

NORRIS LONG

LINDA: Tell me your name and rank.

NORRIS: Norris C. Long. I believe I was second class quartermaster when I left.

LINDA: When were you born?

NORRIS: December 5, 1910.

LINDA: Where were you born?

NORRIS: Greensboro, North Carolina.

LINDA: How old were you when you got drafted.

NORRIS: About 35 or 6 somewhere around there.

LINDA: Why did you get drafted?

NORRIS: Because I didn't dodge.

LINDA: So at 35 or 36 weren't there enough younger guys.

NORRIS: Yeah but they had some older ones in there too and I figured I might as well see what was going on.

LINDA: So did you enlist or did you get drafted?

NORRIS: I was drafted. I didn't think I was going to miss that sort of thing.

LINDA: What were you doing when you got drafted?

NORRIS: I was a railway mail clerk.

LINDA: What does that mean?

NORRIS: That means that when a piece of mail goes in the post office if it is out of town it has to be transported and we handled the transportation of mail between towns. Also ran on the trains up and down the road. Worked the mail in-between towns.

LINDA: Was that here in North Carolina?

NORRIS: I was in Washington, DC at the time working in what was called the Washington DC Terminal. It was a meeting place of a lot of trains and when the mail crew was unable to get all of the mail worked before they got to Washington they would dump it into the terminal and we would work it out so it would make the first connection out of there.

LINDA: So you are working there and you get a letter from the government saying

NORRIS: Yes, greetings. The President's greetings.

LINDA: What did you think when you got that letter.

NORRIS: I thought it might be near time for one to come. Everybody else was getting them.

LINDA: What did your mom and dad think?

NORRIS: I don't know. I was living alone in Washington with my wife. Just the two of us. I considered that a temporary assignment and it proved to be because three weeks after I went into the Navy I got a letter assigning me to my favorite run.

LINDA: Your favorite run which was?

NORRIS: From Norfolk Virginia to Wilmington, North Carolina.

LINDA: Doing what?

NORRIS: Railway Mail Clerk.

LINDA: Something you knew a little bit about.

NORRIS: Oh yeah.

LINDA: So when you got into the Navy did you go to boot camp?

NORRIS: Oh yes, I went to boot camp. But I don't know if I went to the Navy at all because I had a friend in the Superintendent's office that somehow or another failed to transfer me to the Navy so I was officially in the Post Office Department for the full time.

LINDA: So all the time you were aboard the 534 you were still in the Post Office Department.

NORRIS: According to the records I was. I drew retirement for it so it suits me.

LINDA: I was going to say do you get any more or less money for that?

NORRIS: In the end after I had been retired for about 9 months I got a letter from the General Accounting Office saying that they had found an error in the records. That I had not been given credit for the two years that I was in the Navy so that was added to my retirement. They sent me a nice fat check to make up for that failure.

LINDA: That was okay with you.

NORRIS: I didn't argue with them.

LINDA: So where did you go to boot camp?

NORRIS: Bainbridge, Maryland about 80 miles north of Washington.

LINDA: What did you do there?

NORRIS: Boot Camp. That is what I did there. I just went in there for a toughening up period. Give you a chance to give you every kind of inoculation they can think of and give you a little instruction as to what goes on in the Navy. Then you were examined frequently and all the records compiled and you were finally given an interview asking where you wanted to go in the United States Navy. I asked him what I was qualified for and he said just about any damn thing you want. I thought of going to the Aviation Cadet School at Chapel Hill and found out it was a 9 months school so I picked Quartermaster School which is only three months. That would get me into action quicker than anything else. I did think some about going to electronic school because I had heard of something called Radar that had just been invented and I also heard something about something called television and I had actually seen a little television set one time. Grand

Central Terminal in New York City. But I had decided I would stick with the Quartermaster. It sounded more interesting.

LINDA: What does a Quartermaster do on board?

NORRIS: Quartermaster was the navigation center. In the Army the Quartermaster was in charge of supplies and quarters but in the Navy you are in charge of a quarter deck which was entirely different. So a Navy Quartermaster was navigation section. Also we were supposed to be able to be signalmen. And in a pinch work radio and of course radar was on board the ship. We had one set. Very primitive and after I had seen it in operation a few times I learned how to operate it and I don't think we ever had another radar man even come in the chart room. When we needed radar we went and turned it on and read it.

LINDA: Who did you report to?

NORRIS: The Captain.

LINDA: Right to the Captain, not an officer?

NORRIS: Well we had an officer named Sarres that was in charge of the Navigation Department. He knew nothing about navigation and no much of anything about anything else in my opinion.

LINDA: So you went basically right to the Captain?

NORRIS: Well the Captain was a brown coat Quartermaster which was a Quartermaster with enough knowledge and seniority and ability to be given a temporary commission and he told me after he left the ship, he said I had made up my mind I was going to have the best Quartermaster in

the Squadron so he gave me a fit for about a month. He wanted to know everything that I knew and why I didn't know more. I finally learned to read his signals and so when he would ask me a question I knew it was going to come back in a few days so I would bone up on that question and the next time he asked me I would tell him back. The Captain and I got along very well together.

LINDA: Captain Olsen?

NORRIS: Captain Olsen. George Vincent Olsen I believe. I am not sure about his middle name. He and Mr. Coles who was the Engineering Officer and Bojon, can't remember his name right off hand, were the only three regular Navy men on board ship. All the rest of us were civilian Navy and our Navy was what you call the dungaree Navy. We didn't have all the fancy doings that battleships, cruisers and destroyers did. They had to wear pretty uniforms and keep neat all the time and all sort so of things like that. We just tried to get the job done.

LINDA: What did you think of the LST? Where did you board the 534?

NORRIS: I went on board Panama City, Florida.

LINDA: What did you think when you went there and you saw this LST.

NORRIS: I thought it was big until I got up the next morning and got up topside and saw how little it was. I thought well I am hooked on this thing, supposed to be seagoing so lets go. Found out it was a flat bottom job. Just a barge with motors.

LINDA: They were pretty valuable during the war though.

NORRIS: Yeah they learned to do quite a few tricks with LST's.

LINDA: You said in here when I asked you where did you sail from you said where the ship went I went. So where did you go?

NORRIS: From Panama City the whole crew still in training we finally got orders to go to Baton Rouge. We went up there and loaded fuel or was it ammunitions. I believe we loaded ammunition in Baton Rouge and then came down to Algiers from loading fuel there. I don't remember which is which. Anyway when we went into New Orleans it was about 2 or 3 in the morning and I was in the wheel house and began to smell oranges and I thought now that is an odd thing. When it came daylight found out we were sailing right through orange groves. You could look down twenty or thirty feet from the ship and look down on the side of the river and there were orange groves. We went levies there and sailing above the top of the trees. Always remember smelling oranges and wondering where that smell came from.

LINDA: After that you sailed out?

NORRIS: We were given independent orders to sail to Sandy Hook, New York or New Jersey for degousing which is a process to remove the normal magnetism of the ship that has been in one place too long. It picks up magnetism and fouls up every compass you ever saw.

LINDA: Do you have to do the degousing out in the ocean?

NORRIS: No. Once degoused as long as you keep moving and turning the magnetism wouldn't settle in the ship. If you were anchored or tied up in one direction for too long you wouldn't. If you were on the bay on an anchor you would be swinging around different directions so it didn't

bother you but if you were tied up to someplace that is when it would have an effect on you. Anyhow you had to have that done before you went overseas. Then the compass compensator came on board out in the harbor, we turned in every direction and he tried to get magnetic compasses lined up. The same men did the same thing down in New Orleans but he had to come and check them again before we went across. And after that I think we went up to Boston. I don't know whether we were waiting for orders or whether that was part of the orders or what. Anyway we went to Boston. And then from Boston to Halifax, Nova Scotia and waited there for a convoy to form up. There were six LST's assigned to that convoy. We had not guns that would amount to anything. Only anti-aircraft gun, but we did have radar. That wonderful thing called radar. We had a set of radar set on board. So we were radar guard for the convoy. The escorts were destroyers and destroyer escorts and planes. We had to have plane protection for about 100 miles offshore and before we got to England and they would come and cover us from there coming in.

LINDA: Anything happen on the way from Boston to Nova Scotia.

NORRIS: Not that I remember. It was a normal trip.

LINDA: And then you got in the convoy. Anything happen in the convoy?

NORRIS: We kind of got attacked by I don't know if it was a wolfpack of submarines or whether just one or two got in there and blew up two or three ships. But we had been sailing through the highfield in hopes of avoiding them.

LINDA: In hopes of avoiding those submarines? So you suspected there were German submarines.



NORRIS: They were known to be in the area. They were covering the whole North Atlantic trade route.

LINDA: So the convoy purposes went into the iceberg to divert or not let

NORRIS: Yes that was a certain amount of protection.

LINDA: You mention that being one of the frightening things when you heard the ice scrapping on the hull.

NORRIS: Yes, I had gone to bed lying in my bunk and heard this crazy screeching sound. Couldn't figure out what it was. Finally dawned on me that we were running into those darn icebergs and they were sliding along the side of the ship. I knew how thick that side was. I don't think more than 8 or 20 people aboard ship knew how thin our sides were.

LINDA: That must of been a good feeling that you were hitting all these strong icebergs with a half inch hull.

NORRIS: Yeah because we didn't have a kind of bow that would go through them nicely. Ours was a kind of blunt bow and I was afraid we were going to hit one head on.

LINDA: So you were going through there and all of a sudden, was the submarine attack a suprise?

NORRIS: Not too much. Were were expecting to be under attack of some sort. Of course it was a surprise when it hit. First think it hit was an oil tanker. He lit up that whole sky. I can remember going by and people in the water screaming for us to stop and help them and the convoy orders were

absolutely no stopping. But the destroyer escorts were in there working and I would imagine picked up practically all of them. If they were sensible enough to be wearing life jackets and sensible enough lucky enough to be alive.

LINDA: If there were icebergs wouldn't the water have been cold?

NORRIS: The water at that time was 28 degrees and according to the charts your survival was limited to 45 seconds if you were completely exposed to them. Of course if you were in the foul weather gear that we had you were in pretty good shape. But we slept with our clothes on in that convoy.

LINDA: With your foul weather gear on.

NORRIS: Before you went to bed at night take a shower, put on clean underwear and put on your clothes and go to bed.

LINDA: People told me, some of the other people I have interviewed that torpedoes may have been coming at the 534 because of the flat bottom they went under you.

NORRIS: No. They could have but the first ship that was hit was far in advance of us. Way up ahead of the convoy and the second one was not too far but he was also ahead of us. They were the only two ships hit in the convoy that I ever heard of.

LINDA: Where were you when the convoy got attacked?

