

## Fraim, Robert C. Interview 5-4-92

[Speaker 2]

Testing 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, over. Today I'm interviewing Mr. Robert C. Frame, F-R-A-I-M, of 17525 Nassau Drive, Farragut, Tennessee, 37922.

Mr. Frame, when did you first join the service?

[Speaker 1]

I am looking at my transcripts right here, and I joined the service World War II on March 1943. And I seem to have gotten out on the sixth month, that would be June 1946.

[Speaker 2]

Okay, what branch of the service did you fill in? U.S. Navy. Okay, why did you pick the Navy?

[Speaker 1]

Well, I picked the Navy because at the University of Louisville, where I was attending as a freshman, they offered a V-12 Navy program that you could join, and I joined up because of that.

[Speaker 2]

Okay, I'm familiar with that. My brother went through that at Tech, George Tech. Okay, if you will, first describe your activities in the States, from your first, where you reported for duty and that sort of thing, and your training, everything up to the time you went overseas.

[Speaker 1]

Okay, originally, because of the volunteering for service, I got assigned to where I wanted to go, which was the University of Louisville's V-12 program, which was a continuation of my education. My focal point was medicine, I was a pre-med, and there were a large number of us who started. There were a few who survived, but I didn't survive in that my grades were not good enough to continue in the program.

So that removed me from the University of Louisville and Louisville, Kentucky scene, put me into the naval pool of America at that time, and so off I went up to Great Lakes, Illinois, to the naval station up in Chicago, just outside of Chicago. Went to boot camp there, and then from boot camp, because of some skill I must have had, they decided that my best training would be as a communicator, a radioman. So they sent me to a school in Indianapolis, Indiana, about a five- or six-month school, and there I learned the Morse code, as we called it back in those days, the dits and the daws, and became proficient in both listening to it and typing what I heard, as well as signaling with your arms and with your hands the alphabet to communicate from a Navy point of view.

When those days were over, about six months, I think, into the program, it was then time to be discharged from the radio school in Indianapolis, Indiana, and we were given opportunities to make our first, second, and third choice of where we wanted to go, and I chose as my first choice PT boat training. And I had no idea about what a PT boat was, but it sounded wonderful and glamorous, and so I chose PT boats and was selected for PT boats. There were two stations at that time where PT boat training was held.

One was on the west coast in California someplace. I guess because of being basically on the east coast, I was assigned and sent to a PT boat training program out of Providence, Rhode Island, at Melville. Melville, Rhode Island.

It was wintertime of the year, went there, and this training took something in the neighborhood of five or six months, and aboard a PT boat, which has a complement of 15 sailors, officers, 13 enlisted men, my responsibility aboard the PT boat was the running of its radio, voice communication, and the radar equipment aboard the boat fell under my province. When our PT boat training at Melville, Rhode Island, was over, we were assigned, all of us, to different what they call squadrons. A squadron is 12 PT boats called a squadron, and I was assigned to a PT boat in squadron 25 in the south seas down in the area of Halemahera, New Guinea, Barneo, down under place.

It was the first time I had ever gone from the east coast to the west coast. It was a troop train made up of mostly soldiers, but there were some sailors. We went cross-country in the troop train.

I can remember being out in Oakland, California, and we departed from Oakland, California, made the trip across seas and joined my boat down in Halemahera, down in the South Pacific.

[Speaker 2]

Where are you from originally? Born and raised over in Louisville, Kentucky. Louisville, Kentucky, I see.

Okay, and that's how you were in school in Louisville, right? Yes, yes, yes. All righty.

Now, how did you get from California down under to meet your squadron down there?

[Speaker 1]

It was all done by boat, and generally it was troop ships of different nature. We went from over in Oakland, we went right straight to Pearl, disembarked, went into the naval station there, had a few days of liberty in Pearl Harbor, always sort of reporting back to find out if your orders were to ship out, had gotten there. Not a long period of time there.

The war was on very much in earnest then. And then finally there was someplace in there I can remember being on some flights, but it's been a little bit too long to remember when I flew from here to here and when I was on a ship from here to here.

[Speaker 2]

About what date was that before, just the date maybe that you got to your station?

[Speaker 1]

Oh, gracious me. I would say that it was mid-1940, early to mid-1944.

