

Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
JIM BLOOMQUIST
Medic, Navy, World War II and Korean War
1996

OH
353

OH
353

Bloomquist, Jim, (1919-2002). Oral History Interview, 1996.

User Copy: 2 sound cassettes (ca. 82 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 82 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Video Recording: 1 videorecording (ca. 82 min.); ½ inch, color.

Transcript: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

Abstract:

Jim Bloomquist, a Madison, Wisconsin native, discusses his career military service with the Navy and Marines including his participation in World War II, the Korean War, and the Cold War. After enlistment and basic training at Naval Station Great Lakes (Illinois), he talks about his pre-war service aboard the USS Enterprise as an apprentice weather-training seaman. He addresses his transfer to the Medical Department as a corpsman striker, medical training, and assignment as a hospital apprentice in California. After receiving medical training, Bloomquist was assigned to the 6th Marine Division and comments on being transported aboard the USS Heywood from California to Iceland and landing in Iceland with only summer uniforms. Stationed in Iceland, he recalls Marine building projects, being served horse meat in a restaurant, and the hostility of the Icelandic population toward American Marines. After ten months in Iceland, Bloomquist speaks of volunteering for the Marine parachute troops. He comments on training in New Jersey and North Carolina, landing at Tanambogo and Gavutu Island, the breakup of the parachute troops, duty as corpsman at Guadalcanal, and transfer to a Marine rifle unit. He also touches upon fighting with World War I weapons and helmets, putting up barrage balloons, feeling resentment that he was fighting in jungles while others in the Navy were sleeping in beds and eating hot food, and checking and treating Marines for sexually transmitted diseases once they left a brothel in New Caledonia. Bloomquist details the landing at Tarawa including crawling across a coral reef, swimming ashore with 100 pounds of medical supplies, setting up a makeshift aid station on the beach, treating the wounded with morphine, and return to the States after the battle. He speaks of working in a dispensary at Barin Field (Alabama) and having his appendix removed aboard a ship. Stationed briefly aboard a submarine (the USS Bluefin), he describes submarine conditions as cramped but well equipped. At Tinian Island, Bloomquist talks about being stationed aboard the USS Zellars, hearing B29s taking off, being hit by a kamikaze attack, beaching the ship near Beppo (Japan), and being taken prisoner by the Japanese. He touches upon his experiences as a POW in Wakayama (Japan) and says the Japanese people had very little food and the long-term prisoners were on opium to stave off hunger. He recalls being told the war was over, discharge from service, and return to live in Adams (Wisconsin) for three months before reenlisting in 1946. He describes serving aboard the USS Zellars again in the Atlantic and Mediterranean before another discharge and reenlistment. Assigned to Naval Station Great Lakes (Illinois), he mentions teaching for a time. He touches upon his Korean War service providing support for Marine landings and firing white phosphorus rounds at North Korean villages. He

comments on joining a Naval group in Japan and evacuating Vietnamese people after the defeat of the French at Dien Pien Phu. Retiring to the Fleet Naval Retired, he comments on being pressured into the Veterans of Foreign Wars and being active in the Fleet Reserve Navy Chiefs.

Biographical Sketch:

Bloomquist (b.1920) served a career with the Navy spanning World War II, the Korean War, and the Cold War.

Interviewed by James McIntosh, 2000.
Transcribed by Elizabeth Hackett, 2009.
Abstract by Susan Krueger, 2010.

Interview Transcript:

James: Okay, we're off—and here we go. Here it is, the 16th of June—

Bloomquist: Correct.

James: The year 2000. We're interviewing Jim Bloomquist. And tell me, where were you born?

Bloomquist: I'll be damned if I know! (laughs) No, I was—

James: Adams?

Bloomquist: No, I was adopted here in Madison.

James: Oh.

Bloomquist: But I think—

James: Grew up in Adams?

Bloomquist: But then, later on—no, I—I lived here with my folks for about four years.

James: Where?

Bloomquist: In Madison. And then my dad, because he was a railroad man, went up to Adams.

James: So you're—Madison is your hometown, then.

Bloomquist: Yeah, more or less.

James: And what year were you born?

Bloomquist: 1920.

James: 1920.

Bloomquist: 22nd of January.

James: Okay. And when did you enter military service?

Bloomquist: 13th of February, 1940.

James: Two-Forty. And you volunteered to go in the Navy?

Bloomquist: Yeah. There were no jobs, and I couldn't get money to go back to school, and then—

James: Right.

Bloomquist: So I had—

James: You were going to get drafted, anyway.

Bloomquist: Yeah, it's coming up.

James: That was coming up. So where did they send you?

Bloomquist: First, I went—I—well, they—I actually went down and seen them in the—in the end of '39, and—but I didn't get in until the 13th. I went to Chicago, to the recruiting office there. And they swore us in then, and took us to Great Lakes.

James: Great Lakes. Basic at Great Lakes. And then, after your—your initial training, where did you go?

Bloomquist: I went aboard the USS Enterprise, CV-6.

James: Right out—right out of Great Lakes?

Bloomquist: Right out of Great Lakes.

James: And straight to USS Enterprise—

Bloomquist: CV-6.

James: Right.

Bloomquist: That's the old Enterprise.

James: Right, CV-6—the old one. Yep, the old one. As of—as a—just as a regular seaman?

Bloomquist: No, I went aboard to be in—what they call a weatherman aerographer.

James: What training did they give you for that?

Bloomquist: None. You had to take—

James: Oh.

Bloomquist: Training aboard ship.

James: To be a weather—

Bloomquist: Aerographer.

James: Weather aerographer. I never heard that term. Trained as a weather aerographer. Boy, that's a—that's a mouthful, that word.

Bloomquist: (laughs) Well, I don't know exactly what the rain [unintelligible], but then—had a chief aboard there, never been to school. All we did was let balloons go up in the air, and watch them, and—and—(laughs) and note the weather that existed—

James: Oh.

Bloomquist: Where we were at, and that's about it. And then I got sick, and I got in the sick bay, and the doctor happened to be a graduate of the University of Wisconsin Medical School. And the Lieutenant Commander, he talked me into being a striker for corpsmen, or a pharmacist's mate, back in those times.

James: Changed to pharmacist's mate. Yeah.

Bloomquist: And anyway, I did that for five months, then they sent me to San Diego to Corps School.

James: Corps School. Yeah.

Bloomquist: The Naval Hospital in San Diego.

James: To—school—San Diego—okay. And after that training, what did they do with you?

