not, but do you remember where you were and what you were doing when Japan bombed Pearl Harbor?

AK: Yes, when they bombed Pearl Harbor, I was working for the company in Mt. Vernon, the Atris Manufacturing Company. In fact, we were making hose clamps for aviation maintenance. They use them on the planes to tighten hoses, you know, whatever they are doing with these clamps. I was with Atris. …. When we got the notice, I was working that day; I was working in the plant in Mt. Vernon. … That's right when I got the urge to go into the Navy. … When we come home, I lived in Bayard Street with my aunt. …. The group that went, is Billy Believe, Palmarosa and the rest of us. Like I say, "Let's go down, take physical." We went down and the next thing you know I'm gone. …. He's gone, he's gone, I don't even know where they went. It just struck us that there was, you know, surprise, it was really, that they bombed it.

SI: Had you been expecting a war at all or did you follow the news about Europe?

AK: We weren't expecting any war; to tell you the truth, we thought we were safe. When we found out about it, what can you do? You were committed; you were enlisted in the reserve. For you, they call you back to active service. But she was disturbed [Mr. Knipling is referring to his wife], but I had a son, Albert, he was only three years old at the time; now he's fifty-eight. He's married and has a daughter and lives in Davenport, Florida. My mother-in-law, for a while, had a house that's up in 5th Avenue. … They went to live with them, while I was in Korea.

SI: Did you have trouble readjusting to civilian life after you got out of the military?

AK: More or less, yeah. You didn't know where to go for a job. I mean, I just had to get a job to support a family. … Then I was reading the paper and I saw that advertisement for Schenley Distillers … to work for them. … I went over for an interview and Mrs. Bailand, who was the supervisor in charge of, you know, that section, she hired me just like that. But there was one of her assistants, she was an assistant, I can't think of her name. Anyhow, she didn't want Bailand to hire me for some reason or another, but Bailand hired me and I got the job. Like I say, once a week I had to take the litigation files down to the law department in the Empire State Building. I had to go down by train. They gave me a pass and then we go down on the train. I had to go take this drop it off here. … The man, personnel manager in charge of New York, wanted to get me down to New York, to work in the office down there. Bailand wouldn't let me go. She made up excuses, it would be too expensive, and all of that. She wouldn't let me go. … That's when I got disgusted over here, and I went and got the job with Empire Coil. Then I went in the post office. I was in the post office [for] thirty-nine years. Now, I stay home in retirement, enjoying it. I get three checks, government checks. One is my pension from the Post Office Department;

I get a pension check from the Navy, and Social Security. So I'm getting three checks, which I'm very comfortable.

SI: Did you stay on the reserves after Korea?

AK: My wife won't let me join the Boy Scouts. She wouldn't let me join any organization. She [said], "You're not going to join up."

SI: Okay, well, that's understandable.