[Speaker 3]

Okay. Okay, go right ahead.

[Speaker 1]

Well, I guess the very first thing that you do once you get to any base, or at least I thought it was appropriate, was to see if you could find anybody from home. And as you can always do at every base, regardless of where you are, if you look for a couple of hours, you're going to run across somebody that you knew. And I ran across two excellent, good friends of current friends at the very first base I went to.

One was named Charlie Fernyhull, and the other one was Carl Kuhl. And I knew them in Louisville, and I played ball with them in Louisville, and there they were way down under. And the very first thing we did, we went to the wreck shack, drew out some material, and before you knew it, we was either on the beach swimming or playing softball or something when time permitted.

We were all assigned to PT boats, and there was fierce competition between all of the boats. Anything we did, it was always our squadron against anybody else's squadron. First to get on station if we were patrolling that night, first to get back in the morning, first to have the highest cone behind the boat when we were returning, first to get into dry dock if we were injured and needed help.

Fiercely competitive. It was the thing I think I remember about my military service the most because of the locale where we were, how scantily we survived. We survived with the old Brogan boots that came up over your ankle, no socks, a pair of good khaki shorts, an old .45 that you wore all the time that you were at sea. I remember the ritual at sea just as well today, 50-some years later as I do the day I was there.

[Speaker 2]

Tell me about a PT boat. How big is it? You told me about how many people are on it.

How wide is it? What's it powered by?

[Speaker 1]

Well, the PT boat was 77 foot long. It was some 18 or 19 foot wide. As I said, it had 15 people aboard.

It was a fierce, it was a mean sort of ship. It had more power to shoot projectiles and dynamite and everything else than any other similar 77 floating platform ever designed. We had a 37 millimeter cannon in the bow.

We had a quad 20 millimeters starboard and port and starboard in front of the cabin. On both sides of the cabin were the executive officer and the commanding officer were posted. We had 20 50 millimeter guns.

I shot the twin 50 millimeters on the starboard side. That was my assignment. That's all I shot.

On both sides of the ship after the cabin, the main cabin and the only cabin, a little raised area, were two torpedoes that we launched both on the starboard and the port side. Then in the bow, in the rear on the stern of the ship, each ship had its own favorite configuration of gun power back there. Now our commanding officer thought that the 20 millimeter was the gun of preference for us.

So we had quad 20 millimeter pieces back there. Then, of course, at the tail, just on the tail and sometime over the tail, you had about five to ten smoke screen devices mixed in with depth charges. So for a small little platform only 77 foot long, and of course keep in mind that the boat was all wood, not one bit of steel on it, and you never were ever instructed to stay and fight anybody.

That was just a no-no because it was powered by three Airacobra fighter plane motors and it used aviation octane gas and just as volatile to blow up as anything you've ever seen. Therefore, you always slipped around at night, you always slipped up on somebody's blind side, and if you ever thought that you were aware, if they were aware of you, you turned and run because you wouldn't fight in a PT boat.

[Speaker 2]

What was the top speed, cruising speed generally?

[Speaker 1]

Well, of course, everybody lied about that, and you told the speed of your boat by the size of the rooster cone at the back. That's why as you were headed home or you were headed out, when you were going into your patrol area, you were loaded with fuel, you were loaded with ammunition, you were loaded with food supplies and things of that nature. So you sat down in the water so far that your little rooster cone might only be 8, 9, 10 feet high, but after you'd been out for a day or two or three and you were headed home, you usually headed home whenever you were just about going to run out of petroleum, just about the time you got to your base, so you were just as light as could be and you fired out everything, most probably gotten rid of your fish if you could, and boy, you could fly home. We knew that we could make, with no gas aboard, light, light, light and a calm sea.

We could go about 48, 49 knots. Now that put you at about 60 miles an hour. Yeah.

[Speaker 5]

Yeah.

[Speaker 1]

And if you, you know, you've been to Coney Island and places where you come up over the top of a rise on a, you know, and then you, well, that's with the boat. And the old man always let you know as soon as he's going to push his throttle on all three engines forward, he let everybody know it because the boat sort of wanted to take off and I've seen other boats, so I know our boat was just like them, where whenever you looked at them on a silhouette, you could see water under, at the rear two-thirds of the boat because the front two-thirds of the boat was standing out of the water and almost plain, almost becoming airborne. Absolutely.