Bloomquist: I got—I swapped with a guy. I—I—I had pretty high marks, because I had been in—in pre-med, you know. And anyway, I swapped with a guy and stayed in San Diego. I didn't want to go to Great Lakes, and then I had my choice, and I wanted to stay out there. And anyway, they put—the first place they got was TB contagion. (laughs) And later on, I—I eventually was transferred to the Marine Corps, beginning of—right at the end of—the right end of '41.

James: In '41—end of—December '41?

Bloomquist: No, wait a minute, I'm try—

James: Okay.

Bloomquist: I have trouble with dates. Now, let's see—I had Corps School, hospital there—yeah, right at the end of '40. Yeah, I ended up at the Marine Base in San Diego. The Second Battalion, Sixth Marine.

James: 1941—attached to Marines—okay—as a corpsman.

Bloomquist: Yeah.

James: Okay.

Bloomquist: Back in those days, it was—I was a hospitalman—Hospital Apprentice, First Class. (laughs) That, and the next rank was pharmacist—the pharmacist's mate—

James: Oh, really.

Bloomquist: Of the fleet. And after the war, they changed all these ranks to—

James: Oh.

Bloomquist: Hospitalmen, and stuff like that.

James: So what did you do with the Marines? Where did you—did you stay there for a while in Miramar?

Bloomquist: Yeah, we stayed in—we stayed in—out at the Marine Base there in San Diego for about two weeks, then moved out to Camp Elliott, which is about fifteen miles up Mission Valley, near Poway, and right across from where the new air—Miramar is—out that new airport and stuff they—they just put—that wasn't there. That was in the—we used to go there and do azimuth readings and stuff. And then there was remnants of the old World War I Army Camp. But—stayed there—and the next thing I—they lived in tents there, and then later on—I'm trying to figure out when it was. Anyway, we ended up a few months later going up to Iceland.

James: Iceland?

Bloomquist: Well, we actually got aboard ship—the Heywood, USS Heywood, then went down to the Canal and through and—we're supposed to go to some French island, and—but then the Free French took it over, so we didn't have to go. So we ended up in Charleston, South Carolina, about three transports full of Marines.

James: You never got to Iceland?

Bloomquist: Oh, yeah. We didn't intend to go to Iceland to begin with.

James: Oh.

Bloomquist: Then we stayed there about two weeks. The next thing I know, we're up in Iceland, and all we got is summer gear. (laughs)

James: Oh my!

Bloomquist: But fortunately, I had my Navy sea bag with me, with my booze and my pea coat.

James: Tell me about the—and what size unit were you in now, when you went to Iceland?

Bloomquist: Second Battalion.

James: Is it—battalion Marines?

Bloomquist: Marines, yeah. Probably—there was—let's see—there's headquarters company, A, G, E—there's probably five companies in that. Each company probably had about eighty men.

James: Sure.

Bloomquist: And—

James: And how big a medical unit?

Bloomquist: It was—Chief, well, he was Major. Then there was a unit of about ten of us. One man was assigned to each unit.

James: Right.

Bloomquist: They tried to get two, but they didn't have enough people.

James: In Iceland, did you have a hospital facility?

Bloomquist: We had a little set up—a little dispensary. Small—what we could do.

James: Yeah, it's minor things.

Bloomquist: But they had a medical company up there, too, that come up, and I forget what the name of it was, that came from San Diego. Hadaka(?) is the hospital up there.

James: Marine Medical Unit?

Bloomquist: Well, it was Navy—

James: Navy.

Bloomquist: Navy—Marine, yeah.

James: Okay.

Bloomquist: In fact—it was a guy you might want to—be an interesting story for you. Name was Triggs, he's related to these Triggs that had the—the store—you know, the bakeries and stuff. They're in the building business and stuff. But Don Triggs, he was a Second Class Pharmacist's Mate up in Iceland there. And I know I—when I had the duty, I—I used to have to go down and stand duty in the hospital down in Reykjavik, and he and I seemed to be there at the same time, in case any Americans got hurt or anything. He met an Icelandic girl, and they almost caused a worldwide (laughs) incident. He was going to get married to her. The Iclander didn't want him to get married to (laughs) anything. He's—"Well, I'm going to get married." The girl says, "I'm going to get married." Finally, the old—then the Marine Corps told him, "Don, you can't marry that girl." So Don said, "Finally—" Then they transferred him back to the States. Years later, I run into him. He's out in Oregon now. But he come back, he got away—he retired out of the Navy and eventually came back here. But then when—went out there. He never did marry his girl, but they had our government and the Icelandic government—

James: In a snit.

Bloomquist: Huh?

James: In a snit, over—

Bloomquist: Yeah, oh, man.

James: Now, the war started yet, for American—?

Bloomquist: No, uh-uh.

James: Okay.

Bloomquist: While we were up in Iceland, in December, we would just—well, what we did—they took G Company, put us over on—up on a—the Icelandic

people were building these big reservoirs and stuff, to pipe hot water down into the—the city and—

James: Right.

Bloomquist: All that. And we went up on this hill above the airport, set up a perimeter. They thought maybe the Germans would've want to come and jump in there, you know. So we sat there.

James: For a weather station—you know, something.

Bloomquist: Yeah, just in case they ever try to come in and—because they—the Germans were behind putting all this—building all this irrigation system or heating system, you know, coming from Gulfoss down to Reykjavik. And anyway, then later on, we still had to camp at Baldurshagi.

James: What's that? Is that the name of a town?

Bloomquist: That was the original camp that we were in.

James: How far from Reykjavik?

Bloomquist: Oh, about seven miles. It's kind of funny—above us at the camp, there was a big lake, and there was a—quite a river coming down, and it was joined by another river that was coming down, that was hot water, and they mixed. And when they (laughs) just set up for the showers and everything else, they put that right over the—just—the area there. We'd take baths there, and stuff like that. They'd pump the water up, you know.

James: Did you get liberty in Reykjavik.

Bloomquist: Oh, yeah.

James: Did you enjoy that?

Bloomquist: There wasn't much—

James: Oh, really?

Bloomquist: The girls—the type of girl you wanted to go with, and then—a lot of the girls that a guy went out with—the Americans and stuff—they shaved their heads, all that (laughs) kind of stuff.

James: They shaved their heads?

Bloomquist: Yeah, and then I remember standing in a rape line there in Baldurshagi. Some woman up above by that lake up there said she got raped. Actually, what she was doing—she was a prostitute while her husband was gone to sea. She was (laughs) selling her—selling herself. And she never identified anybody, but we had to line up and walk through this line, and she was—old Parker—Captain—I mean, Colonel Parker—you probably heard of him. He was—he ended up in being Police Commissioner for Los Angeles.