NORRIS: I happen to be on watch when the first ship was hit. I remember I talked to the Captain about different things and one of them was signaling to the

crew in case of attack. The Quartermaster on watch had a switch. It rang the bells and he also had a speaker that went all over the ship. So when I called out general quarters, general quarters all hands man your battlestation, that sort of crap, he had said sound that alarm at least five seconds. Now that sounded like a long time at times. I sounded the damn thing for 20 seconds. I think I repeated it three times for general quarters. The Captain was down below sleeping in his bed in the deck below and I remember 20 seconds after I had sounded the first alarm I heard him speaking from topside. He had climbed up on the outside and taken command of the ship. Mr. Right was on the opposite deck when we hit and I can remember his voice - sound general quarters - it sounded like he was bored to death when he said that - sound general quarters. I kidded him about it.

LINDA: What did he say?

NORRIS: He said I was as excited as I could be. I didn't know I was doing in. So I said you sounded like you were bored to death.

LINDA: Probably scared the jabbers out of him or something.

NORRIS: No, I think he had trained himself to keep under control in an emergency and it just took over and he actually sounded like he was not the least bit excited.

LINDA: Were you excited?

NORRIS: I was too busy because by the time I was sending that everybody else had left the wheel house and I was standing back there holding these two things and steering with one foot till Doug and I don't know who the other

Quartermaster showed up. I believe it was a Coast Guard Quartermaster. A kid named Curtis.

LINDA: You were older. How do you think you were affected by all these kinds of things - icebergs, being attacked on a convoy, versus one of the kids on board that were 17 or 18.

NORRIS: Well you don't really think about that. It happens. It is over with. You might remember it later but at the time I don't think you really think about it. That is the point of all that training - that you do what you are told to do at the proper time.

LINDA: So the training kind of gets you out of the mind - I can remember when you are young you fear nothing and then every day you get older little fears creep back into your life. So going off to war, being in a convoy getting attacked by submarines to me at 35 would be really scary.

NORRIS: I had, the Captain and I had the two best jobs on the ship. Any exercise that we had people had a different thing that they did and different exercises except the Captain and the Quartermaster. He automatically took command of the ship and I automatically took the wheel no matter what happened. We always ended up in those two places. The only exception was if there was a man overboard. I had two life rings on the outside and I went out and threw that over to try to mark the spot if somebody reported a man overboard and then the other was abandon ship. I had to get rid of the codebook.

LINDA: Did you ever have a man overboard?

NORRIS: I think Johnny Mack did. He did it deliberately though. He claims it was an accident but that kid was about half crocked one night. Somebody bet

him he wouldn't dive. Before they could finish saying it he was over there.

LINDA: Did you have to pick him up.

NORRIS: No we were anchored at the time. He claimed that he fell overboard or something. I don't know how he got out of it. He gave a good enough excuse when the Captain asked about it.

LINDA: When you guys ran the initial day going over to Normandy for the invasion did you know that you were headed to Normandy.

NORRIS: Definitely. That was the only purpose for us being there.

LINDA: How long were you in England, how long was the ship there, a week, a month?

NORRIS: Several months. It wasn't at all unusual for all the LST's in the area to be ordered out just as if we were loaded. Make it look like the invasion had started. We might go out five or six miles in the channel and then turn around and come back. Sometimes we would even load troops, tanks and everything else. Well is this going to be the one? Nope. Back we go again. Then on the 5th of June the crew that we loaded you knew it meant business. Then all of a sudden cancel the orders. Seal the ship. Nobody leave or come on board. No messages sent. And damn it we had our radio on shore. The AM radio that we had in Seoul. So they made an exception and we could call and tell them where we were and they brought it out on somebody's little boat. Came out and brought our radio to us. Then the next morning the BBC started out there - (humming a song) if forgot the name of it - anyway that was their signal that they were getting ready to start news broadcast and on the 6th of June there was a slight pause, and

instead of the news here comes the theme again. And I don't remember if it came a third time or night but anyway it came on a second time and I imagine everybody really started listening then. And I can't remember for sure if the announcer was followed by Eisenhower or not. But sometime along the line during the day Eisenhower read his little speech. And sent a copy of that speech to every installation. I know it came on board our ship. The Captain read it over the ship's communications system. Sarres read it to the navigation department. And I had a copy that I was supposed to read to the Quartermasters. So when they got together I said listen you heard the damn thing three times you want to hear it again. No - okay consider it read. I folded mine up and put it in my pocket.

LINDA: How did the letter go?

NORRIS: Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen we are engaged on a great crusade and all that sort of crap.

LINDA: Well it was a whole different ambiance. Before you were there, you knew what you were getting ready for.

NORRIS: Certainly everybody knew that we were supposed to invade Europe. Didn't know exactly where except when we got the final orders. By then the Captain and I had gotten along to the point he called me into the chart room, opened up his orders, said we are going to land in a place called - let me see what was the name of that - he told me the name of the little old town we were supposed to land in. Think I would remember something like that. Later on he got to the point where he could trust me enough and just hand me the orders and say when are we going to get there? What is the ETA? Every once in a while I would catch him in there figuring it out again making sure I was right.

LINDA: Well he was a good Captain.

NORRIS: He was a Captain. He was determined about his navigation.

LINDA: So before you went over to Europe what was life like everyday. You did your job. What did you do at night? And what would you do during the day if you worked at night?

NORRIS: Well occasionally we would have liberty. Sometimes it would be midnight. Sometimes overnight liberty. If I got overnight I would take train to go into London, check into the Dorchester on Rainbow Square where the United States Army had rented every hotel in the area. They called it Rainbow Square.

LINDA: A lot of fun at Rainbow Square huh?

NORRIS: All the talent gathered there for business purposes.

LINDA: So you then get your orders and you are headed to France.

NORRIS: Well we were in and out of several places before we were finally assigned to a particular group and we end up at Harris England. That is on the east coast about 100 miles up from the point. And if you ever talk to James again find out why he never got that message.

LINDA: What message?

NORRIS: When we were coming around the northern part of Ireland and heading down the Irish sea we got a radio message and I happened to be the one that caught it instead of the radio man. I don't know what they were doing but they didn't catch when we were called - order us to report to an exact

point just off the English Coast at a certain time. So we got down there and stopped and a British destroyer came alongside and shot a line with a message attached to it assigning us to a British squadron because 6 of us had come over ahead of our regular squadron to finish training in time enough before the rest of the squadron got in. So we ended up in the British Navy for about 11 weeks.

LINDA: You were taken command by the British Navy?

NORRIS: We were under the British command. Of course we had our own officers and everything. It made no difference to the crew except one time when we went for supplies and could get American supplies. I remember I got a pair of dungarees and they must have been intended for ladies because I finally got roomers to put something in my hip pockets. They were most commodious.

LINDA: So when you went over to France you were carrying British troops.

NORRIS: Yes. We carried British troops for 10 or 12 trips before we ever got the first Americans.

LINDA: What was your first trip like? You went over and where did you land - Gold Beach?

NORRIS: We landed just below the point where the Omaha beach met the British beaches. We were the first little town just south of Omaha.

LINDA: What was that like. You pulled up there and what were you doing - pull up the LST and let the guys off.

NORRIS: Pull up, unload and back off.



LINDA: Was it like a big parking lot?

NORRIS: Well not big. Naval engineers which were later called frogmen I think. They had gone in and blasted a path through the hedgehogs and laid out lines to mark it in case the ship was sunk or your boat was punctured or anything like that and guys would have something to guide them on in the rest of the way. But you just aimed right in the middle of that thing and kept going until you hit land. Drop, open the barrel gates and drop the ramp and unload and if you knew your business well enough you might be off within an hour.

LINDA: Its incredible. You pulled up, opened up doors, let down ramps, got people off, and pulled back up and got out.

NORRIS: When you went in you went in with the bow ballast tanks empty so the front end of the ship is as light as you can make it. Just as soon as you hit the water, hit the land, you pump those ballast tanks full to lock you down. As soon as the last man or tank or whatever you had was off of there they pumped it empty again, lifted you. After the 3rd or 4th time if you were conscious enough you might feel the first little tremor when that bottom lifted off. When you did you get that hull broad bank anchor, pull on that tight cable and yank yourself off the beach. And we were good at it. I didn't realize how good we were until after I got thinking about it later on and I thought good lord we were compared to most ships darn good.

LINDA: 534 seemed to have a little charm.

NORRIS: They were lucky. Just think about it. 27 planes come out of Japan trying to sink us and only one gets through and he hits us in 6 feet of water so all

you had to do was settled down there and not kill a man of ours only the CBs.

LINDA: Going off to Okinawa and the Normandy Invasion. It had a little angel watching over it.

NORRIS: Never had a hold punched in it till we met up with them in Okinawa and then during all of the Normandy invasion I never saw a German plane. We had absolute air cover the whole time. When they started those V1 and B2 bombs now that is a different thing. You can hear one of those things coming. Sounds like an outdoor motor puttering along. The V1 were coming over low enough that we would shoot at them.

LINDA: Every hit any of them.

NORRIS: No but RAF learned a trick though. Rubin and I were talking about it a couple of weeks ago. He said do you remember some of those V1s coming back from England and going back to Germany and I said sure and he said well how in the world did that happen. I said we are damn spitfires. The RAF found out that they could stay five or 6 thousand feet above the normal track and then build up enough speed to catch one of them, get under them and clip the wings so that the darn thing would turn around and head back.

LINDA: Can't hear what she said.

NORRIS: We made 29 crossings.

LINDA: You carried British troops over, what did you bring back?

NORRIS: Anything that needed to be moved. We might be hauling a half a dozen oil tankers one, next time it might be nothing but just ammunitions. They were very versatile things.

LINDA: So you would pull up, have to unload and then load to go back.

NORRIS: No we didn't load anything coming back. We were just carrying stuff over.

LINDA: Did you go back empty?

NORRIS: We were supposed to bring back 600 prisoners one time and I don't know how we got out of that. I remember them issuing out guns and everything and I didn't have nothing in the wheel house and they brought me two 1903 rifles and two Thompson sub machine guns so that the people in the wheelhouse would be armed. Built me a rack. Kept the whole thing the whole time. Never did fire one of them. Whenever I did do any target practice it would be the guns that the gunners mate had in the service so mine never got unlatched at all except the time when we went swimming over there. I had pulled one of the 1903's off, loaded it and got out on the deck in case we saw any sharks. Bonner was swimming down there and he came climbing up the ladder - what the hell are you doing out here with a gun. I said I am looking for sharks. Well he said that is not your job. He called two or three of the gunners mates and told them to get a rifle and get up here.

LINDA: He figured they knew more about shooting a rifle than you did?

NORRIS: Well it was not my duty and that was actually something that the gunners mate could be doing. I mean within his occupation.

LINDA: Maybe you could have sent a signal to the shark.

NORRIS: I was planning to if I saw one. I was going to send him a 1903 30 calibre  
oat 6 bullet to him.