So they went fast. Oh, they did, didn't they? And, well, so fast that you could, anything that you hit that was floating and you were fooling around going that fast, it went right straight through your hull.

Yes, it wouldn't push itself off, it would just penetrate the hull. That was the big problem and why some of the more sensible skippers never went that fast because all you were doing it inviting disaster.

[Speaker 2]

Why was that? Was there any particular reason for them being all wood?

[Speaker 1]

I think they wanted them to be so light, they compromised the wood and the steel so that they could get the lightness of the wood and the speed of the boat. I think it was the attack idea of trying to get a real light rather than having to push that steel. Now there were some, there were, by the time that I was in the PT Boat Navy, they had experimented and several different builders had proposed to the Navy that this steel or this aluminum or this composition be the next model of boat and if the war would have gone on, I'm sure they would have found some of these lovely new metals, metals that we used today, but not back in those days.

Okay, go right ahead. Well, the role that I felt the PT Boat Navy, the portion of the PT Boat Navy that I served seemed to be one that the Japanese had moved into all of those islands down through there and I cannot remember all of them and I can remember that our responsibility was always to just let the Japs stay where they are and keep them from getting relief in terms of supplies coming in and keep them from departing from where they were to go do their dirty work someplace else.

So we were always cast in a role that tonight was going to be a good night because our intelligence told us that there was going to be a convoy of seven ships coming south with supplies to refurbish the Japanese on such and such an island. So I'm sure that all of the different squadrons of boats down the islands were made aware of it and then our commanding officers would take us to a place where the higher authority thought they might possibly venture through there and we would always leave 1.32 o'clock in the afternoon getting on station and we would scout the area, the shoreline, the indentations, the hiding positions where we could go in, bunker down, be very, very quiet, not move and where our radar could show us sort of over the horizon if and when anything was coming. If they did, on many, many occasions, our role was to be very quiet and slip out, give no profile if we possibly could, no talking, no lights, no communication and our lead PT boat would take us to the point where he thought it was best for us to push those little engines up and make a run and I believe during this period of time, if he just exaggerated or if I exaggerated, perhaps we hit a few larger ships, but actually seeing a result of a single torpedo or our torpedo traced to us at night, one, it was all done in the darkness, it was all done with great confusion because when you've got two squadrons, 36 small little old boats going around, sometimes the greatest hazard was running into your own boat that had fired his fish and he was running out of there and going right straight in front of your bow.

But we did the job that was asked of us and that was that we were never aware of anyone ever getting food into these islands and we are almost absolutely positive that not a single Japanese soldier ever got off the island to go. Now then we had some other funny episodes. The Japanese were great growers of their own vegetables and evidently must have come to the island with a huge supply of all of the things that you needed to have vegetable gardens and we would watch them tilling the soil, we would watch them staking up their plants, we would watch their vegetables grow and then just about the time that there was a harvest, our biggest thought was to go in and shoot up their gardens and sometimes you could see

them just shaking their fists at you from their odd houses and things like that where we were just raking up and down their cornfields and their reddish patches and just devastating everything that they had to eat. And that's sort of not too much of a claim for fame but at least that was the job to be done.

[Speaker 2]

That's a blow against their morale and I guess their stomachs too.

[Speaker 1]

I guess the most heroic adventure that I saw was not really a participant in. From the Louisville area there was a fellow by the name of Bernie Crimmins who was a football player at Notre Dame. He was an All-American at three different positions at Notre Dame and we were aware of the fact that he was coming to our PT boat base and he was one of these black-faced, honcho, macho people and he evidently was, well, I know what he was there to do because our boat was picked to pick him up at a certain time there on the island and take him out.

And we traveled and traveled and traveled and it was an all-day venture and we got to some little unnamed island and he was aboard. He did not hobnob with any of us. I had an opportunity to tell him that I was from Louisville too and he and I lived about two miles away from one another but he was a bit older than I.

He was an officer and he had all kinds of pouches and sacks and things on him and finally our skipper and he got the maps out and they finally decided the point that he was to be dropped off and we just went in real slow to the beach. He jumped off the bow of the boat into the water and then, sort of like MacArthur, onto the island. And we pulled back out at sea, oh, 10, 15 miles out I guess and evidently the instructions were at dawn, meet him right back at that same spot.