James: Oh, yes.

Bloomquist: And, well, he—Colonel Parker, he sat there with her. She—she never picked out—we all walked by, and had to make a turn, and go on (laughs) and stuff. She never named anybody. And that was about then—later then(?)—

James: The locals didn't like the Marines there.

Bloomquist: Not too well. The Icelanders were pretty—they liked themselves, and that's about it. They didn't want anybody else there. The Germans that went up there and started building things, you know, and stuff for them, and they kind of liked them, you know—pro-German. And I could speak a little German, and stuff, and Sweden—I'm a Swede. I knew some—knew a lot—a certain amount of Swedish. And I could get along pretty well with the Icelanders. I—I—I never had any problems. But I never did date an Icelandic girl, but there was some pretty ones. In the hospital there—you meet them, you know, where I was at. We had—had an emergency room there, and we'd just stand by in case an American got messed up. Another thing was kind of interesting there. The Marine used to come in to town, where our menu was—wasn't too good. (laughs) And they come in to town, get a steak at this one restaurant called the Gulfoss Restaurant. They—what they didn't know about it, though, and I did, because my father had told me about it, and written me—told me that they raise horses for meat in Sweden, Norway, and up there. What these Marines were—they loved that steak, except that it was all horsemeat. (laughs)

James: I think you could.

Bloomquist: I tried to tell them it was horsemeat. They wouldn't believe me. But—

James: So how long were you in Iceland?

Bloomquist: We were there about ten months, I think it was. We came back to the States, and I eventually ended up in the—went on leave, and then I come back, and I went into the paratroop training. I figured as long as I'm with the Marines, I might as well get paid for it. You get an extra fifty bucks a

month, so I—I—I just applied for it. I never thought I'd get it. By god, they picked me.

James: This was still in—before the war started.

Bloomquist: No, the war had started up in—when we were up in Iceland.

James: Oh, so you—so you earned it from 1942, then.

Bloomquist: Just—yeah, we come back in '42 there—early '42.

James: So you—you decided to go into paratrooper training?

Bloomquist: Yeah, went first to Lakehurst, then to what is now Camp Lejeune, North Carolina.

James: How about being in the Marines? Were you in—

Bloomquist: I was in the Marines—just the Marines.

James: So you—

Bloomquist: Marine paratroops.

James: Marine paratroops—okay.

Bloomquist: And then we ended up in San Diego after our training in Camp Lejeune. And went overseas, and then we made a landing on Gavutu-Tanamobogo.

James: How did you get overseas?

Bloomquist: The Bluefontaine(?) [Blue?] was the name of the ship. You look up there—

James: Yeah, that's your cross—the—before the—

Bloomquist: That was one of the ships.

James: Okay.

Bloomquist: And—

James: You sailed over there.

Bloomquist: Yeah, we made landings there in—this was the Guadalcanal campaign.

James: Okay.

Bloomquist: But we—other Marines landed on the canal, and the other—the Raiders landed on the other island there, right next to Gavutu and Tanambogo. Can't remember the name of it right now and—

James: Tulagi?

Bloomquist: And that(?)—Tulagi. And anyway, we eventually went over to take us longer, take these two little islands we had—

James: Did you make any jumps there?

Bloomquist: No, we never—we never jumped in combat.

James: How many jumps did they give you in training?

Bloomquist: I probably—I think I got—the record was 96.

James: 96 jumps?

Bloomquist: Yeah.

James: In the United States, before you left the country.

Bloomquist: Yeah.

James: How did you enjoy that training?

Bloomquist: (laughs) I carried a roll of toilet paper most (laughs) of the time.

James: (laughs)

Bloomquist: It wasn't that bad. I—I don't like heights, but it was different from an airplane. I don't know why. You never see nothing, you just—they line you up, and say, "Go!" and you went. (laughs) And I was in San Diego before we went overseas, and the [unintelligible] were quartered—you probably could trace back, but guy by the name of—an officer, Second Lieutenant by the name of Ossebof(?) went out of this DC-3. He was the last man out, and his parachute got hung up on the tail assembly, and they flew him around for about an hour. Finally, some—one of those—some type of plane with—two-seater, Navy plane went up, got under the plane, and got him—saved him.

James: [unintelligible]

Bloomquist: (laughs) But then we got overseas there, and we—we got to Telagi, and then they took us over to Guadalcanal, and we got attached to different outfits. They broke—broke us up, and put us in different units over there and stuff.

James: Were you still being a corpsman or not?

Bloomquist: I was a corpsman all this time. Yeah.

James: Okay.

Bloomquist: And—

James: So what kind of a—the—I mean, a hospital set-up did you get to(?) in Guadalcanal?

Bloomquist: (laughs) A butcher shop, in my describing.

James: You mean you were in tents there.

Bloomquist: We had a little tents—something set up—what they called a battle station.

James: I see.

Bloomquist: On Gavutu and Tanambogo, we didn't do that, because it wouldn't—no need for it.

James: I see.

Bloomquist: Marines on Tulagi, they—they didn't have hardly any casualties, either. That was a raider battalion. And then we went over on the Guadalcanal, and we were defending—the outfit I was with was defending the Henderson Airfield and stuff.

James: How big of a medical unit were you in at that time?

Bloomquist: That was—same—

James: About twelve, then?

Bloomquist: I was in that—

James: Ten or twelve?

Bloomquist: I got—I'm trying to remember.

- James: Well, roughly.
- Bloomquist: There was probably fifteen or twenty people.
- James: How many doctors?
- Bloomquist: Two.
- James: Two doctors.
- Bloomquist: Yeah. I can remember their names—Wolf and Sisson(?).
- James: Okay, very good.
- Bloomquist: And one was from—Wolf was a Jewish doctor, from New Jersey, I think, and Sisson(?) was—Sisson was from some—rural Mississippi, I think. They were reserves.
- James: Mm-hm.
- Bloomquist: Anyway, that—we stayed there, and eventually I can remember sitting on the—on the Kukum Docks there, waiting to go board one of these Higgins boats, to go out the this one transport. We were going south. This was after Guadalcanal was secured. And trying to get all this in order is difficult, because—
- James: Just take your time.
- Bloomquist: And—but anyway, we got—I was sitting there, and I could tell those Marines, I'd see the destroyer out there, you know—cruising around and stuff. And I say, “Boy, I joined the Navy—” (laughs) I said, “I could be aboard that thing, getting a good bath.” And here, I'm sitting there, stinking, you know. A good meal and everything. But about three years later, (laughs) I was—I was aboard a destroyer (laughs) like that, and we got hit by three kamikazis.
- James: Now, don't get ahead now. In—in Guadalcanal, you had a—
- Bloomquist: Anyway, we were at Kukum Docks there, and they took—put aboard the—these transports, and they took us down to New Caledonia—Nouméa. And we—a number of us took about six or seven days. And they stopped giving us Atabrine, and—because aboard ship, there's no mosquitoes, nothing, and New Caledonia was mosquito-free, I mean, as far as malaria.
- James: You were on a destroyer?