LINDA: That would have been quite a signal. So what was the most frightening  
part of that whole Normandy European Invasion. Was there any time that  
you were just scared?

NORRIS: We were coming back from France one night and I saw the craziest  
signaling lights I had ever seen in my life. Normally when they swept the  
mines out of an area we would get an order saying where the route was  
and they would put up floating buoys along that route to mark it. But this  
night I could see a light it was flashing two and half seconds and another  
light was flashing 5 seconds another light was flashing ten seconds. I  
thought what in hell. I look on at sharks and they had nothing to identify  
any of those things. The only light I could see was 2 1/2 seconds. So I  
went on up and spoke to the Captain. He was in charge that particular  
night. I don't know but he was actually in command at the time. So he  
said well what does the chart show. I said the chart shows one guide light  
2 1/2 seconds. So he said well that it is. He said stay up here and watch it  
for a while and sure enough the water was rough that that light would go  
completely out of sight behind a wave and maybe pop up in 2 1/2 seconds  
and next it might be five and next may ten. But it would be varying all the  
time and it looked like a whole series of lights. It thought those red guns  
they have a minefield out of this world tonight. But later on I would say  
on or about the 6th or 7th trip I had gone in and got the corrections and  
plotted new mine fields and there was not a foot of            in that English  
channel that was open and we had orders to sail that night. SO I talked to  
the captain about that and he said well those mines are laid down in depths  
that would be too deep to be affected by us. He said they are magnetic

mines and we do not have bulk of steel in this ship to ignite one of them. I said what do you want to do just ignore them and he said Yup. He said from not on let's just forget about the mines and I never paid anymore attention to them.

LINDA: You trusted that you didn't have enough of the fields?

NORRIS: We were too shallow and anyway we didn't have the metal.

LINDA: That was one good thing about the construction of the LST - huh.

NORRIS: A destroyer would maybe 30 feet down below the surface of the water and have sides maybe 2 or 3 inches thick. We had little 1/2 sides and we were sitting right on top of the water just like a bed pan. That is what a lot of people called them. Floating bed pans among other names. They called them the standing target, the last ship delayed.

LINDA: I read that a lot of LST's transported wounded back.

NORRIS: We never did happen to be on one of those details and the time we were supposed to be holding the prisoners we saw them marched up and stop and then we got orders to come back in. We never did find out why it was cancelled. We were supposed to bring back about 600 German soldiers that particular trip.

LiNDA: Were there rough checks on the rough seas in the English Channel. A lot of big waves. I remember my dad telling me about big big waves.

NORRIS: No. In the September storms it was bad. And we had one hurricane. We were in Portland Harbor and the wind got up pretty heavy and I had been reading the instruments there. Normally I would read the barometer every

thirty minutes but it started that morning it started dropping a little faster than usual. So I started reading it every 15 minutes and then the darn thing dropped down below 29. I had never seen a barometer so I went down and called the Captain. I said Captain I don't know what is going on, that barometer is going crazy. Somebody at one of the doors

LINDA: Okay wait hold it there. Where were we? What kind of fun things happened going back and forth across the English Channel.

NORRIS: Fun things? I don't recall fun of any kind on that. It was very tense at times. The LST's were supposed to hopefully make thirteen trips. They were expendable and they were hoped to make 13 trips and when we made the 26th trips and still going, made the 29th trip and somebody finally had mercy on us and said go back to the States and we went back to the States and so help me they were going to fit us out and send us out to the Pacific.

LINDA: That is that good old Evansville shipyard.

NORRIS: Yup too well built.

LINDA: I remember you said how good the

NORRIS: They had a very good reputation. Of course a lot of things we tell you are things we heard. We had no verification but we didn't have anybody saying they were lies either. All we know is that is what we were told.

LINDA: What kind of news was happening. What was the American people hearing? The French people, the European people during this time?

NORRIS: I assume they were getting fairly accurate reports but after seeing some of the newsreels and finding out how phony they are and I doubt we were

getting too much of the truth. About the only news that I can remember is picking up a copy of the London Times and having 3 solid pages of death announcements. I mean these were just two line announcements. This was after an air raid. And whenever you figure how many they can get on a page,

LINDA: That is a lot of names

NORRIS: It would be that many reported in one night. The British really had a rough rough time.

LINDA: Do you think the British lost more men than American troops.

NORRIS: In proportion yes they lost a lot more. They were in a longer time and they were in a total war. The American people had some irritation if they were not in the service because the war was going on but that was about all. Had shortages of various things and they had to go with the ration cards for different things. But short of an actual shortage of something we never had it over in the United States. Over there they were short in everything.

LINDA: It really affected the country.

NORRIS: Oh yeah and everybody was in the war effort somehow or another. They were involved in that war somehow.

LINDA: How were the women involved.

NORRIS: Lord I wouldn't guess but at the very least they would have organizations do things. You might have two of your neighbors with a death in a family

so a church group would be organized to go around and confer with them. They were all involved in the war somehow or the other.

LINDA: What about the people in France?

NORRIS: We had no contact with the people in France. I imagine the Germans cleaned all the French people away from the shore. I do not know. We just didn't have any contact with the French.

LINDA: Were you ever at Shurberg?

NORRIS: Yes.

LINDA: Why were you there?

NORRIS: I would have to look at the records to find out about that. What did we go to Shurberg for? Must have been delivering something.

LINDA: My father had been in the hospital for about three months in Shurberg. He had shrapnell behind his eye and he was blinded temporarily. So I wonder how he got to Shurberg.

NORRIS: We had gone into Shurberg the Germans had sunk two ships. Kind of caddy cornered the mouth of it. And we had very little clearance but we got through that and got into the harbor but I don't remember what we were doing there. We weren't picking up anything to bring back so it had to be delivering something but it wasn't troops. I don't know why we were at Shurberg.

LINDA: Were you writing back and forth to Ann at that time?



NORRIS: Yes.

LINDA: Get mail every day, every week?

NORRIS: Not in any regular fashion. Just whenever it got through.

LINDA: You could only pick up mail when you were back in England.

NORRIS: Yeah. You might go 3 or 4 weeks and not get a single piece of mail and then maybe you get a collection of all of that three weeks all at one time. It was very erratic but I mean it was understandable.

LINDA: Do you have brothers and sisters?

NORRIS: I had 2 brothers and two sisters or two half brothers and two half sisters. I was an only child of a second marriage.

LINDA: Were they writing to you or you writing to them?

NORRIS: No I don't think I ever wrote to either one of them. I wrote to my wife. That is about all.

LINDA: Did you ever write to your parents?

NORRIS: I may have. I didn't think about making any trips to them.

LINDA: So after the 29 trips back and forth what happened you got orders to go back to the United States?

NORRIS: Back to the States.

LINDA: Where did you go.

NORRIS: We came back to, our orders were Newark but we made first port at Norfolk.

LINDA: Why?

NORRIS: Because we had a couple of fellas that had to be unloaded. I don't know whether the Captain did that on his own or whether he got permission to do it. I am sure he got permission but I have an idea he just decided he would try that. Make that his first landing. Anyway we landed and we were back off I would say within 15 minutes. Just long enough for them to get ashore, the Captain would run up and sign something and get the heck back on. That was one of the few times we made a port and I didn't get off.

LINDA: So is that kind of a situation, you know my dad was a coxswain, so is that kind of the situation where you would have kind of anchored somewhere and maybe the Captain and those two people that need to get on.

NORRIS: If we were staying for any period of time, yes. But this time we pulled up to a pier, and the Captain and his two men got off. The Captain came back alone and we just got underway.

LINDA: What did LCVPs do during the Normandy invasion. Were they?

NORRIS: They were mostly carrying supplies and unloading when the actual invasion was going on. They would hover around one of these big troop carriers and load up with troops and bring them ashore. They would be the lucky ones because a lot of them had to do some wading get ashore. But if you called on our boat they walked to shore dry.

LINDA: I remember my dad saying he would take men in and they would get off, they were Army, they would get off and they would run on shore and my dad would tell stories about people he would see dead around him.

NORRIS: Ye, chances are that when we landed at Portarborssam that was the place we went to first. But I have an idea that small boats were up in Omaha Beach helping unload troop carriers. LCVPs that is. We called them small boats because they were smaller than we were anyway.

LINDA: Much smaller. So an LCVP might not be just be assigned if it was a 534 small boat it might not have just serviced 534 they could have gotten off and

NORRIS: Oh yeah I can remember one time when Shirkonson, it may have been your dad, but one of the other coxswain was out over in the Pacific were out on independent orders. They were gone for over a week. Occasionally we would anchor they would come flying up, sit down and get a meal, and get back in the boat and head off again. Any ship that would call them for service they would pull up along side and do whatever they could do. But they were independent command.

LINDA: But they were always under the command of Captain Olsen.

NORRIS: Yes, but they were independent command of that small boat. They were subject to command of any ship but they were in command of their own vehicle, their own transport.

LINDA: So the LCVPs had a coxswain, a gunner and maintenance guy right?

NORRIS: Usually. That was more or less permanently assigned to them or maybe as a crew. I don't know how many crews they might have had for each boat.

NEXT TAPE

NORRIS: People outside of our division. Maybe on liberty if we knew somebody we would go make liberty with him but so far as keeping contact aboard ship we pretty much compartmentalized.

LINDA: I remember him talking a lot about Joe Symanski. What did you have to do with him? He was a boatsman mate right?

NORRIS: He was in charge of deck forces and probably the anchor. I remember he asked me for a sounding lid and I told him why the hell don't you go to so and so. I told him go to so and so for that and he said that is your job. I said the heck it is. You know I asked the Captain and he said yes you are supposed to make up the sounding lids haven't you done it? So I had to get the book out and find out how to make a sounding lid. I got the supplies together, made up one and it was kind of fun so I made another one. Made one for myself.

LINDA: What is a sound lid? What is it?

NORRIS: It is a 6 pound weight tied to a line and it is marked out in fathoms. I believe the best I can remember, you have a little strip of leather with one strip it is one fathom, if it is split in two it was two fathoms, split in three parts it is three fathoms. Now I don't remember what was 4 fathoms, but anyway then 5 fathoms was the first knot and from then on you go up by 5 fathom links. By that time after you have counted off a few times you are supposed to be able to do it just by how you move your hands. Anyway I made up me a sounding line and got out and tried it a few times. Hung it up beside my desk and the darn thing disappeared. I never did find out

who stole my sounding line. But nobody ever asked for another one so I figured Symanski got it.

LINDA: Did the 534 have a mascot.