And during the course of the night, you could just see, it took him so much time to get up here and then, balloon, man, I'm telling you there would be the damnedest explosions you've ever seen. He knew where the dynamite was and he blew it up and it was quiet for two or three hours. You could just almost imagine him moving.

Balloon, this would be a fuel depot and a couple of more hours and balloon, this would be something else. And then, towards morning, we went in and there he was sitting all hunched over just like a native telling us that we were late. He had sat there exposed on the beach longer than he wanted to be and so he asked us where we were.

And our captain's vision of sunlight or dawn and his was a little bit different. Went back to the base. He absolutely did not go to the officer's club.

He did not go any place. Went straight, took him by a jeep over to a little place and 10 minutes after he was on the thing, he was gone someplace else. He survived.

I've seen him since then. I have had an opportunity to confront him in a restaurant since then in Louisville and to remember the occasion. I don't know that he did, but at least he said he did.

[Speaker 2]

Boy, that takes a lot of courage.

[Speaker 1]

Oh, my goodness.

[Speaker 2]

It's a wonder he survived.

[Speaker 1]

Yes. About the only other episode that kind of was fun was there was, all of us know that there was an IFF, identification for underflow signal that could be exchanged between ships and aircraft and things of that nature. And down in Halemahera, the island is sort of U-shaped and it comes to a very narrow entranceway but a huge almost ocean-like interior.

And a concern was always that getting trapped in that little neck as you went in, and so you'd be at sea, and man, when you decided we were going to go in, you went in and the engines were just absolutely full throttle and you got through this little three-quarters-of-a-mile inlet just as quickly as you could. Some aircraft carrier someplace put what I think their names were, the Corvairs, the Navy ship that had to go like wings into the air. And we were concerned with being in line and keeping the right distances between boats going in.

And out of the clear blue sky at the end of the bay are these aircraft. Well, we didn't know them. We couldn't see them.

We were scared to death of them. And they would not respond to our IFF. Well, they played around up there and finally they got in line and swooped down in the typical strafing mode.

So our old man called us to general quarters and we fired on them and hit one of them. He crashed. The other four turned and left because they could see our markings.

Obviously, we were an American boat. We were flying the American flag, all of us in line. It was just a silly, silly mistake for them to do what they did.

Now, we had no alternative. We couldn't stop. We were in a very perilous situation.

So that was a catastrophe as far as I was concerned. They wouldn't identify us. Because I was on our boat.

I was one of maybe 18 or 20 PT boat. That was my thing, giving out the signal, the IFF signal. And it changed every day and it changed for many reasons.

And they never responded to us. Did they actually strafe you all? No, no, no, no, no, no, no.

I think what they were doing was just come down and had a look at those funny-looking little fast boats down there. That was all, nothing more than that. But a commanding officer with a crew to protect, he's going to do what he thinks is the proper thing to do.

[Speaker 2]

Yeah, you think we're sizing too much on that, you know. That's just one of those fallops that happen so often in the war, I guess. Sure.

I don't know what you mean. Okay, what's next? Well...

[Speaker 1]

About what date now is this? Well, I can get it, I can't get it on the date unless you can supply the dropping of the bomb on Hiroshima. For it was at this period of time in those waters...

That we were told that we were all going to be put aboard LSTs, just listed up and put aboard LSTs. That was why we were called a boat instead of a ship, because we were capable of just being lifted up by a big crane and just deposited. And that we were going to be sent just en masse up to Tokyo Harbor, Tokyo Bay.

And that we were going to play a significant role in the evasion of Japan. And that our work there, we could just by-step those people, they were of no consequence at all to the war effort. And so stop expanding our efforts on them.

That we were to report to Leyte, that's in the southern part of the Philippines, and that meant an ocean run of thousands of miles. Well, a PT boat isn't made to go thousands of miles, it's just a tender little quick boat. But we didn't have enough LSTs to load them on and to make the big journey.