Bloomquist: No, we were aboard a transport.

James: Oh, transport. Where were you going?

Bloomquist: Going—we're heading for New Zealand.

James: Oh, you're going back in the reserve area.

Bloomquist: Yeah.

James: The whole hospital unit?

Bloomquist: No, not a—this is the Marine unit that we were with. And—

James: Which was the Marine unit you hooked up with?

Bloomquist: The Eighth Marines, I think it was.

James: I see.

Bloomquist: I'm positive.

James: When you were in Guadalcanal, were you acting as battalion aide station?

Bloomquist: I was a company corpsman. I wouldn't—I'd been lying. I never was in a battle aide station.

James: Oh, I see. What were your—what was your duty there in Guadalcanal?

Bloomquist: Anybody got hit, we took care of him.

James: Even in the field?

Bloomquist: The field, yeah.

James: You mean you brought—you patched him up?

Bloomquist: We carried stuff with us, you know—[unintelligible].

James: Japan and German, then—

Bloomquist: Whatever—give—

James: Bring them back to the—

- Bloomquist: Give him morphine, whatever—
- James: Bring him back to an aide station.
- Bloomquist: Stop any—yeah—well, we never took him back. We just take care of him, and then the Marines had people to—
- James: Goodness.
- Bloomquist: Yeah, carry, just bring up a stretcher, and take the guy back.
- James: That was a busy time for you, then.
- Bloomquist: Yeah, we—we were in a battle there, ten [unintelligible] like that, up at Tassafaronga, few other places.
- James: Nobody—you were never over Ara(?) [Arawe?]
- Bloomquist: They tried to—us—they bombed the hell out of us from—see, we were right around Henderson Field—
- James: Right.
- Bloomquist: A lot of the time, and they were trying to hold Henderson Field. And they had a fighter unit in that, with old Pappy Boyington, all of them—
- James: I know him.
- Bloomquist: In there, at that time. And anyway, I knew nothing—Pete Gibou(?) got the—guy got shot. What are you—you take care of him.
- James: You carry a weapon?
- Bloomquist: Uh, yeah. First we didn't, but then they—they gave us .45s. But they were—
- James: You never fired—
- Bloomquist: I never used it. (laughs) I'm all—I later—I mean, when they first—back in the States, when we were at Camp Elliott, I used to go out with this—Marines when fired for record, and all that stuff. And they let us fire, you know, so—
- James: With an M1?
- Bloomquist: With—well, no, .45.

James: Oh, okay.

Bloomquist: And I never—the M1—well, back then, they didn't have M1s, then. They had—they had the old spring-through and the BARs and stuff. That's what we hit Guadalcanal with—those kinds of things. And then they had Reising guns, and a couple others that they had. And then the Army relayed this, and they come in with all this thing(?). We had those brown(?) helmets, you know? The Army come in with those fancy helmets, and all that shit. (laughs) Anyway, we—they relieved us, and then we had to relieve them, because the Japs (laughs) were—Japs were taking over. And those—those Army guys, you couldn't blame them—they were—they probably hadn't been out of—out of their recruit training for more than six or seven—

James: Yeah, we weren't prepared.

Bloomquist: *They* weren't prepared. And the Marines were well-trained, despite the fact that we'd been up in Iceland and all that. Marines train like hell. I got a lot of respect for them. And they never had much respect for me, until we got in the war. (laughs)

James: Then they needed you!

Bloomquist: (laughs) "Hey, Corpsman!" You know.

James: Right. Okay.

Bloomquist: But—

James: So you—you avoided getting shot and stayed out—

Bloomquist: Well, I—they took me off of the—the Pinkney, I think the transport was—the Pinkney, the Rixey, and some other ship. They were fast transports that based—transported Marines into—you know, out there. And they took me off and put me in MOB 7, in New Caledonia—they're right outside of Nouméa, with malaria. The malaria come—because I wouldn't stop taking Atabrine—come back on us. And I was in the hospital there, and—

James: Did the—did the malaria hit you very hard, Jim?

Bloomquist: Yeah, it bugged the hell out of—you get chills and fever—

James: Fever, right.

Bloomquist: Yeah. And I had two different types, and then—anyway, I got—kind of got—when you got down to Nouméa and stuff, eventually it just faded away.

James: Never had any more attacks?

Bloomquist: No, uh-uh. And anyway, I might have had a few here and there, but nothing like—nothing like they were then, and anyway, when I got out of the hospital, they sent me over to a barrage balloon outfit on the—there was an island that formed—that formed the Île Nou, they called it. It formed the—the bay there in New Caledonia.

James: I see.

Bloomquist: In Nouméa. And I was there—

James: Doing what?

Bloomquist: Think they set up a—set up a little dispensary there—I mean, a little sick bay.

James: I see.

Bloomquist: First aid station, I call it.

James: All by yourself, or with some—

Bloomquist: No, with first class—I was second class at the time. And then I made first—there's first class, and will be made chief. We stayed there about—oh, probably, I'd say six, seven months. We were right next to a French prison—

James: In the—

Bloomquist: On the—on the island.

James: This was island with Nouméa?

Bloomquist: Nouméa, yeah.

James: Okay. Was the life pretty grim there?

Bloomquist: No—

James: Not much.

- Bloomquist: The—the food they—most of the food and stuff we got was from—was shipped up from Australia. And they eat a lot of mutton. (laughs)
- James: I haven't found—
- Bloomquist: Go—
- James: Anybody who liked that.
- Bloomquist: No. Yeah, we finally got a whole bunch of beer. You know?
- James: Yep.
- Bloomquist: In the big bottles, from Australia. And man, everybody, when—got two or three, they allotted two or three bottles to each person—big bottles. Drank the—tried to drink the stuff, and it was—they used formaldehyde in their beer.
- James: Jesus.
- Bloomquist: To pasteurize it. There was that lingering taste. God, it tastes awful. I had all kinds of 100-, 90-proof alcohol if I wanted to drink. (laughs) And Légend(?) [Les Gens? Les Jeans?] brandy, that they—we had all kinds of stuff. But I never was much of a drinker or a smoker. Anyway, they broke that up, and we went over to—
- James: What's this balloon outfit? What do they do?
- Bloomquist: They put balloons up—
- James: Weather balloons.
- Bloomquist: [unintelligible]—not weather—no, big balloons, like in—remember in—in London?
- James: Yeah.
- Bloomquist: Protect(?) London?
- James: Barrage balloons.
- Bloomquist: Take—they had all this stuff hanging down from them.
- James: Oh.