NORRIS: We had a puppy one time. It seems to me like we had two puppies I am not sure. Anyway when we were tied up at the beach at Mt. , it was that beach with the tremendous beach head. It has about a four-mile beach in front of it. Momashell. San Mashell. And somebody stole a St. Bernard puppy. San Mashell On Grell. Where's that map thing. Somebody was trying to figure out a name for him and they ended up calling him Michael in the Gravy. He stayed with us for about 6 months. He was getting to be a huge dog and the guys would feed him coffee, soft drinks, anything and he got so he would drink anything put in front of him and the gunners mates were cleaning guns one time and using lye and that puppy got ahold of a mouth full of lye and killed him. But he would drink anything that was set down in front of him. If he saw a bowl with mush in it he would start lapping it up.

LINDA: Where did he sleep?

NORRIS: Wherever he darned pleased.

LINDA: Big enough and strong enough.

NORRIS: Oh yeah we had another puppy and they guys would try, everybody petting him and he would learn that he could come up in the chart room and sleep in the quad, nobody would bother him too much up there. I got to talking to him and it finally dawned on me wait a minute that dog doesn't pay attention to anybody talking to him.

LINDA: Norris you have to start that story over again because something outside, he goes up in the chart room

NORRIS: Up in the chart room and when I was speaking to him in english he paid no attention and I noticed he wouldn't answer the call \_\_\_\_ and I started speaking French to him and the puppy recognized it and they wondered how in the world I could get the dog to come to me when nobody else could get him. I would just barely whisper ec ec and he would come right to me.

LINDA: So you spoke French, that was cute. Did you speak French.

NORRIS: Not much just enough to get by.

LINDA: Just enough to call the dog.

NORRIS: Yah I could call the dog and I could dance? the pilot when the pilot was on board. One time the pilot gave me an order in French and I answered him in French. The Captain came down to the shortroom later and said I didn't know you spoke French. You haven't got it on your qualifications. I said I don't consider myself qualified. He said well you answered him in French and I said yeah normal words anybody can learn 15 or 20 words if you had to. All you do is just order right and gave him a number of degrees and all I had to do was answer him. He said well the pilot looked a little surprised when you answered him and I said I was surprised when he spoke French instead of English too.

LINDA: Did you ever have the barrage balloons over in Normandy?

NORRIS: Yes in the first part of the invasion we had barrage balloons. We lost one but I don't remember how it happened, whether somebody shot it over,

seems to me like it did, firing at a plane and it hit a cable. I am not sure about that but I remember we did lose a barrage. It seemed like it was replaced and then pretty soon all of them were removed. They were a darn nuisance but for a little flying plane they were protection.

LINDA: Now the 534 carried and LCI for a period of time

NORRIS: Both oceans

LINDA: You used it or you transported it?

NORRIS: No dumped it off. They could cross the channel too.

LINDA: What was their purpose?

NORRIS: Carrying troops or tanks either one. LCI carried infantry. LCTs would carry personnel or tanks.

LINDA: What was the personality of the 534 in the Atlantic. It had to be different in the Atlantic than in the Pacific because you had different crews. How would you characterize the personality of the 534.

NORRIS: I would say in the Pacific we had a much easier going. By then practically everyone had learned their job pretty well even if you had new men on board it didn't take them long to straighten out. At least we had somebody with some experience when we went in the Pacific.

LINDA: Okay so the 534 in the Atlantic Theater versus the Pacific Theater - tell me about it.

NORRIS: Well in the Atlantic we were all uncertain. To begin with we didn't know too much about what we were doing. We didn't know what we were getting into but after we had been through it all that time we had begun to feel pretty cocky I reckon. Then I guess compared to a lot of ships we had a right to be. We did a pretty darn good job all things considered.

LINDA: You didn't lose a man.

NORRIS: I always figured the reason the United States Navy beat the Japanese Navy is they were just more messed up than we were.

LINDA: So you got orders to go back home, go back to the States, came back into Newark?

NORRIS: Yes, we landed I believe at Pier 42. One of those piers. We were tied up there until the shipyard was ready for us for the conversion. And they did some work then in New York too. I don't recall all that was done. There was a lot of work done to that ship. Converting it for Pacific duty.

LINDA: What kind of difference in the ship did you have to make to go to the Pacific?

NORRIS: Well we had to install evaporators to furnish fresh water. There is no way we could carry enough fresh water for a crew for that period of time so we had to make our own water. We were carrying extra LCVPs.

LINDA: Did they think they need extra LCVPs because they didn't secure the beach head as much or...



NORRIS: I imagine they found that they were in a little bit of a shortage and Army and Navy both believed in not in having enough they wanted ten times as much as they had. They would never have enough of anything.

LINDA: So did you go on leave when you went into New York?

NORRIS: No I didn't get the first 30 leave. I got the second thirty-day leave. At that time my wife was living in Washington so I scooted down to Washington. Spent that month at home.

LINDA: What was Ann doing at home? Working?

NORRIS: Yes. She got tired of not having enough to do and took a business course and before she even finished the course she had been offered a job with the Internal Revenue Service so she went to work for the Treasury Department. There is a rule of some sort somewhere in the government that is violated frequently but you are not supposed to have two people in the same department if they are married. So it was all right for her to work for the Treasury Department but not for the Post Office and I couldn't work for the Treasury Department.

LINDA: What is the funniest thing that ever happened aboard the 534.

NORRIS: The funniest was that crack to Overstate made of Syzmanski. Coming down the ladder out of the galley you had about this much clearance. When you were carrying a tray you carried it low and walked down the ladder and be all right. But if you got a little bit forward there it caught on that ledge and Syzmanski I think had his head turned. He was talking to somebody behind him and caught the edge of the tray and we had spaghetti that day and the spaghetti land on top of his head and on his shoulders. Before he got to the bottom of the ladder Overstate was

standing one in front of me and I heard Overstate say - You know Symanski that looks good. That was no doubt the most extemporaneous funniest remark I ever heard.

LINDA: Well he was a big guy anyway so with a bunch of spaghetti all over him

NORRIS: Yeah everybody enjoyed laughing at Syzmanski and Arndt. Arndt was a gunners mate and he was little on the clumsy side so any time you had an excuse to laugh at him they laughed at him too but you better be in a crowd because he is too big to laugh at by yourself.

LINDA: So you were in New York, you had your leave, you got re-outfitted, got repaired so what happened. Sailed around San Diego?

NORRIS: Yeah we now I don't know about the rest of them I remember turning in Atlantic charts which were up to date. Good collection for somebody. Got down to Panama, went through the canal and went out on the Pacific side I went in the hydrographic office and drew us a set of Pacific charts and outside of seeing Iguanas about ten feet from the ship nothing particularly I remember about Panama except I sure like the summer uniforms the soldiers and sailors had down there. White shorts and just as neat as can be. You looked so cool. We had those long pants.

LINDA: Far cry from the Atlantic where you were cold all the time.

NORRIS: We thought it was a mighty fine place. You would be warm on the outside as well as the inside.

LINDA: So you kind of bounced over until you ended up in Okinawa right? Quam, Saipan.

NORRIS: Yes we reported into San Diego and got orders to Honolulu. They formed up a little bit of a convoy there. I believe two tugs, seemed to me like there was an oil tanker in that bunch too. And 4 or 5 other LSTs. And we were in command. Big shots.

LINDA: Because you had all this experience behind you.

NORRIS: Yeah we hot shots. No we had a darn good reputation for navigation because of George V. Olsen. He intended to have that record. When he left the ship he was transferred to in charge of hydrographic office in San Pedro. So he must of had a pretty good reputation.

LINDA: When you came into New York was transferred off right then?

NORRIS: Yup.

LINDA: So who took over the ship?

NORRIS: French.

LINDA: Right then.

NORRIS: Just as soon as the commander surrenders his command somebody else is automatically in command.

LINDA: So you must have had some fun along the way in Hawaii..

NORRIS: I don't remember too much fun. We went swimming a lot in Hawaii and they had a good beer joint there right on the beach. If Robey and I went off together and I would order a beer and Robey would order a beer and I would drink my beer and then Robey would hand me his and I would

drink his. That went on I would say four or five trips. Robey finally moved on I believe the shuttle trolley going from Pearl Harbor into Honolulu. He said it is time for you to do something for me. What's that? He said I want a banana split. You ought to eat one too so I ate a banana split and nearly puked on it. I wasn't accustomed to all that sweet stuff. He loved it.

LINDA: Was he your best friend.

NORRIS: Yeah.

LINDA: Just because... what did he do on board?

NORRIS: Well with me I generally kept pretty busy.

LINDA: What did Duncan Robey do?

NORRIS: I don't know what he did in his spare time, if he had any. But at various times he would be on the main engines and pumping stations, laundry room, he was apparently qualified for just about everything aboard ship.

LINDA: So why did you think you were going to the Pacific. What were you told.

NORRIS: They didn't have to tell you anything. You knew when you started making those particular changes it was for Pacific duty. You were on the way. You didn't know if you would be on board ship or transferred off. You had no idea what was going to happen. Take it as it comes.

LINDA: So you loaded up somewhere along the way and started carrying supplies over to Okinawa, right?

NORRIS: Yeah, we loaded up at Pearl Harbor. I never did pay attention to what supplies we were carrying. I remember, the only supplies I can remember were some civilian cigarettes. And our ship was service, so cigarettes with no tax paid on it. We were hauling civilian cigarettes and the reason I found out about that because somebody broke open one of those bid cartons of cigarettes and stole two or three cartons out of it. They were Pall-Malls and as far as I know I was the only one smoking Pall-Malls so I had to report to Captain's Mast be charged with stealing cigarettes. And Monroe was my advocate, you didn't have lawyers aboard ship but he was supposed to be conferring with me and I didn't know what the heck he was talking about or what he was figuring on doing. I knew I hadn't stolen any cigarettes. I was going to tell them that - you prove it. But when they started the investigation, Bonner said what cigarettes where they being stolen. From box such and such from shipment such and such.. and this that and the other. I don't know, I think it was about three cartons of cigarettes that were gone and Bonner said were they in this shipment that contained this particular carton of cigarettes. Yes. So we opened up the carton and he said all right now these are the tax stamps to show that these were for civilian use. He said give me your cigarettes. I gave him my cigarettes and he said these were the cigarettes that he was smoking and you could see that there was no tax to be paid on it because they were tax-free. Dismissed. That was over with.

LINDA: Is that the only time you got in trouble on the ship.

NORRIS: No, one time the Captain had a friend on another LST. They had some code words between them but when they wanted to get together to have a drunk.

LINDA: Olsen?

NORRIS: Yeah. I didn't know anything about this. Anyway we got a message . We were tied up or something and I happened to look out the window and saw somebody calling and so I got up and took the message and the message was "When we get to Antwoork lets get together for some cold tea. Best that I remember something of that sort. Anyway I knew better that Antwoork the way he said it, Antwoork was misspelled so I corrected his spelling. I handed it to the Captain, the Captain read it and he said is that the message you got? Yessir. Are you sure of the spelling? And I didn't catch it. He was asking me if I had made a change. I said yessir I am sure of it. He said I don't believe you should stay in command of ship's control. So the next day when we had quarters Overstate was in command and I was just a third class quartermaster. I think that went on for about two days and I don't know what might have happened but the Captain didn't like the way things happened he came back the third day and said you are back in charge of ship's control. That was the end of that.