They were going to load us on at Leyte. And so we were trying to think out and plan for rendezvous with our supply ships, rendezvous with our fuel, rendezvous with this, that and something else to make this, to be able to even get our boats safely to Leyte. And lo and behold, over the radio at night came a message that a spectacular bomb had been dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, that it was of such force and such intensity that it was really and truly believed that perhaps there would be an offer of ceasefire on the part of the Japanese immediately because of the devastation.

And regardless of what your current role is, disengage yourself and remove yourself from any area of conflict and then just stand by. So our skipper, we were doing some minor patrol work up and down. I can remember we were overhanging trees and we were just doing a lot of shoreline stuff.

And he took us about 25, 30 miles to sea and just stood by there all night long. And then on the way in the next morning or however long it took there to be this give up, the thing was over with. So we never did get to Leyte Gulf.

We never did make the big trip up to Tokyo. So part of those American servicemen who might have gotten saved by that is myself. So the next thing we knew, the very people that we had hemmed up, officers evidently had been told to surrender to the closest military establishment.

During that period of time, our responsibilities were to go back and revisit these islands and pick up their commanding officers. And they had the great big huge swords and the



beautifully done uniforms. And we would carry them over to our base and there they would meet with appropriate generals and sign certain papers.

And then we would, after the ceremony, take them back and land them again. And it was a consequence of things for a boat designed to be done and that boat certainly played its role in exactly the right manner. I have been a member of the PT Boat Veterans Organization.

We have an annual meeting. I've only been to two, but that picture that you see on the wall is a picture of the president. He was run over in the islands about 45 or 50 miles from where we were.

And we knew some PT boats had had an encounter and that one had been run over, but we did not know and his name would not have registered on us, I'm sure. And years later there was a Colliers magazine that had the picture of the president on the front of it with a PT boat. I had a PT boat on the front of my desk for years.

So I wrote him a letter and told him that he and I had been on PT boats together. I sent him a group of my Japanese surrender pictures and asked him if he could possibly acquire the picture on the front of Colliers magazine and would autograph it for me. So a month or so later in comes two packages from the president and one was the returning of all the pictures that I had sent him in one package and then the second one was a note from him excusing the fact that he was not able, because it was commercially produced, had no access to the Colliers picture.

But he hoped that I would accept the enclosed, personally saluted letter. It says, for Robert C. Frame, with every best wish.

[Speaker 2]

Well, not too many people have one of those.

[Speaker 1]

No, they don't. No, they don't. They sure don't.

[Speaker 2]

No, they don't, sir. Not too many of those go around.

[Speaker 1]

And I have at home the letters on my wall in my den at home, but that's the one I wanted to bring to this office. We've only been here about four years.

[Speaker 2]

Is that right? How did those boats, small as they were, how rough was it?

[Speaker 1]

You never went out in rough weather. I see. In rough weather, there were degrees of roughness and once it got that rough, you simply didn't go out.

It would shake the boat apart. The mask that held the radar dome would break loose that fast from its mooring and fall someplace and break up something or puncture something or something. So you just never went out.

In clement weather, Matt, you had the day off.

[Speaker 2]

What is the longest period that you were out? Two days, three days?

[Speaker 1]

Three days is about maximum because, first of all, it doesn't have a supplemental gas. There were not supplemental tanks of gas that could be put under the wings or here, there, someplace else. It just had X.

And interesting, when you fueled a PT boat, there was only one man who was allowed to stay aboard the boat. You went down to the fueling area and you went down with a minimum, always you went with a minimum number of people to keep the boat, to man the boat. The skipper, two persons to handle the roofs and one motor mac to handle the engines down below.

Now, once you tied up, those three people left the ship and maybe went a half mile away. And then the motor mac, the man down below, the man who controlled the gauges and could stop engines and could stop the gas coming, stayed aboard the boat all the time, never two people. They lost almost as many boats and fires at the loading platform as they did anyplace else, even with those precautions.

But I can remember, I always remember that if they were, that during the fueling process you always had about two hours that you could take a nap, play a softball game, go swimming, whatever you want to do because there's nothing going on. You sure the bell didn't go down?

[Speaker 2]

Watch this. I guess if you got down the bell and hit the start button, that was it, wasn't it?

[Speaker 1]

Oh, we sprang a leak returning one evening, not from gunfire or anything, just sprang a leak, and the motor mac shouted up to the captain that my floorboards are floating in gasoline. So he ordered the stopping of all, shut down the electrical power system. Another boat came over and got us, threw us a line, and then towed us into dock.