- Bloomquist: They had this—they had this on the whole—see, the whole line of them knew(?) along, and they had—there was no way they could dive in, or the Japs come, and they'd get tangled up with these barrage balloons.
- James: Did you get any air attacks when you were there?
- Bloomquist: No, not a thing. Was a picnic that we—right next door, they had a PBY—
- James: Base.
- Bloomquist: PBY Base and stuff. And I—I didn't, did I—I remember having to go on shell patrol, and then be a—what they called a “pink house” in Nouméa. It was a brothel, behind a big wall. And there were lines there, sometimes four or five blocks long. We were in there to make sure if they went in, when they come out, they had to get a prophylaxis, you know, usually vitargyl injection up the urethra—
- James: Did you get—
- Bloomquist: And there's calomel ointment inside.
- James: Did you get every one of those guys?
- Bloomquist: Everybody that came out.
- James: They didn't like that treatment, though, I'll bet.
- Bloomquist: (laughs) I tell you the truth—I knew—getting inside of the Corpsman, you got the chance to see your private before you got in you. Because they were ugly.
- James: Pretty ugly, huh?
- Bloomquist: But I used to get a kick out of the line. Sometimes those lines were a mile long, when the ships come in. And the French girls, French people that lived there, they wouldn't have nothing to do—
- James: So after—how long were you there?
- Bloomquist: Oh, I'm trying to figure—then I went up north. I never got down to New Zealand. I was supposed to go there, but that was quite an outfit down there. And I never got down there. And they sent me up—back up north, looking to board the—either the Pinkney or the Rixey, another ship, and they took me up to Guadalcanal again, and that was secured. And then we went and got in and went to—they invaded New Georgia, but there was no

problem there. It lasted about two days. And I was with a medical outfit, and—as a corpsman with the company in—

James: You were on—on New Georgia?

Bloomquist: Huh?

James: You—you went ashore?

Bloomquist: Yeah, in New Georgia. Yeah.

James: Okay.

Bloomquist: And then I got attached to—I left there, and I went over to Vella Lavella and was in a medical company that they set up on Vella Lavella, and just prior to the invasion of Bougainville.

James: Mm-hm.

Bloomquist: And we handled all the patients to Bougainville, and all that. Then I came back down at—we moved out of there after Bougainville, and I guess they secured it. I don't know—I never got over there. But got down at Guadalcanal again, and went into another outfit, the Eighth Marines, and we invaded Tarawa. And that was hell.

James: Really? So from the Bougainville Campaign, then you went to where?

Bloomquist: We weren't in—we were—

James: You were in Vella Lavella.

Bloomquist: We were in Vella Lavella, which was about twenty water-miles from—
from—

James: Bougainville.

Bloomquist: We took all the—they brought all the—

James: You took the casualties.

Bloomquist: The casualties came down to us.

James: Okay.

Bloomquist: And the one that they—the worst ones.

- James: And then where?
- Bloomquist: Then I went back to the canal, and I—
- James: Guadalcanal?
- Bloomquist: Guadalcanal, yeah. And got into a—the Eighth Marines, and in November, I think it was, if I remember correctly, we invaded Tarawa—Betio.
- James: What did you do there?
- Bloomquist: (laughs) I went ashore.
- James: You went ashore at Tarawa?
- Bloomquist: I tried to. Well, we were in Higgins boats.
- James: Right.
- Bloomquist: And I got a book there you ought to take and read. It's all—
- James: Okay.
- Bloomquist: You can look at. And anyway, we went on a Higgins boat. We got hung up about—oh, I'd say six- or seven-hundred yards from the beach on coral. Tide was low—they misread the tides.
- James: Yes, I know about that.
- Bloomquist: And we finally got ashore, and then they—shoot, what I did—I just went—I had about, probably 100 pounds, or 150 pounds of first aid gear and stuff on my back and all over. And I just got in the—in the water. I had seen—
[End of Tape One, Side One]
 --when I was in the Higgins, what was—I see these people that are going ahead of me who get shot on the beach.
- James: Right.
- Bloomquist: And so I just got in the water, and I was a good swimmer, anyway. And I just crawled, where I could crawl on the coral and when it got deep, I swam, and I finally—over near where there was a pier, I got over there, and that's where I run into old Colonel Shoup, who eventually became the Commandant of the Marine Corps. He got a Congressional Medal of Honor then. And from then on, you'll have to read the book what went on, because all I ever did was take care of people that were wounded.

James: But your—tell me about setting up your aid station there.

Bloomquist: I didn't have one.

James: How many—

Bloomquist: All I had is that stuff on my back and other people.

James: You had a tent or something?

Bloomquist: No tent.

James: No tent.

Bloomquist: Right underneath the pier.

James: That's where you set it up?

Bloomquist: Yeah.

James: How many were you? You and couple other guys?

Bloomquist: Me and about four—about five other guys.

James: You ran an aide station with the five of you?

Bloomquist: Set up a makeshift—yeah.

James: Makeshift aid station.

Bloomquist: Just—just—

James: So you couldn't handle all those casualties—Jesus.

Bloomquist: No, we took care of as many as we could.

James: Could—I see.

Bloomquist: Then—

James: What did you do with them? I mean, the—was the folks coming in to take them back out to the hospital ship?

Bloomquist: We—we—we'd take—we'd take care of them, give them morphine, stuff like that. Remember the syrettes they had, and all that?

James: Sure. Oh, yeah.

Bloomquist: Everybody carried them.

James: Did they have the hospital ship Benevolence was there? Because—

Bloomquist: I don't know. I—

James: It was.

Bloomquist: Truthfully, I had to read the damn book to find out what hell happened.
(laughs)

James: Did you send them out to a hospital ship?

Bloomquist: Well, I—I didn't send them anyplace, so all I did was take care of them.
That's all.

James: You mean somebody else did—

Bloomquist: I was a first aid man strictly and whoever after I got done with him—we didn't have such things as IVs—well, we had plasma, but we didn't have any left.

James: What about a bleeding artery? How did you deal with that?

Bloomquist: A what?

James: A bleeding artery.

Bloomquist: Oh, must put a tourniquet on it, or you'd open—you'd open it up and tie it off.

James: Oh, that's real nasty.