LINDA: He never did say anything about...

NORRIS: No he told me later he said you were not supposed to change the letters in that word. We knew it was misspelled. But that was the way it was supposed to be. Antiwork instead of antwoork. The Dutch spelling was Antwerke and I thought he was trying to spell that so I changed it to the British spelling to erp.

LINDA: Were you ever wounded on board? Did you ever had to go into a field hospital.

NORRIS: No. The only time I had a scratch was when that darn plane hit us. Ship next door splattered the side of our ship with twenty's. Twenty millimeter anti aircraft gun.

LINDA: You weren't in Okinawa very long before you were attacked.

NORRIS: I don't know how long we were there. Not too long. I think we had orders to go to truck to pick up a load of something. I am not absolutely positive about that. I think I heard Captain or somebody or maybe Bonner I don't know who. Somebody said something that we were supposed to go to truck which was a supply base in that area. It would be a normal place to go to pick up supplies though. Of course after we got hi that was out of the question.

LINDA: What were you doing the day the Kamikaze pilot came around

NORRIS: Well at that time we were unloading and we had a bunch of seabeeies on board. Bunch of these little front loaders. Forklifts and they were unloading supplies. Among the supplies civilian Pall Mall cigarettes which were left.

LINDA: Where were you that day and what were you doing. You personally. Where were you on board when the kamikaze pilot

NORRIS: I have no idea. I was probably in the chart room. That is where is usually hung out. If I wasn't on watch on the bridge I would be int he chart room. I always had something to do in there. If nothing else I would be reading.

LINDA: Where did you sleep on board.

NORRIS: Well I slept for a long time in regular crew quarters and I came down one afternoon to do something around my bunk and the darn bunk was empty and my bedclothes were gone. So I went to see Burba and I said Burba what the heck happened to my gear and he said oh you have been transferred to chief quarters. You were supposed to be there all along. So

I went in there and sure enough they transferred me. I had to sleep with the other chiefs. I never actually was a Chief Quartermaster except acting Chief Quartermaster from about the 3rd day I went on board. Captain never explained it to me until later on. He said you might have been third class but you were acting Chief Quartermaster the whole time.

LINDA: Olsen had a special affection for you.

NORRIS: I don't know if it was affection. We got along mighty well. I think he was a little bit proud once in a while whenever I would pull something he liked. I didn't ask him too many questions but I found out that the Chief Quartermaster and he was actually a Chief Quartermaster on board 208 which was a coast guard ship, was a hot shot. So whenever I had a question and I could get to the 208 I would run up the 208 and ask him instead of me asking Olsen. And then Olsen would wonder how I found those things out. It took him a long time to figure out where I was getting my information.

LINDA: You had a little cheat sheet on the 208.

NORRIS: Yeah. And you know I tried my best to remember the guy's name and I can't do it.

LINDA: The guy on the 208.

NORRIS: Yeah.

LINDA: Did you eat good on board.

NORRIS: Yeah we had pretty good chow till we got to the Pacific. I don't know what happened in the galley. We lost some of our cooks. We lost our



baker over in England. He was the best shot too. Had the best record for shooting those darn 20 millimeters than anybody else. He got drunk. Captain threw the book at him and transferred him. Get him off the ship.

LINDA: Okay lets go back to the day the kamikaze plane came around and hit the ship. What happened then. There was fire? What do you remember about that day.

NORRIS: Well yeah. I remember trying to take pictures and the flame came in. Sometime earlier, I don't remember what was happening, but somebody asked me why don't you get your camera and get a picture of that. And I said well I am saving it to take a picture of the plane that hits us. And we had planes, kamikazes that come over occasionally, and I never bothered with the camera at all. For some reason I picked it up this time. Maybe because hearing those Marine pilots nailing them. Anyway I stepped out and here comes on kamikaze around and I thought well he is a long ways off but I'll try it. So I followed him around. He got shot and went in the water and the second kamikaze came and went past our stern. I might have gotten him, he was pretty close. Next thing I know whoomp the darn fool had turned around and come back and hit us from the other side. I hadn't even paid a bit of attention to him when he turned.

LINDA: Wouldn't that have been something if you had that on camera.

NORRIS: Yeah but he was so far away that little old single lens of mine, I saw when the film was first made knowing what to look for. You could actually see it. It looked like a bumblebee flying across there. It is so tiny.

LINDA: But then mass chaos must have happened on board. There were fires, you didn't know if people were wounded. You didn't know who survived.

NORRIS: Well when it went off the fire didn't start for about an hour or two and here we were sitting in 6 feet of water when the plane hit us and the bottom was blown we just settled on the bottom. See we were tied up right close to the shore. Tied up to a pier. And then the first thing I know started finding out what was happening down on the main deck. All those guys had been hit down there. But ther Army trucks came and haul them off . There was an Army hospital not too far from where we were. But I remember Romey Williams, Because I walked out on the top deck to look down to see what damage could be seen after the fire was out and there was Romey lying flat on his back with cut almost in two and a pile of blood all around him and I thought I hate to see Romey die and they picked up the wounded and everything else, the dead ones, hauled them off and somebody finally decided well pick up this one, he's dead too. Picked him up and he was still alive. Carried him over to the hospital, sewed him up and about three or four days later here comes Romey strolling in.

LINDA: Bet you thought you saw a ghost.

NORRIS: No I was never too suprised at anything. I was certainly suprised to find he was still alive because I walked by him twice and it never occurred to me that he might be alive. Everybody else was doing the same thing. I mean he was so obviously dead. Anybody that bleeds that much is bound to be dead.

LINDA: You have a lot of film. Were you always turning around with your camera?

NORRIS: No. Just every once in a while I would take to a notion to try to take a picture. A lot of those films were ruined. It wasn't unusual to take a whole roll of film and not get a picture out of it or take a roll and maybe

only half of it would be good. Mainly overextending the filter of the camera. I would be trying to take a picture when I simply did not have enough light. I might take a black and white picture when I first started using the camera and it had enough film speed that I could get a picture or something that you could at least see. Then when color film came out with that speed of ten which is wonderful for color if you had time enough and used the camera properly that low speed was good. But boy you had to have a light.

LINDA: Well after the kamikaze hit the ship and you couldn't live on board the ship where did you live?

NORRIS: Oh year we lived on board. It didn't do a great deal of damage to anything except carrying capacity. There was a big hole I would say about 4 or 5 feet wide and maybe 15 feet long where that bomb had gone underneath and just blown the bottom up.

LINDA: And then. So you were there. You put the fires out, life was going on and then the typhoons came.

NORRIS: Yeah.

LINDA: How did you feel about the typhoons.

NORRIS: Nothing we could do about it.

LINDA: Wasn't it scary. I heard that the thing got whipped around and we on for two or three days and in the middle of the night.

NORRIS: Well the wind went on for that long. We were finally free floating around and bumped into I believe it was McDonald Victory. It was a merchant

ship. It turned out to be the same ship that was tied up along side in London when a V2 bomb went off and almost tore the mast off of him. Cause I saw that mast while we were just hanging together. I said what happened to your mast? He said oh a bomb in London hit us. I said where were you King George Dockers or King Albert's dock I believe. Whichever one it was. I said when was that and he told me the date and I said hellfire I said you were the ship we were tied onto when that thing hit. I said thank you for saving us. He was a least about 20 feet above on top of ours. The bomb hit him and just blew atop of ours. Didn't bother us at all.

LINDA: Another happy movement. So when you guys So when the typhoon hit you guys were like beached.

NORRIS: Yup we were blown ashore and far enough on shore that we couldn't get off under our own. We weren't any good to anybody so there was no point for tugs coming yanking us off, so about all we were good for was to be stripped for parts. I think one of the first parts taken off was one of the rudders, no, part of the propeller system. We had a spare one bolted underneath the deck. I remember them taking it out. And from then on whatever was useful whatever anybody wanted, if we had it they come and strip it.

LINDA: You were living on the island at this time.

NORRIS: Practically. We were so far ashore that we couldn't get off.

LINDA: Is that where the problem with French came in when you were on the island?

NORRIS: I imagine so. I don't know. Time was just passing that was all.

LINDA: Were you there when August 14 came 1945 and the war was over.

NORRIS: Yeah.

LINDA: Was that a happy day?

NORRIS: Yeah but we were pretty much sure that it was over before that. That was just the official closing of the war. Just like securing the island as they called it. It meant the enemy was defeated and we were in Control of the island. Sent out word that the island was secured. Several generals in the area didn't have enough bars on their chest so they conceived the idea of engaging in the campaign for Okinawa so they declared the island unsecured and for three days we had planes landing with generals and admirals coming out and getting them another ribbon. Because all they had to do is set foot on the thing while it was in a battle status and they got a ribbon for it. We were the site of the island. Unsecured. Then secured again about three days later.

LINDA: When did you leave the island? When did you leave to go home? Did you go home then.

NORRIS: Yeah and I came back as quick as I could get here. I don't remember the date. Terry has the list of it. I never tried to remember dates like that. Do you remember the date of separation?

LINDA: Talking...can't hear. So if I mentioned a couple of things to you tell me about them. Opera on board.

NORRIS: That started in Honolulu. They had brought a new radio of some sort. Put it in the chart room. I had a duplicate radio of everything they had in

the radio shack and here they brought another radio that the radio shack didn't have. A nice one. What the heck is that for. He said that is the tank radio. I said well we don't have any tanks as a general rule and we usually pass the word because you are generally inside them things what do we need that for? He says you are supposed to listen to them if you want to hear the tank battles. And we had a long range general use radio and when we got in the Pacific I was having trouble trying to keep the chronometers time because I was trying to use Tokyo time signal instead of the American and I got to fiddling with that radio one time and found out that I could pick up the station in Washington, DC. So from then on I was listening to that and then one day I was just idling around and accidentally it happened to be on a Saturday and the time was right and I picked up the Metropolitan Opera. So next Saturday I was set for it. When it came on I had that radio on. I think about the third Saturday that I was listening to the opera the Captain came in and asked what is that you are listening to - I said Metropolitan Opera. He said you listen to it often. I said I have been listening to it for about 20 years now. He said well you reckon anybody else want to listen to it. I said I don't know. He said the next time it comes on get on the horn there and notify that it could be heard in the chart room or wheelhouse. I could turn on both radios and we could hear it either place. So I did and anywhere from 6 to 12 people would show up to listen to the opera. Then it was very enjoyable because the ones that came up to listen really came up to listen. They didn't come to make fun or anything they wanted to hear it. Then most of them had some knowledge of opera and appreciated it. Just depending on who was on duty at that time I usually would have a crowd sitting around. Didn't have room enough for benches or anything to sit on so we sat on the floor around the bulkhead.