And it was a moment-by-moment problem of whether or not we were going to stay afloat long enough to get to the dry dock. And I can remember having to radio in hand signals that they should lower the dry dock so that we could pull right straight in. We did not have any time to be tied up here or there or someplace else.

We were just floating in gasoline and clear the whole damn thing. And it took about seven days for our boat to leak out and to very cautiously get that petroleum off there. But some connection had busted, and we came so close to blowing ourselves right out of the water.

[Speaker 2]

Before you came back to the States, what did you do with your boats? Where did you turn them in?

[Speaker 1]

Well, we left our boat at the squadron. They had PT boat bases. And out of a PT boat base would operate maybe five, eight, ten squadrons.

A squadron would be 12 boats. So there would be 50 or 60 boats. We left them all there.

Left them all there. Had nothing to do with their decommissioning. Had nothing to do with them being taken out of service.

That was left to another person at another time. But I had nothing to do. I did not see that.

It would have been a very sad day. A very sad day. Yeah.

I remember my boat number just as clearly as 325.

[Speaker 2]

How did you get back to the States?

[Speaker 1]

Well, that was fun. They get you back, or I was gotten back to Pearl Harbor at the naval base there. And was given an opportunity to be discharged from the Navy and processed in Pearl or to come home and be processed someplace in the States.

Back in those days, you could take a Navy uniform and the underwear and the socks and everything else that you had and it's sold at a high premium. My economics said I wanted to be discharged in Pearl Harbor, become a civilian in Pearl Harbor, sell all of my Navy gear at Pearl Harbor, where I had a good market for it, supplement it with civilian clothes, and then I'd worry about getting myself home. And so they did exactly that.

And I had the little \$200 or \$300 worth of discharge money and then I had the \$200 or \$300 worth of selling. Everything I had on me except one uniform and it was most probably white and very minimal. And I went down to downtown Pearl Harbor and got some civilian duds, bought that ring, and now I was a civilian.

So I went out to the Navy base and told them I was not in a hurry to get home, but anytime they could find a little aircraft coming back. So, well, it wasn't two days. I got a call over the enlisted men's thing saying that a flight such and such was leaving at such and such and going to land at Oakland, California.

I thought, well, I'll be gracious. I'm going right back where I started. So I flew into Oakland and stayed overnight and got a ride out on the highway outside of Oakland where all the tractor-trailer trucks were heading east and put my little ditty bag down on the road and gave it the old sign and I wasn't there five minutes.

This old overhead cab gasoline truck came to a stop and I had to run about three-quarters of a mile down the highway and he says, which way are you going, buddy? I said, I'm going to Louisville, Kentucky. He said, I can take you to St. Louis. I said, that's fine. Now, I had ridden a boat through all kinds of weather. It was supposed to be the hardest boat in America and never once got seasick and within 45 minutes I vomited all over this man's cabin.

He was the nicest man. He said, it's a jar in one of those when you've got hundreds of thousands of gallons. And we pulled into a truck stop.

He got a garden hose and he just washed out my side of, on the dash and on the floor and on the seat. Just washed it all out. Got it real nice and clean.

Went inside and I'll never forget, you know how you have these little fresheners that you hang from a string, you know, and they sort of give a little scent. He got one of those and put it on the mirror and we took off again. Why, we were good friends when we got to St. Louis. And then, of course, from St. Louis you go over to Evansville, Evansville over to Louisville and you're home. And that was the end of the first part of my career in the Navy. Mother didn't know I was coming home.

I walked up the front steps. Is that right? Oh, she knew that I was in the States.

She knew I was in St. Louis. She knew that I was going to be home in two, three, four days, whatever it took. But I was always an individual that I wanted to be by myself and take care of myself.

And I always felt like I could think just as well. I didn't need a crowd of people to participate in. I can get home exactly the way I want.

When did you get home now? Do you remember? Well, let me see.

Again, I can give you honestly. I got home June of 1946. June of 1946.

This little record here says that I had 14 months of sea duty and 13 months of U.S. duty at that time. And I was home then from June of 1946 until September of 1949. Now, in the meanwhile, now this goes on to a second chapter.

Do you want to know about my Korean service?