AK: She wouldn't let me join nothing. But the only thing I joined was the Boy Scouts; I did join the Boy Scouts when I got my sons. I was a Cub Master, in my sons' pack for seven years. We had a nice organization, I mean, nice bunch of boys, which I'm meeting, now they're all married, I meet them in town. They're all married now, and got their own kids. … One of the boys, Cushman, he's a Scout leader now, in the same church, the Holy Name Church in New Rochelle. They still got that Boy Scout, Cub Scout troop, over there. But there was a clan in there. We were in there so long, for seven years. We were imbedded in there, I mean. … This fellow, I won't mention his name. I won't mention the woman, that they got together and they wanted us out. They wanted to run it. So, well and good, so Bob Johnson, who is my assistant at the time, and I had, George Warner was assistant, we all got together and Bob was gonna leave. So, how the hell, I don't want to stay around, I want to get out, too. I was getting tired of it, so we all left. … We dumped the thing into their hands and it went down the tubes. It all went away. Then I went on the Boy Scouts of America Commissioner's staff. I had to go around and check different troops, to make sure that everything went on smoothly, among the troops. Once a month, I had to send a report into the Boy Scouts headquarters. Then I was put on the board; I had to go down New York City, Greater New York Boy Scout Council down there. I had to go down as a member representative of the New Rochelle group. … Then I was Assistant Scoutmaster, Physical Arrangement for National Jamboree in Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, which my son attended. I was the … Assistant Scoutmaster on that trip in Valley Forge. You know about the Boy Scouts, in the Order of the Arrow? Well, I made Order of the Arrow before I went down to Pennsylvania. … My son Albert was in it before me. …. You get in the Order of the Arrow, then the second stage is Brotherhood. … Then there's one other stage, I don't know what the third one is. But there was a fellow in the organization, that he was voted into, was gonna be voted into that third rank, I don't know what it is. He black balled him. They had marbles and they dropped in the pan, in the thing. … He dropped the black one in, taking him out. So he never got it. But I used to go up to Camp (?) on weekends with my sons, because they all went to Scout camp. I served on the committee up there too, Order of the Arrow. Albert became, he was Area Chief for this area, Westchester County. … He went down to Wisconsin, to the University of Wisconsin, for powwow, or whatever you want to call it.. …. When my son, Bobby, he went to the World Jamboree in Japan. I went around. When I was in the Boy Scouts, Cub Scouts; we used to have annual sales, every year, where we would get candy, boxes of candy and sell them for a dollar a box. We get X amount of money and the company would get; the company was here in New Rochelle. … When Bobby wanted to go to Japan, we got a thousand boxes of chocolate; we sold them, we sold every chocolate. … He made money for his Scout [troop] going to Japan. So he went up to Japan Jamboree. That's how he was, he was very pushy. You know, you had to get things done. In fact, he left home. … He went to

Minneapolis, lived up there for seven years. … Then he was out there, … he met another associate, which was in the catering business, because he was the manager, beverage manager of one of the hotels out there. He got tied in with the Hilton and he had a very good job with the Hilton organization. When he got married, he married that woman, [pointing to a photograph] Dawn, my daughter-in-law. … When he got married, he got two weeks in Hawaii, all paid for, hotel room and everything, air flight out there. They had in Las Vegas, where they got married; they had a suite in the Bellagio, all for nothing. Every time he turned around, the guy got something for two of them. They were in that trade, so they were dealing and wheeling all through the trade area where they got all these deals. … Then they had their wedding at the Venetian. But then he had to pay for the buffet. So that's the only thing he had to pay, I mean he got everything for zilch; he didn't have to pay for anything. Robert now lives in Davenport, Florida across the street from his older brother Albert III.

SI: Well, I just have like one wrap-up question. How do you think your time in the service in World War II and Korea affected your life, made you who you are today?

AK: I really don't know. I think about it at times. … I don't know, I just took it for granted. I just had to do this, and had to do that. … Now, I'm doing this, you know. Just like in here, the Philippine governments, they gave me two awards, which I just got, you know.

SI: The Philippine Republic Presidential Unit Citation Badge … and the Philippine Liberation Medal.

AK: And then I got one from Korea, Presidential Citation.

GY: These are just certificates, do you have any actual medals?

AK: I'll show it to you, I got the medal right there. It's blue, white, and red, I think. It's just a bar, with the silver ribbon around it.

SI: Is there anything else you'd like to say about any part of your life?

SK: No. Just enjoying life now. I do have a problem; I had to go on May 15th, I'm gonna be operated on. My spinal chord, it's giving me trouble. My legs, I lose, from my knee down, I'll lose circulation; they go numb. It almost feels like I'm walking on cotton. … They go in here, I think, around here, someplace. They go to my spinal column. … From what I understand, the column, the nerve is in the middle; and the bone is squeezing, cutting off circulation or something. … What they got to do is, they got to go in and cut the bone, to widen this up. …. They got to put some sort of a placer in there so it wouldn't contract and give me, you know. … It will go here, back here, and down from my spine and back. I'll go on May 15th. In fact, Friday I have to go for Dr. Matone, who is a nerve specialist. They got to put fluid in my veins, to check, see if I got any clots in my bone system, you know. Take it from there.