LINDA: So French must have liked opera.

NORRIS: He didn't as far as I know ever listen to it.

LINDA: Tell me about if I mention Walter Shirks.

NORRIS: You mean the little 13 year old coxswain. I didn't know how young he was till the Captain asked me one day. He said by the way how old do you think Shirks might be. I said I think 15 or 16. I think he is a little underage. He said he sure is. He is only 13 years old. Just had a birthday is the reason why he mentioned it. He said I have orders to send him home. As I understand he called Shirks in his office, privately, and asked him if he wanted to stay in the Navy. Shirks said that he did. The Captain said well I have orders to send you home. Just as soon as I touch land I am sending you home. Now what you do about it is your own business. So the kid took off and about three days later he showed up walked and boarding the when we got up around New York.

LINDA: That was the 534 huh.

NORRIS: Yup.

LINDA: Hought.

NORRIS: Hought is a crazy Irishman. I don't know what was his point of view or what set him off about it but he did not like the officers. He was a good steersman and he would be on the wheel. He would get an order and carry it out properly. But if the Captain was in command he would just as like say okay George. He called the Captain by his first name just like anybody he has known all his life. Called the other officers by their first name. Called me Mr. Long. Why I don't know. I never did figure out but

for some reason he respected me. He called me Mr. Long. He said you are the only none of the ship that I would mister.

LINDA: Mr. James.

NORRIS: Sleepy eyed. Bedroom eyes. He went on that 30 day leave, came back and went to bed and nobody can remember seeing him move for 2 whole days. I know every time I passed by him after somebody mentioned something that he hadn't been up for several hours every time I passed by I would look and he looked like he was either dead or dying. Just sitting there as peaceful as could be snoring away. But nobody even saw him go to the head for two whole days.

LINDA: What about Holt.

NORRIS: Holt was one of the deck apes that decided he wanted to be a signalman and he had a habit of stopping every signalman and quartermaster he could trying to get him trying to practice signaling with him. And he turned out in the end in my opinion the best thing signalman we had. He really loved it. I don't know you mentioned something about where he was from. I think he was originally from Mystic Connecticut or is it Mystic RI. For some reason I think that is it. I can remember one time when I was going to check the mastheadlights. The masthead has eight bright bulbs at the top of the mast. Certain signalman require that mastheadlight be shown. Anyhow I started up that mast and Ed came out and saw me and he said watch doing and I said I have to go up and check the lights and the next thing I know that darn fool was coming a climbing that ladder and just like a squirrel he ran from backside of it and got on my side - what are you supposed to do about them. I said look at them see if they are burning. He said there are 6 burning and two out. I said okay lets replace the two. And then I said ahh lets replace all eight of them while we are at it. He



comes squirreling down again. Got him 8 bulbs, went back up and put them in. I never did get more than half way up that mast.

NORRIS: Hi little buddy. Where have you been all day.

TERRY: I have been listening. I will try to do this chronologically if I can. When you first got over to France or some point when you got to the San Michele wasn't there some sort of a baseball game.

NORRIS: No that wasn't San Michele.

TERRY: Or was that when they walked out and got caught by the cops.

NORRIS: I think they went out trying to find some oysters and the beach looked so nice and dry I don't think it occurred to any of them that, that could be under water at times. Anyway they were a long ways off when that water started coming in and got up to about their chest before somebody finally happened to notice that they were signaling or waving. I don't think they had a signalman with them. So we had to send a small boat after them to bring them back to the ship but they were about a quarter of a mile when they were picked up. Still a long ways off.

TERRY: How high was the water.

NORRIS: Just almost up to the chest.

TERRY: Who were they?

NORRIS: I don't remember. We were sitting on the bottom I remember I thought I had checked the jaroscope compass so I remember spotting the LSTs out os some number, I remember talking to the quartermaster of that LST at

sometime or another so I called him up and asked him for a reciprocal reading on my jaro. He gave me his and I gave him mine. I thought they were but it was just an opportunity to check on it so... Then the water came in and we got off again with somebody's Saint Bernard puppy.

TERRY: Where was the baseball game. Can you tell that from the beginning.

NORRIS: That was second invasion. Second landing we made. I reckon it was third or fourth day maybe of the invasion I don't remember exactly when. Anyway we went in that time on a falling tide and had to wait for the tide to come back in so somebody said lets go play baseball and yelled over to some ship alongside so we got up a baseball team and get out there and they marked off the field and was playing baseball and a couple of guys got shot. There was a sniper and it took them several hours to spot him. He was a major in the German army. He was hiding in the water tower. Everybody assumed because it was a water tower it was full of water. But they had emptied the water out and made portholes around it. But they got him.

TERRY: Did that break up the game?

NORRIS: No. Too many other people getting hit so.. He was just a bystander anyway. He wasn't actually in the game. They don't count.

TERRY I don't remember which side this was on but you had a bit of a run in with one of the cooks. Remember when your cooks changed you didn't appreciate Rich Cameron

NORRIS: No Cameron was a good cook, Most. They discovered there was a loss in the allowances or something I don't know what I didn't have any business with the finances of the ship. But anyway there was a shortage of some

sort. So they sent this chief cook, old timer, over, to take over and I mean the chow got lousy just as they showed up. And I didn't particularly like it so I just stopped eating it. Cameron was also a cook. He was on a different time from Most. Most had the responsible for the daytime and overhaul for the whole business but he was just on the daytime and Cameron was on the night. But Cameron kept bringing me goodies all the time. Everybody thought I was getting hungry. Heck I wasn't getting hungry. I was getting the fat of the land. Cameron baked pies or something like that. Other people would get a slice a pie. I would get a whole pie. And I had a five-gallon jar of olives and these five-pound cans of corn beef. I had several of those up there in my locker. I still like corn beef and I still like olives. I thought sure I was going to get tired of them before this thing was over. Most didn't last too long. Shipped him off.

TERRY: When you got to England, I think it was near Christmas, you got sent up to some building where there were some women and friends.. Could you tell the whole story from the beginning.

NORRIS: I don't remember what I had to go to the British admiralty for. I had to go up to the admiralty office which was on top of the hill, at the light house and everything ...anyhow I noticed that there were a couple of old guys they looked like might have been 70 or 80 years old and everybody else in there were women. All the ranks and all the ratings were women. See when I got back we had occasionally been receiving messages from them or sending message to them for various things. One particular was I think Christmas morning I saw a ship signaling to the VA office Merry Christmas and Happy New Year or something like that and I call McKenster, I said Mac did you see that and he said no what was it and I told him and he said well lets do the same thing. Okay we'll do it. They

encouraged the signalman to send private messages because it was more practice. It improved the efficiency if they sent private messages

Taped Stopped.

NORRIS: I told Mac send the same message if he wanted to. Then he engaged in a conversation with them just the way they do, signalmen, maybe wishes them a Merry Christmas and first thing you know talking about the weather and anything else. It was just practicing. After it went on for a while Mac says who in the hell am I talking to anyway? I said I don't know who but you are talking to a woman. I said there isn't a thing up there except women. You never saw so darn many women. So Mac got all excited and he started talking it up around and pretty soon they decided they would invite the whole VA office to a dance or a party or something. I don't know what they had planned. Anyway he called up and invited them and they said sorry a destroyer had moved in and they knew what was up then so they had dated up the whole bunch for that night.

TERRY: Real quick the HMS Rodney

NORRIS: Rodney was tied up at South Hampton at the entrance to South Hampton not in the harbor at all. The bow was sticking up and the stern was almost underwater.

TERRY: Describe the little story about the HMS Rodney I believe you put it.

NORRIS: You mean start it over? It was tied up at the entrance to the harbor at South Hampton. I believe. I am pretty sure it was South Hampton and the bow was sticking up out of the water at an angle and the stern was almost under water. The whole ship was rusty. Big spots of rust all up and down. I figured somebody must have really hit him to sink him like that. But on

the day of the invasion here was this big beautiful British battle cruiser slamming those shells in - looked at it and so help me it was a Rodney. They had painted up all overnight put her back into duty. There wasn't a thing wrong with it. They just made it look like it had been sunk so they wouldn't be bombed anymore. But that was a beautiful site. That was a close as we ever got to a really beautiful ship. Because they didn't paint that thing in battleship gray, heck no she was pretty black and white where she was supposed to be white sticking out there like a store thumb. You shoot at me if you want to pal I am here.

TERRY: You want to tell the story about how you sent out with a farm boy.

NORRIS: Who?

TERRY: Amici? Was that who grew up on a farm? You want to tell that story?

NORRIS: I already told them about milking the cow.

TERRY: Did you tell that one. Tell me again. Pretend like I never heard it before. Refresh my whole memory.

NORRIS: We were tied up I am pretty sure at Falmouth, anyways pretty close to the West Cost of England and I decided that I would walk to the shore and see if I could see Ireland. And a lot time when I would start on liberty some of the kids would ask if they could go along. Yeah sure. So Nitchy, Doug and I started walking. We were picked up by a milk truck and I guess we rode within four or five miles of the coast and he pulled in to a dairy and said this is as far as I go boys hope you have a good time and said good-bye. We started walking along, Nitchy looking back at those cows and he said I sure would love to milk one of those cows. So I wheeled around, went back and asked the dairyman, I said I have the crazy sailor that wants

to milk one of your cows by hand. He said bring him on, I haven't seen anybody use a hand on a cow in years. So Nitchy milked the cow. We went on the coast let me see Redrith Wales was the name of the little town we went to . You could look out across the water and see Ireland but couldn't go.

TERRY: Want to tell a little bit about painting the wheelhouse.

NORRIS: After a period of time any structure will start getting a little dirt and a little off color. Doug really enjoyed painting. He really loved it. He brought up the subject of painting the wheelhouse.

They are talking back and forth because there is noise.

NORRIS: Doug came in one time and said don't you think we ought to paint in here. Well it will be all right what do you want to do. He said what color do we want and I said well frankly I think we could improve this if it was green, bilious green at that. I said lets paint the top kind of light blue and then bulks heads a little dark blue and then of course underneath of course was dark almost black cause it was a combination of non-skid paint and it came in only one color and it would do for any color because it was so near black. So Doug did that. He painted the whole thing. Did a good job on it. Captain came in one time, stopped looked all around, well some nice paint job but I like it green. I thought oh hell I should have asked him before I changed the color anyway so I told Doug, Doug got mix up the most bilious color of green you can possibly find and come up here and paint everything. Top, sides and bottom. Paint it all one color. And he did. You would almost through up if you walked in there and stood for a while in daylight. He really had a sickly looking green. The Captain came through about twice and he called me back from the chart room one time and he said go on paint it blue if you want it. Doug get out your paint

again. Light blue on top, medium blue on the bulkheads and dark blue on the bulkheads.