Bloomquist: You'd put a—

James: You had to use that, and then—and—

Bloomquist: I'd worked in O.R. in the Naval Hospitals.

James: So, you—you could—you had hemostats, so you plant them and tie them off.

Bloomquist: Oh, I had all the kits and tools and everything.

James: Right. That's what I'm getting at.

Bloomquist: These units that we had, and I—

James: You must—the work must have gone on and on and on in that [unintelligible].

Bloomquist: Oh, it—it was some—see, what they'd done, is they'd lined the—this beach, and it was this pier going out there, and if that water had been—I would have been—no, they'll put—you would have been rough then. They put this beach up. They took logs and coral, sand, and everything, build it up about, say ten, twelve feet high. They had—they were—they were inside of it. They were shooting the hell out of it. Read the book, I have to tell you. I tell people—I mean, I didn't know about what in the hell was going on there until—until I read the book. And I didn't particularly give a damn know what the hell was going on. But it only lasted three days. Once they got in, they took them, and old Shoup—I—he got set up at headquarters there, and that's where I was. And they start bringing what they could, then we used to drift down and—where guys were wounded, and get them, and come back. I know I got hit a couple times, not serious, but—and—

James: Enough to get you a Purple Heart?

Bloomquist: I—I got one. I don't know where the hell it ever went. I don't pay much attention to it. And I never go for these organizations.

James: So anyway, after three days, then what?

Bloomquist: Then it was over! Then I came—

James: You—

Bloomquist: Then I came back to the States.

James: Oh, you got leave right after that.

Bloomquist: Yeah, we—well, I—my time was up anyway. They were doing a point system, and I was way over.

James: Yeah, but the war wasn't over.

Bloomquist: No.

James: They weren't sending—

Bloomquist: God, no.

James: They weren't discharging anybody in 1943.

Bloomquist: No, no.

James: I see.

Bloomquist: That was then—then I got back to the States. I went on leave, got down to—got down to Pensacola Naval Air Station, and nothing much happened there.

James: What were you doing there in Pensacola? Setting—

Bloomquist: Chasing WAVES. (laughs)

James: Yes. What I mean, is—did you have—did you have a medical unit of some kind?

Bloomquist: No, I had a—they had a big dispensary there.

James: A dispensary.

Bloomquist: I didn't—they have a hospital there, too, but I wasn't—I was in the dispensary. Then I made Chief, and they sent me out to Barin Field, which was a final squadron for pilots.

James: Made Chief—wait a minute—made Chief when you were at Pensacola.

Bloomquist: '44.

James: Chief in '44. Okay.

Bloomquist: Then they sent me out to—from the main—main station there, the main naval air—naval air station, they sent me out to Barin Field, which is near Foley, Alabama.

James: Barin—I've never heard of that one.

Bloomquist: Well, it's—just—

James: Went to Alabama on the way to [unintelligible].

Bloomquist: Yeah, it was near—it was along—

James: Was it near—

Bloomquist: The panhandle of Florida there, and just inside of Alabama, towards Mobile.

James: There was an air station?

Bloomquist: There was.

James: When you went there.

Bloomquist: Yeah, went there, and they had a big dispensary there. There was final squadron for—there—for pilots.

James: Tell me about the name of that place. Barin—B-A—

Bloomquist: B-A-R-I-N I think it was, Yeah. Next right—one mile from Foley, Alabama.

James: Okay.

Bloomquist: That whole area down there eventually became Gulf Shore—

James: Yes.

Bloomquist: If you ever heard of that.

James: So you had just another dispensary there.

Bloomquist: Just another dispensary, yeah.

James: Okay.

Bloomquist: The only significant thing there—after I was there about four or five months—I came back from liberty one Sunday night. We had twenty-two guys, and man, we took care of everything, and two nurses.

James: Oh, your dispensary is pretty big, now.

Bloomquist: Yeah, it's a big—it's a big dispensary. And in fact, we had about two or three hundred pilots coming through there all the time. And we could perform certain types of surgery and stuff. But I came back from liberty on a Sunday night, and the guy that had night duty, the First Class, come up to me and says, "Hey, Chief, you should guess what—we got some help. I've been screaming for some people, you know." And he says—I said, "What—what's the score?" He said, "Well"—he said, "to start with, they

got—they got over 500 WAVES from the base.” And I said, “What kind?” I said, “How many did we get?” He said, “55.” 55 hospital corpsman. (laughs)

James: You didn’t need 55.

Bloomquist: I—

James: What are you going to do with them?

Bloomquist: Well—

James: Other than—

Bloomquist: I knew what would—when that—that happened, I knew—I said, I told this First Class, “You got to buy—you better tell your wife you got about—maybe a month left here. You’re going overseas.” And that’s what happened. They shipped us all out.

James: Shipped the boys out and kept the girls.

Bloomquist: They—they had a—left a—kept a couple guys there and stuff. There was one other guy that come out there—was a friend of mine, who had been at—down in the South Pacific with me. He made Chief, and he just come—come back later, and I didn’t. He took over as Chief. (laughs) And—(laughs) and I said, “I didn’t—I didn’t know what to do with them.” Anyway, I went over to Mainside for a few weeks, and then eventually ended up and—I went up to Little Creek—wasn’t Little Creek, exactly, but Ocean View. They had a bunch of Nissen huts and stuff. And all it was—was—they had a whole bunch of chiefs there, and they were assigning them, you know. Well, I sat around there, and I had—I went to New York two or three times on liberty and come back. Eventually got on a train, went out to San Pedro, California, and out there at Terminal Island, your receiving station, and I went aboard—I got into a—an LSM Flotilla Flag and—

James: And a ship—what kind of ship?

Bloomquist: LSMs. They were landing ship, medium.

James: LSM.

Bloomquist: And actually, in our group, there was—what the hell, 48 of them. I was in the flag, with this young doctor, and I’ll never forget him. Ed Commando(?), his name was. The only significant—we went through training there around San Diego and up—up and down the coast and

everything, for landings and all that. And they were—this is all preparation for the invasion of Kichin(?) [Aguijan?]

James: Tinian.

Bloomquist: While I was in the States and all this, they invaded Saipan and Guam and all that. Anyway, we got in San Francisco and we all went on liberty. Ed Commando, the doctor, myself, and his wife, and a guy by the name of Joseph Michael McGillicuddy Sherlock—he (laughs) was a regular man, and (laughs) he and I had been a railroad man. And we just happened to hit it off, and I had been on a rail—worked on a railroad before I went to service, off and on. We went ashore and had a good old time, and second night out, I got—I got appendicitis. What I had set up—kits and stuff, you know, and we were in the back—the rear compartment, the doctor and I—the rear compartment on this LSM troop compartment that they—and we—I got all the gear and everything over a period of time, sterile gear and all that stuff. So to do surgery, you know, had me all set up. Who's the first patient? (laughs)

James: You.