[Speaker 2]

Yeah, I'd like to. When we get this right, I'll call it right on.

[Speaker 1]

Well, when I got home, of course, I still had college work to finish up because I had not finished it to begin with. So I re-enrolled in the University of Louisville, had two more years to go, finished those two years. And towards the end of that, I began to say to myself, oops, things about the world doesn't look too good to me and I sure don't want to be an enlisted man again.

So I applied up to the 6th Naval District's recruiting office in Cincinnati, told them that I was finishing my work at the University of Tennessee, going to get my Bachelor of Science in a business degree and that I would like to apply to the Navy for a commission. You came to Tennessee? No, no, no.

This is all back up in Louisville. Still in Louisville. And so they responded with the necessary papers and asked me to go get a physical and literally awarded me a commission as an ensign in the U.S. Navy Reserves in the supply corps, supply because of my business degree.

And we were involved in the Korean War. I had married, had no children. And one evening, Gina and I, when we got home from work, living there in Louisville, there was that little military package and I was called to service.

Didn't know why. And I was called to service in December of 1949. And I had never had a uniform before, had to go buy a uniform, had not been trained at all as an officer.

So I was not much of an officer, but I was an ensign. And the call to duty was for me to go and get my supply corps schooling at Bayonne, New Jersey. So Gina and I closed down our apartment in Louisville and we started towards Bayonne, New Jersey, which is across the harbor from New York City.

Well, of course, we thought that was the blackest day of the world, but actually it was the most fantastic day of the world. On the way up, we ran into a catastrophe. At Zanesville, Ohio, it started snowing.

And back in that year, just before Christmas, in Zanesville, Ohio, there were about, well, snow drifts were three, four, and five feet higher than our car. Once we got back on the road and they cleaned the place. In Zanesville, Ohio, we stayed there.

We had to call the Navy and tell them that we just simply could not go any further, that we were snowed in in Zanesville. We stayed there for about five days. And amongst the people who were on the highway, there were 21 or 22 people who died who stayed in their car and did not turn around and go back to Zanesville.

It was sort of between Zanesville and Meck City. There were deaths out there. So we got to Bayonne, New Jersey.

I was enrolled in learning how to be an ensign and learning how to be a supply corps officer. And lo and behold, we rented a little Jewish couple's home. Apartment.

Prettiest home you ever saw in your life. We answered their ad, and they kind of looked at us through the crack in the door. They do not relieve you of all of the dispersing that you have done.

The federal government keeps an open account on you, just in case there is any hanky-panky. They could bring civilian charges against you, even though you are in the Navy. And then, after passing the time and no occurrence of a disaster, then Congress discharges you from any further liability for the money.

And I was noticing in here, there is a little notice. How does it go? Of course, it's a...

Here it is. United States General Accounting Office, Washington, D.C. Certificate of Settlement of Account. And it was to Lieutenant Junior Gary Robert C.

Frame, dated April 16, 1915. So it took that long to have this. And I certify that I have examined and settled the naval account of symbol 574078.

That was my number. And it was signed by the Comptroller General of the United States, E. L.

Leland. So that's probably the most important little piece of paper to have been relieved. Six million dollars, part of it diesel fuel soaked.

So the bottom line of my military career was that it was fascinating, that I enjoyed every moment of it, that I was fortunately recalled. And that started off a lifetime of travel. When we got home, I had no basic career then, but one of the things that we have always done is travel.

And we have been to Europe four or five times, and Asia, and that. But that started it. Just that knowing that there was that huge amount of stuff to see all over the world.

[Speaker 2]

You've been fortunate, haven't you? Yes, sir. That's good.

I don't have anything like that. Except I do have a few people that had some of the same type of experience that you've had, where their service was a broad education. Yes, yes.

They thoroughly enjoyed themselves. It influenced the rest of their lives, like it did. Testing 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, over.

Today I'm interviewing Mr. Robert C. Frame, F-R-A-I-M, of 17525 Nassau Drive. Farragut, Tennessee, 37922.

Mr. Frame, when did you first join the service?

[Speaker 1]

I am looking at my transcripts right here, and I joined the service World War II on March 1943.

[Speaker 4]

Okay.

[Speaker 1]

And I seem to have gotten out on the sixth month. That would be June 1946.