TERRY: Wasn't there something about chipping paint and it woke up the Captain? What was that story it was really funny.

NORRIS: I don't remember exactly where that was but the outside decks got pretty tough service and a lot of the paint was cracked and started rusting and I don't know if the Captain gave that order or whether the ships personnel officer, I don't know who gave the order. Anyway they ordered us to chip all the rust and paint and everything off that deck. And that is the most boring thing on earth because the Chief Bosun's Mate or a Warrant's Bosun Mate came by and leaned up against the thing for a while and watched us and said why don't you get the air gun and do that if it has to be done. I said because they told us to use Chipin hammers and that was when the idea hit me. The Captain was down below in his cabin so we all gathered right above his cabin and went to work with our chipin hammers. It took about fifteen minutes for a messenger to come up and tell us to stop that damned banging on the deck. Get the Chief Bosun to take care of it properly. So next morning you take the air gun and noise..noise... chipped off all the lead and everything. Rust paint and everything else. A new coat of paint was slapped on there by that afternoon we had a nice new deck.

TERRY: You have a story about when you first got to the Pacific you went to an island and had a beer party.

NORRIS: Aritenian I think. The ship came in loaded with beer. It was an infrequent occurrence but they tried to do it occasionally. Anyway they unloaded the beer and our day came and we wanted to go ashore for a beer party. Starting in the morning and lasting till 5 in the afternoon after which we

will return to the ship blah blah. We were allowed six bottles of beer for that day. Duncan Robey did not drink beer. Doug Brownell did not drink beer. But they both liked candy and I didn't care for candy so when the candy allowance came along they got extra candy and when the beer allowance came along I got 18 bottles of beer. I made it through 16 but I couldn't handle the last two. I had to give up on them and hand them to somebody else. And they poured me aboard ship.

TERRY: You passed a General once. Remember that.

NORRIS: No that was an admiral. Admiral Mitchner. I was on the detail to go after film. I got that as a permanent job somehow or another and I was walking along the pier and here came three officers coming off the boat they had landed and walking along the pier and I was walking out and two or three guys bringing film behind me. I had gotten I would say ten feet past the officers and it finally dawned on me hell fire that was an admiral. I turned around and looked and he had turned around looking at me. I saluted and he returned the salute grinning. He knew what was happening. He had happened before. Just absent minded I wasn't paying a bit of attention. Just walking along with my hands in my pocket whistling.

TERRY: Could you salute like you did when the realization came on you

NORRIS: Any kind of salute would be all right in that case. But I know I was laughing and when he turned he was laughing too. Admiral Mitchner.

TERRY: The story that always gets me that I love for you to tell was when you were on the transport the whole thing from the malted milk balls to all the way when you get on the transport to San Diego mentioning the Scottish book and San Antonio Rose.



NORRIS: Well after the war had been over oh I don't know maybe one or two weeks they had finally gotten the discharge organized based on certain points, your age, length of service and so on and so forth. They had a chart that showed how many points you got. I was one of the first six to be discharged. So this LCT came alongside and we got on it. The ones that had sea bags got on it with their sea bags and equipment. We had everything burned up so all we had was a little handbag and what we had on. I don't remember the rest of them but I remember Pop Jennins was one of the others that six. We got on the LCT and and we were supposed to go to get on board the Valley Forge. Carrier. And we wandered all over that base trying to find the Valley Forge. I asked permission to get on the light and they refused it. If I had gotten on there I would have found that damn Valley Forge or found out where it had gone or something. They didn't have nerve enough to call SOPUS? and demand the information. Now I wouldn't have been officially about it. I would have been on the private line with the signalman over there which I knew pretty well. We had been freelancing for quite a while. Got along pretty well with him. I would have asked him where the Valley Forge and he would have given me the anchorage or else they told me it left the base. But we wandered around all day in the hot sun hunting for the Valley Forge. And LCTs have a crew of about 10 or 12 and they carried provisions for that many. And here they had about three hundred guys on board. No way in the world they could have fed us. And I happen to have bulked a bag of malted milk balls. Mainly because I like them and had a chance to get them somewhere I don't know where it was. So I picked up a bag of malted milk balls. So I grabbed myself a handful of them, stuck them in my pocket and threw the bag to one of the other crew, probably Pop Jennins, whoever I recognized of my own crew. I said throw them to somebody else. All our crew got a handful and then the rest of them went in . That was all we had to eat that day. Didn't have anything to drink. Man it was nice to finally got on board a ship. Get treated like

a.. like a dog again at least. But the Valley Forge didn't want to haul passengers in their pretty ship so he had pulled out and I heard later he had pulled out about one day and somebody made a big enough kick about it and somebody else got mad enough about it because they turned him around they told him you go back and load up with passengers before you leave. That is all hearsay. You have to go with what you hear. Depend on it being true. Anyway it is pretty likely because that is the kind of thing that did happen. Like the time Ed Luckenback, called the Luckenback freighter. Ed Luckenback was a Quartermaster on an LST and he was passing this Luckenback freighter and called up on the signal light who is your Captain? The message came back who wants to know. Ed Luckenback. He found out who the Captain was real quick. And there is a big hotel. Apparently they were interested in hotels as well as shipping lines. This big hotel had a sign out front officers only and Ed wanted to make a phone call so he started to go in. Shore Patrol stopped him and he went to a public telephone, called the manager of the hotel and told them get them damn guys away from the front door. And that was the end of the officer only business at that hotel.

TERRY: What happened when the LCT actually reached the transport that takes you back to San Diego. Do you remember the story about when you got on the transport headed back finally from California and there was a fella in your bunk.

NORRIS: Troop transport. I had the bottom bunk and the guy on the second the bunk right above me. I went in one afternoon. I had a book I wanted to read so I would go find me a quiet place on the ship. I didn't bother about chow line but once a day I would eat one meal. I wasn't doing anything so that was enough. So I was off for eating. I came in one afternoon and here was sitting on my bunk plunking away on a guitar. I listened to him for a good while before I finally recognized what he was trying to pick

out. It was San Antonio Rose. I asked him watcha doin. He said I am trying to learn this song. I said it sounds kind of like San Antonio Rose. He said that is what it is supposed to be. I made up my mind I was going to learn to play that before I got back and sing it to my gal and I was going to get married. And before we got to San Diego he was plucking it out pretty well. You could recognize it but it had an odd rhythm to it that I had never heard. But when we tied up at San Diego they held all the lines for a while and here comes this coffin off. And I asked who it was and they said oh it was that guy that had the bunk just above you. Caught pneumonia and something else I don't know what died during the night. Later on I was listening to the radio and here came that San Antonio Rose just like he was trying to play it. I found out that Bob Wills had an entirely different arrangement that I had never heard before the war. So I got to be quite a fan of Bob Wills in this business. I think he was the composer of San Antonio Rose. I'm not sure. He had to write changes anyway because he made a beauty out of it.

TERRY: Where was that fella from that was trying to do it.

NORRIS: San Antonio. I asked him why that particular song. He said that is my home town.

TERRY: During the war what was your favorite opera or rather your favorite aura from what opera.

NORRIS: Deperinzalmar. I liked practically all of the lower range of opera. I understand from people that study that sort of thing that you have a tendency to like the voices nearer to your own level. So I like baritones and the bases the best. That to me is a beautiful baritone aura.

TERRY: And what is that aura from.

NORRIS: Hmm.. Lady of the Camelias - what the heck is the name of it.

TERRY: Was that an opera that everyone enjoyed the most?

NORRIS: No any opera would do.

TERRY: There wasn't one that especially

NORRIS: No they knew as much or more about opera that I did. Most of them. A lot of those boys were raised with classical music education. I was not. I just liked it. To me for some reason I liked opera. Now what the hell is that opera

Linda & Terry talking.

Tape turned over.

LINDA: So the audience if I show this so in this picture you see them doing this, this, this.

NORRIS: Loading supplies right there.

LINDA: You say this is the crew on the 534

NORRIS: The 534. How much loading. I always invented some excuse to stay up in the chart room when they had that all hands business going on and I got by with it. But while they were unloading it somebody accidentally dropped a box of oranges and after everybody sampled one not an orange made it down to storage.

LINDA: Oranges seem to be in your life this whole trip.

NORRIS: Well so rare that we got fresh fruit of any kind or fresh anything. Anyhow somebody had pity on me and threw me an orange. And pretty soon somebody else had pity on me and I got another orange. Then when they started loading apples one of those boxes dropped and apples scattered everywhere and I got me an apple. So I wound up with two oranges and an apple. I enjoyed that loading.

LINDA: You think maybe they dropped a couple of these things on purpose.

NORRIS: I have a suspicion it might be true when they recognized what was inside. They probably smelled the oranges and they had apples printed on the outside of the apple box.

LINDA: Now this is looking down into the LCVP?

NORRIS: Yes. I wasn't sure it was the LCVP until I saw the rear bow of it and saw that crazy front end.

LINDA: One question. Could this have possible been where my father would have been.

NORRIS: Yes. He would have been on the wheel. One time when we were going after movies one of the deck hands on that LCVP made him a lasso out of 1/2" line and he was standing on that bow braced against the bow lassoing anything that was in the water. I've seen him throw that darn loop over a two by four and yank it out of the water and how he got it to go underneath that thing and the way he did it I don't know.

LINDA: So this is the LCVP going away from the 534.

NORRIS: From anybody. They were all over the bay when I was there. They did everything. It wouldn't be unusual at all for a ship to call us up - can we borrow your boats and of course we would lower them in the water and send them off.

#### TALKING

NORRIS: That is unloading the LCT off our deck. What they had done was taken this huge tanker and built gantry cranes on the top of the deck and they would pump a baluster out of one side, the ship would lean over and those cranes would slide out, the arms would slide out. They dropped the lines, pumped the baluster and lift it back up. We would move out and put out the small boats at the bow and stern and push us out from under it and let it down in the water. When I was talking to Robey the last time he said when did we unload our LST over in England. He said I never knew that happened. I told him yeah you were probably down below. That was so slick. Just nothing happened. All we did was practically same thing pumped ballast on one side, had it leaning, cut the stays and that thing just slid right off into the water.

LINDA: That is how they do the LCVP. They get it down. So they told me that the ship would be sitting like this and here is the shore and my dad would bring the LCVP and he would have to bring it around because he was driving this way and he would have to come around do it this way. And so my dad was really good about getting that little butt of LCVP around there and right up there and they used to have contests to see who wouldn't hit the side of the ship. Get the closest.

NORRIS: Get the closest without touching.

LINDA: And they used to have races with the LCVP.

NORRIS: You do anything for entertainment. The Navy thought they had rules and regulations but nobody could remember what they were.