Bloomquist: Me! On two desks, put them like full man hill(?). And that guy—this First Class it was a [unintelligible], this LSM-448—he had been a—a pharmacy student, worked in a—used to—I used to call him a “soda jerk.” But I—I—they gave me a spinal—was going to give me ether. I said, “You better not.” He gave me a spinal. I laid there and when the doctor tell him what—you know, the instrument, I'd point. (laughs)

James: (laughs)

Bloomquist: Anyway, I come out of it all right. So anyway, that didn't last too long.

James: So you say you were on the California coast, right?

Bloomquist: I got—well, we got—we went out and we went to Hawaii. This is on the way to Hawaii.

James: Sounds like you went to training and went to Hawaii.

Bloomquist: Going to Hawaii and this—we got out there and—I'm there and all of a sudden I'm—I had this certain that I was all right. And the—back in those days, you never went ashore on Hawaii, because you know—I—I had been there before, on the Enterprise. Go down on a hotel suite. It was good, you know, back in those days. They have luaus and puliau(?) and you drink, and all that stuff. And—but anyway, the next thing I know, I'm—I got orders to—to the sub base off of the ship. They took me off the

ship. Actually, outside of being a—they needed a—a surgical nurse to help this doctor. That's all they needed. They didn't need a chief pharmacist's mate.

James: Someplace where?

Bloomquist: In Pearl Harbor.

James: Oh.

Bloomquist: And they took me over there, because the Chief Pharmacist's Mate aboard the Bluefin had got sick, and the Bluefin was scheduled and two days later, we took off and (laughs) were gone for about six weeks. We went up and laid off at Tokyo.

James: What's the Bluefin?

Bloomquist: A submarine.

James: You got in a submarine?

Bloomquist: Yeah.

James: Sub base and then a tour around(?)—Jesus Christ, what a career! (laughs)

Bloomquist: When we all went to the base there, and they put me aboard the Bluefin.

James: Okay.

Bloomquist: And I—that—one of the old test—old fleet-type submarines. No room, no nothing. But the sick bay was pretty good, stuff—and the food was excellent, as long as it lasted. We spent about six, seven weeks—we laid off at the Tokyo Harbor there and all they did was count ships.

James: Oh. Well, this war was over?

Bloomquist: No, no.

James: Okay.

Bloomquist: The war was still going on.

James: Okay.

Bloomquist: And—

James: Through Japan and—

Bloomquist: And you know, anyway, we're laying off there, counting ships. And we finally get back to Pearl Harbor, and I told them, I said, "I'm going over the hill." I said, "I get off this son of a—son of a gun."

James: You didn't care for the submarine?

Bloomquist: No, man.

James: Was that?

Bloomquist: At night, they—when they couldn't come up, they'd snorkel, you know. That was a breathing device.

James: I know.

Bloomquist: Because they—they'd charge their batteries, and all that, and the air got so putrid. And you'd no room, and I'd slept under—I—I have to get out of bed to turn over. Slept under a torpedo. (laughs) Have a—

James: What kind of a—does a medical outfit—did you have there, now? You and—

Bloomquist: Just a little—

James: (laughs)

Bloomquist: About—about as big as that thing right there.

James: (laughs) That was it.

Bloomquist: A locker thing—

James: A locker.

Bloomquist: In that place, where—where you could pull out, put a patient—

James: Yeah.

Bloomquist: On if you needed—and—

James: But you really couldn't do much, could you?

Bloomquist: Oh, you had a lot of equipment to take care of—

James: Did you?

Bloomquist: If—yeah. But aboard there—nobody really got hurt too bad. Once in a while, they'd get hit—

James: You didn't—any battles on that—on that submarine?

Bloomquist: We never had any problems at all. We never torpedoed anything or—all they did was—they were—all their purpose there was to count the ships going in and out of—of Tokyo—

James: Tokyo Bay.

Bloomquist: Tokyo Bay. When you finally got back, and they took us over to the Royal Hawaiian Hotel, and left—they—that was the routine.

James: You were there on the submarine how long?

Bloomquist: Oh, about seven weeks.

James: Seven weeks.

Bloomquist: And I told them, I said, "No more."

James: Then back to Hawaii.

Bloomquist: Back to Hawaii. Next thing I know, I got orders to go aboard the USS Zellars.

James: Boy, that's—

Bloomquist: DD-777.

James: Then USS—DD what?

Bloomquist: 777.

James: A destroyer.

Bloomquist: Destroyer. Sumner.

James: DD-777. What was the name of it again?

Bloomquist: Zellars. Z-E-L-L-A-R-S.

James: 777.

- Bloomquist: It's a brand-new submarine, just been commissioned.
- James: You mean—
- Bloomquist: I mean brand-new destroyer.
- James: The destroyer, yeah. Okay, how about the—how was that—that Zellars. Was it pretty good?
- Bloomquist: We had a—we had a doctor and a—an HN [hospital corpsman], and we went all the way to Saipan. And at Saipan we picked up a—picked up a third class by the name of Ensley, who was an old [unintelligible]. **[Break in Recording]**
- James: Just a stop-over.
- Bloomquist: Yeah, take this—well, they were—and we, as we sat there, we—you know, anchored—we'd go there, have—set up a chief club there, and stuff. Go over once in a while. But all night long, off of Tinian, they'd take Tinian, right next door to Saipan.
- James: Yeah.
- Bloomquist: These 29s would—every fifteen minutes, they were—
- James: Right.
- Bloomquist: Taking off, going over us. And see them come—they'd go around—you could hear them going around, day and night. They were bombing Japan.
- James: Yeah.
- Bloomquist: You know.
- James: Now, your—your medical unit aboard the destroyer—you say it was pretty nice. You—
- Bloomquist: Yeah, with—
- James: Brand-new, and you had a doctor.
- Bloomquist: Had a doctor.
- James: And you were a chief, and then you had a couple of first classes.

Bloomquist: Had a third class and a—

James: Third class.

Bloomquist: And I—this is where I stayed alive, because that third class come aboard—but if he wouldn't have come aboard, I would have been in a forward battle resting station with him in the ward room, right underneath the bridge and all that.

James: Yeah.

Bloomquist: But this third class came aboard. He had—that's where we set up this battle station, up there. He had a regular sick bay, but—

James: This was apart from that.

Bloomquist: But up there, when you went into battle, you set up the board room there, that big table and everything.