SI: We hope that you do well in that.

AK: It seems like this time in my life everything seem to be coming together, you know, before that I was never in the hospital. I had never had anything done. Now, as you age, your body … disregards you, it goes bad. Well, I had, in this finger here, they opened up the finger from its first joint all the way back to here. … They had depression. [Mr. Knipling is pointing to fingers on one of his hands]. In other words, the vein in here, the muscle, the tendon was pushing up and I had a lump there. … They opened up the finger and Dr. Michlat, a Filipino doctor, he opened that up. … They said that he made incisions in the side of the tendon so it gives it movement. … He pressed it and sewed it up, and no trouble. I mentioned that I was over in Japan and in the Philippine Islands, and he thanked me for being over there. He said, "I'm very grateful, you saved my country." He was a nice, nice doctor, very nice, and his wife is a doctor, too. I met her. She's a wonderful person. I was very fortunate to get him, he's good. But before I go to any doctor, I ask my own personal doctor, Dr. Stivala, "Who should I go to? I'm having trouble with my legs, my balance. … I took a bad fall going up the street here." … I says," Who shall I go?" Then … he would recommend the doctor that he would go. So I went to Dr. Klass, who is a very good doctor. … Then I went, I'm gonna get that guy, Dr. Rawanduzy. The operation, I couldn't even pronounce the name. … He's an excellent doctor. … Dr. Stivala says, "I'm recommending this doctor," because of the way, the person that you go with, they got to be someone that you would pick, you know, so he recommended this doctor, and he's good. Even afterward, he is good, he explained everything. … If you didn't understand it, he'd go through another way of explaining to you, until finally you know what he's gonna do to you. He's very good. Other than that, my wife has a lot of trouble; right now she's having trouble with the back. …

SI: Well, we wish you the best of luck.

AK: Yeah, well, after I come out, when I go through the operation, I got to go into therapy. … Someone was telling my wife, for me, "Don't take home care," but they don't give you home care, "Don't go." They told me to go to either extend care unit in New Rochelle Hospital or Burke Rehab, up in White Plains, which is an excellent hospital. The doctor, Rawanduzy, that's doing it says, "Make sure you go to either White Plains or New Rochelle, that way you'd get the best rehab there is." That's why I like the doctor. He's looking out for me.

SH: Thank you very much for sitting and talking with us.

AK: This is a pleasure. I can talk to you all day.

SH: We certainly appreciate it.

AK: I hope I was able to give you anything you wanted.

SI: Oh, yes, absolutely, absolutely. You were very forthcoming to all of our questions and we appreciate it. … You went through a lot and I'm glad you lived to tell about it.

AK: You know, with my son talked about it, you know, you hear stories about these people who come to your home. It was in my mind, if what you want to do is come in and hold us up?

[laughter] I swear to God that hit my mind and I said, "Boy, where are these people coming from and they said, "Rutgers University." Okay, we're safe.

SI: Yes, if we want to hold people up, we could stay in New Brunswick and hold people up.

AK: They're coming in; they're breaking into people around here, this neighborhood, Westchester County. They're going into homes, going in backdoors, you know. You just don't know what they'll do now. So it was a pleasure to meet you.

SI: Pleasure to meet you, too, and your wife.

AK: Excellent.

SI: Thank you very much.

AK: I'm surprised she hasn't been out here. She always put her two cents in.

SI: This concludes our interview with Albert J. Knipling on May 2, 2007 in New Rochelle, New York, Thank you very much.

AK: You're welcome.

[Postscript: On 16 August, 2007, my son, Tim, and friend, Betty, drove up to the ship to raise the American flag on the 65th anniversary of my joining the crew of USS *Massachusetts*. They got a certificate saying the flag was flown on that date and my son put the flag in a case to match the medal case.]

----------END OF INTERVIEW----------

Reviewed by Edwin J. Robinson 7/24/07
Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 8/30/2007
Reviewed by Edwin J. Robinson 9/19/2007
Reviewed by Albert J. Knipling 10/4/07