LINDA: Now what is this.

NORRIS: That is after the LCT has been unloaded. Those huge timbers were still on the deck. Oh your are liable, after you had no space you are liable to be doing anything. We had a basketball court down on the main deck and we whipped practically everybody except other LSTs cause they never could get used to those low ceilings. They would try to loft the ball over our boys knew to get up right up and let it drop in. Wilson was a darn good basketball player too. You mentioned something about it.

LINDA: He went, John Wilson was in the service, he went home, you know he is a big guy, tall guy, went home and was working on the railroad and he got caught between something. It got his right leg and right arm chopped off, right after the war. He lived the rest of his life with an artificial arm and leg. Got around pretty good with it. He was a fascinating man to meet. After going through the whole war and then to end up like that. What's this?

NORRIS: One of the insulators broke on the cables that held our mast in place. Broke one night. Darndest bang you ever heard. And of course that left the nooses there and it would rattle. Two cables just bouncing back and fourth against each other. So one of the ship fellas had to go up, hook up a new stay I believe they called it.

LINDA: What do you remember about the time on the way I think it was over on the covoy over to England when the tanks broke loose and those big old tanks were on the deck, the tank deck banging around.

NORRIS: That was after we got to England. Going across the channel. The tanks were bolted to the deck. They had what you called clover leaves built into the deck and they could drop the end of this chain with a special hook on it into one of clover leaves and then tighten it up and that tank would be anchored down there. Couldn't move at all but one broke up, broke loose one time, I don't know if it pulled up part of the clover leave or whether a chain broke, anyway it got sliding around, first thing you know it is breaking other tanks loose. And then they ended up opening the bow doors and just shoving the whole bunch, just start them up, ho out and let them go.

LINDA: Into the ocean?

NORRIS: Yes, right on out to the ramp. Right on the end of the ramp and tumble over.

LINDA: So they were destroyed. I heard they were

NORRIS: Well it was either that or loose the ship. If they had bounced around on those little tin foil sides we had they would have gone right on out.

LINDA: Somebody told me that Captain Olsen was down there and could have been killed. Said he was down with the tanks trying to

NORRIS: I imagine so. He was the kind that would actually get down there and oversee that, that was done and he would have the authority to give the order.

LINDA: Now what is going on here?



NORRIS: That is a swimming party after the ship was sunk. We were still anchored out in the bay that was before we were below ashore. And somebody decided they wanted to go swimming, got permission and pretty soon half the crew was out swimming. And at that trunks were optional they could put them on if they wanted to or leave them off if they wanted to.

LINDA: I notice some of the exercised their option.

NORRIS: I imagine that was a picture of a LSTs unloading a big troop transport.

LINDA: So the LCVPs would go over to these other ships and unload them?

NORRIS: Yes. See we didn't need them for ours. Anybody that walked on or off of our ship walked in and out dry. We were proud of that. We always put it up on dry land when they wanted to unload. And got off.

LINDA: There is a sailboat.

NORRIS: Yeah on that beach so of them had row canoes and cattlemarines with sails and all kinds of things. All you had to do was go out and catch a wave out there and then turn around and spread out your arms and get up on top of the water and it would throw you right in.

LINDA: That is a beach boy song. Catch a wave and you are sitting on top of the world.

NORRIS: Yeah but they were doing it on boards though. Some of them down there were using boards too but you could do it without a board at all if you knew how to do it if you knew how to body surf. But the beach there was not sand it was coral and the guys would come in a lot of them would

come in all the way and let their chests? scrape on that coral and they got the damndest case of fungus.

LINDA: As if there was anything else to do go out and get scraped and get infected.

NORRIS: The war is about 98% of nothing and 2% of actually doing something. Now that is the end of the war signal. I did remember to take that. I happened to glance out and I saw soapers? flying their flag haust. It didn't mean anything to me because I knew we were supposed to do the same thing to antrange so I got out and ran all the flags up. Went back and looked up the code book - looked up the those first three and the message was cease present blank and then the second row of flags were of flags had a designating flag which meant that any flag in that string was spelling so the war was over because the last three words William Able Roger, cease present war. I thought that was a heck of a note. Everybody knew it was over. We knew that night before they had already made the arrangements but the official message that was over

LINDA: You crossed the International Dateline. Could you tell me a little bout this.

NORRIS: Well you are seeing what is happening. They got the biggest tarp we had tied it up in such a manner that they could fill it up with water and garbage from several days collection in the galley, made a very fine soup, and I believe that is Parlero on the left there. I mentioned in one of the tapes that I had made that I think I recognize the back of his head I saw it so often in front of that radar machine.

LINDA: Did they shave your head.

NORRIS: Well the Barber had his option of designing whatever sort of haircut he wanted to give you.

LINDA: Who is this guy?

NORRIS: That is Captain French.

LINDA: That is French?

NORRIS: That is Dole. He turned around just at the wrong time. The one sitting there

LINDA: So that is French.

NORRIS: He is grinning and somebody else is getting it. You got a haircut of the Barber's option and also a massage with deck paint on the end of a paint brush. I see Robey got a good load in his face. That is Chris on the right. Just passed him. The only one looking right straight at us. The one is kidding Robey about the paint job. That is me in the left there. I am pretty sure it is. After I had taking some pictures I put my camera back on the Quartermasters there's Chris or Gray. They look somewhat similar.

LINDA: It must have been Chris it isn't Larry Gray.

NORRIS: I am pretty sure it is Chris. The first time I saw it clear I thought good lord that is Chris. Anyhow my haircut was from the back all the way over and to the front. Just a path right through the whole hair. I wish they had show all of that in clear light because see those clippers going right through. Giving me a good massage with deck paint first.

LINDA: How long would the deck paint stay on.

NORRIS: Not too long. It didn't even stay on all through that. A lot of it washed off even if you didn't get painted when you went in by the time you came out she had paint on you. There is one of the officers. I don't recall which one it was.

LINDA: Right?

NORRIS: No. Right I knew well enough I would recognize him from any direction.

LINDA: Coles?

NORRIS: Nope. One of the younger officers. And there is another one. Frankly I didn't get too well acquainted with those replacements.

LINDA: Is this Okinawa?

NORRIS: Yes. That bay was surrounded with high heels.

LINDA: Did you kiss the 534 good-bye when you left it.

NORRIS: No. I grabbed my little possession bag and got off of that thing. I had had my fill of it. That is an ammunition dump blowing up, burning up. It burned for about two days. Never did find out for sure whether it was American or Japanese.

LINDA: This is the fires.

NORRIS: No we looked over the damage and everything. Everybody was fiddling around, the Naval Intelligence Units had given orders that nothing was to be disturbed. Hell fire we had that plane just about taken apart by the time

they got there. I got part of the parachute. They were dumping ammunition there. Fire just started. We had a big supply of aviation gasoline and 55 gallon drums and the very nature of the drum is that you have vapor coming out of it all the time. Gasoline and I have no idea how the fire started because no one ever admitted knowing anything about it. But we had about 6 feet of water in the main deck. Those drums, most of them we filled close to full but not completely full so they would be floating around in the water and just about time they get the fire out another one would let go and spew the gas all over everything and here we go again. That is Right on the right there. That is Bonner. Ensign Bonner. He is another one that I would recognize from any direction.

TERRY: Who was the oldest guy on the ship?

NORRIS: Hupganin. He was a professorial wrestler. I guess he is retired, I am sure he retired by the end.

LINDA: And we know the youngest was Shirks.

NORRIS: You know I thought his name was Lynn or something, Shirks.

LINDA: Walter. Walter L. so maybe it is Walter Leon Shirks.

NORRIS: It seemed to me that we called him Lynn.

LINDA: I'll go for a search for a Lynn Shirks.

NORRIS: I am not sure I could be confusing him with someone else but it seemed to me that I always called him Lynn.

LINDA: So all those Shirks back in Kentucky will say well what about Lynn.

NORRIS: Now if he was hooked up with a circus he was all over the country and I have an idea that he was probably killed in a gambling back somewhere.

LINDA: Maybe that is why I can't find him.

NORRIS: If he had a little more experience he would have been right there with Safford and Burba. Because he could play cards. That was a sign in front of a bank. Always called it Japanese Pepsi Cola Sign because it look like an overdone Pepsi Cola Sign. Incidentally talking about Pepsi Cola reminded me of Coke a Cola. About a week after they invaded Okinawa here comes the most beautiful billboard showing up advertising Coke a Cola. Drink Coke a Cola. Some CB apparently had a job painting those darn signs before the war and they got the crazy idea of putting up Coke a Cola signs. He had this beautiful sign you would swear it was made right there in America. Drink Coke a Cola.

LINDA: Was that life on Okinawa.

NORRIS: Yes the capital of Okinawa was Naha and then they bombed the hell out of it. Broke anything that was breakable. I doubt if there was a window in the whole town that wasn't broken.

LINDA: I wonder what it is like today.

NORRIS: They were complaining because the Army has a base on Okinawa and they are not getting enough money out of it so they wanted to leave. Leave Okinawa for the Okinawans.

LINDA: This is going down into an LCVP right?

NORRIS: Yes. No. The other way. Going from an LCVP going up. Going to transport that is us. Loading up. Had to wait till they load unload. As soon as we got loaded we took off. Heading for home.

LINDA: Those are called ocean shots.

NORRIS: Unload in San Diego.

LINDA: After the war?

NORRIS: Yeah.

LINDA: This is not the LST.

NORRIS: No that was me standing on the dock taking pictures of the other lucky fellas going home. We landed in San Diego and took a train up to Los Angeles to make a troop train that comes across the United States and they told us that the train would be leaving in 30 or 40 minutes don't leave the station. So I walked out in the yard and asked the car inspector when is this trooper going to make up. He said 5:30 in the morning. So I walked out the side entrance and grabbed me a taxie and I took a tour of Hollywood all night long. I started about ten o'clock and about 5 the next morning I was still in that taxi. Been in a dozen bars. Finally got the driver himself coming in with us. The passengers we would pick up. I never spent a cent. The taxi driver wouldn't take any pay for all the hauling around he did. He said I had more fun tonight than I ever had on this job. Thats all. Thats it. You know the law at that time was he could not pass anybody signaling if they were going in the direction that he was going. Of course we had gone to west Los Angeles area and he had to pick up any passenger that wanted to go in that direction. So we would

pick up a passenger carry him to his destination after stopping in a bar and then we would pick up another passenger and head in another direction and stop at another bar.

LINDA: You were there for the whole nine yards.

NORRIS: I was enjoying every bar and then about the last three or four the driver was enjoying the bars. He didn't see the point in me having all the fun. But the passengers were paying the bills and buying the drinks. So it just went fine.

LINDA: You were enjoying it.

NORRIS: Yeah. I was having a ball. Taking pictures of lights because it was too dark to see anything else.