[Speaker 2]

Okay. What branch of the service did you go in? U.S. Navy.

[Speaker 1]

Okay.

[Speaker 2]

Why did you pick the Navy?

[Speaker 1]

Well, I picked the Navy because at the University of Louisville, where I was attending as a freshman, they offered a V-12 Navy program that you could join, and I joined up because of that.

[Speaker 2]

Okay. I'm familiar with that. My brother went through that at Tech, George Tech.

Okay. If you will, first describe your activities in the States, from your first, where you reported for duty and that sort of thing, your training, everything up to the time you went overseas.

[Speaker 1]

Okay. Originally, because of the volunteering for service, I got assigned to where I wanted to go, which was the University of Louisville's V-12 program, which was a continuation of my education. My focal point was medicine.

I was a pre-med, and there were a large number of us who started. There were a few who survived, but I didn't survive, in that my grades were not good enough to continue in the program. So that removed me from the University of Louisville and Louisville, Kentucky scene, put me into the Naval Pool of America at that time, and so off I went up to Great Lakes, Illinois, to the Naval Station up in Chicago, just outside of Chicago.

Went to boot camp there, and then from boot camp, because of some skill I must have had, they decided that my best training would be as a communicator, a radioman. So they sent me to a school in Indianapolis, Indiana, about a five- or six-month school, and there I learned the Morris Code, as we called it back in those days, the dits and the daws, and became proficient in both listening to it and typing what I heard, as well as signaling with your arms and with your hands the alphabet to communicate from a Navy point of view. When those days were over, about six months, I think, into the program, it was then time to be discharged from the radio school in Indianapolis, Indiana, and we were given opportunities to make our first, second, and third choice of where we wanted to go.

And I chose as my first choice PT boat training. And I had no idea about what a PT boat was, but it sounded wonderful and glamorous, and so I chose PT boats and was selected for PT boats. There were two stations at that time where PT boat training was held.

One was on the west coast in California someplace. I guess because of being basically on the east coast, I was assigned and sent to a PT boat training program out of Providence, Rhode Island, at Melville. Melville, Rhode Island.

It was wintertime of the year. Went there, and this training took something in the neighborhood of five or six months, and aboard a PT boat, which has a complement of 15 sailors, two officers, 13 enlisted men, my responsibility aboard the PT boat was the running of its radio, voice communication, and the radar equipment aboard the boat fell under my province. When our PT boat training at Melville, Rhode Island, was over, we were assigned, all of us, to different what they call squadrons.

A squadron is 12 PT boats called a squadron, and I was assigned to a PT boat in squadron 25 in the south seas, down in the area of Halemahera, New Guinea, Borneo, down under place, and it was the first time I had ever gone from the east coast to the west coast. It was a troop train made up of mostly soldiers, but there were some sailors. We went cross-country in the troop train.

I can remember being out in Oakland, California, and we departed from Oakland, California, made the trip across seas and joined my boat down in Halemahera, down in the South Pacific.

[Speaker 2]

Where are you from originally? Born and raised over in Louisville, Kentucky. Louisville, Kentucky, I see.

Okay, and that's how you were in school in Louisville, right? Yes, yes, yes. All righty.

Now, how did you get from California down under to meet your squadron down there?

[Speaker 1]

It was all done by boat, and generally it was troop ships of different nature. We went from over in Oakland, we went right straight to Pearl, disembarked, went into the naval state, had a few days of liberty in Pearl Harbor, always sort of reporting back to find out if your orders were to ship out. Had gotten there.

Not a long period of time there. The war was on very much in earnest then, and then finally there was someplace in there I can remember being on some flights, but it's been a little bit too long to remember when I flew from here to here and when I was on a ship from here to here.

[Speaker 2]

About what date was that before, just the date maybe that you got to your station?

[Speaker 1]

Oh, gracious me. I would say that it was mid-1940, early to mid-1944.

[Speaker 3]

Okay. Yeah. Okay, go right ahead.

[Speaker 1]

Well, I guess the very first thing that you do once you get to any base or at least I thought it was appropriate was to see if you could find anybody from home. And as you can always do at every base, regardless of where you are, if you look for a couple of hours, you're going to run across somebody that you knew. And I ran across two.