James: Sure.

Bloomquist: They had lockers and everything, with all kinds of stuff, and—

James: So meetings up there.

Bloomquist: I was up there, but then—Kincaid was his—the doctor's name. His father was an admiral. And anyway, we went to—to Okinawa, and—

James: (laughs) Jesus. (laughs)

Bloomquist: We left Saipan, went to Okinawa—and then maybe Okinawa Campaign. And we were on radar picket duty, along with eight other destroyers, out of 700.

James: Bad duty.

Bloomquist: Huh?

James: Bad duty in Okinawa, that picket duty.

Bloomquist: Anyway, we were up—we were up, right opposite Beppu, and I'd been—I moved back to the after-battle resting station, with the—with the other kid that had finally made third class, and we set up in an after-battle resting station. And we got hit—we got hit by a kamikaze that come down and went right into the ward room.

James: Jesus, that—that—that forward ward room.

Bloomquist: Yeah.

James: So they took that kid that you had out.

Bloomquist: It went in there, and—and the plane went into it, and then the bomb or whatever it had went down and went into a—fortunately, it was a water buoy—and exploded there, and screwed up the forward fire—you know, the—

James: Yes.

Bloomquist: Forward fire room and all that. And anyway, I got a phone call back in the—my station, and I come up, and I went into the ward room—what was left of it. And I never did find much of Kincaid or—or Ensley.

James: The doc and the—and the—

Bloomquist: They were killed.

James: Third Class were both gone.

Bloomquist: Yeah.

James: How about your ship?

Bloomquist: Well, we were on the way, and then—

James: But you weren't sunk.

Bloomquist: No, no. That's the only place it hit. And then, a little while later, it took just about a period, like say about twelve hours—we got hit the second time.

James: Twelve hours later?

Bloomquist: Yeah, and that was—that was right after the torpedo tubes. And didn't do too much damage.

James: It still didn't sink yet!

Bloomquist: No, no.

James: Unusual.

- Bloomquist: No, we—in the meantime, there was other ships coming up alongside us. We're heading back to—we're heading back to Okinawa, try to get into this—was it—I forget the name of—Kerama Retto. It was a volcano, but there was one opening, and it was like a harbor inside, they called it a—thing, you know. And they'd—supposed to—there was a tender in there—that's where we were trying to go. And anyway, we got hit the third time.
- James: Jesus H. Christ!
- Bloomquist: But in the meantime, they were taking people—the wounded off and the dead off, onto these other ships and stuff and—
- James: How did you take care of these people aboard ship who were wounded?
- Bloomquist: A couple people came aboard, tried to help—off these other ships, these corpsmen. And this—
- James: Still not sunk, though.
- Bloomquist: No, and the sooner they took care of the people, they'd go back—they'd put them back aboard these other—these LSMs and other ships, and a couple destroyers. Finally got hit the third time and then—it was right off of Beppu, and then we had—had to beach it.
- James: Beach the ship?
- Bloomquist: We lost almost all steerage, and the damn thing was sinking, so they beached the damn thing.
- James: Beached—but—beached it at Beppu?
- Bloomquist: Yeah.
- James: B-E-P-O?
- Bloomquist: That's—used to be called the sin city of Japan, (laughs) down on Kyushu. (coughs) And that was it.
- James: Once in Japan, you can't get beaching it in Japan.
- Bloomquist: Yeah, had to. You're going to sink otherwise.
- James: Yeah, I know, but the war wasn't over.
- Bloomquist: Huh?

James: The war wasn't over.

Bloomquist: No, we—the—they just beached it to keep it from sinking and—

James: But you'd fallen into Japanese hands if you'd—

Bloomquist: Yeah. We were there—we were guests of the Japanese government for about the last two and a half months of the war.

James: So you were—Jesus Christ!

Bloomquist: (laughs) It wasn't too bad.

James: Then—

Bloomquist: Not for us, anyway.

James: Beached but(?) at Beppu. B-E-P—

Bloomquist: Near(?) Beppu, yeah.

James: Yeah, near B-E-P-O.

Bloomquist: Uh-huh.

James: Near Beppu, Japan—taken prisoner.

Bloomquist: Well, about three days before they come aboard, (coughs) then all they wanted was the food.

James: Later, Japs came aboard.

Bloomquist: And they didn't—they put guards aboard and all that. We turned in all our weapons and everything. Weren't anything we could do. And—

James: But you stayed on the ship.

Bloomquist: Yeah, stayed on the ship, and then they come aboard, and they—they—they brought another—another—like a tug or something alongside, with a big barge man, loaded all our ammunition.

James: Mm-hm.

Bloomquist: They made the guys—the Americans that were on it—they—they—because they knew how to run this stuff. And they needed the ammunition, I guess. And eventually we got off of it, and they took us over to—to

Fukuoka, and they told us—I remember this one Japanese guard who could speak English told us they knew that there was going to be an invasion. They said, “If—if—if Kyushu’s invaded,” he said, “you people are dead.” And I asked him why. He said, “We can’t have—we got to take everybody we got and fight.”

James: Right.

Bloomquist: “We can’t be guarding prisoners.” So anyway, we ended up in a place called Wakayama.

James: How do you spell that? What’s this Fukuoka?

Bloomquist: This is—huh?

James: You said, “Fukuoka”—they sent you to.

Bloomquist: That town of Fukuoka was on this—Fukuoka was right near the railroad. They put us on a train at—at the—Fukuoka and—

James: But eventually you ended up where?

Bloomquist: Went from there, through the tunnel there, that they had between Shiminoseki—

James: To—

Bloomquist: Over to the Honshu, and they took us up and put us in a prison camp between Kobe and—and Osaka. Wakayama—I don’t know exactly how you spell it.

James: I don’t need that name. Prison camp near—

Bloomquist: Just like in [unintelligible]—

James: Osaka.

Bloomquist: Waka—

James: Near Osaka.

Bloomquist: W-A-K-I-Y—

James: It’s a prison camp.

Bloomquist: A-M-A. Wakayama.

- James: Well, when was this at time—at terms of war? Was it right at—
- Bloomquist: Right at the end.
- James: Okinawa was—
- Bloomquist: Right at almost the end.
- James: Must have been right near the—very near the end. You were only there a couple of months.
- Bloomquist: We were there about two months. And I run—
- James: [unintelligible]
- Bloomquist: I run in there—I run into—
- James: In the [unintelligible]—
- Bloomquist: I ran into a friend of mine, had been on Wake Island, Dudley DeGrow(?). And he'd been captured on Wake Island out there. And all the prisoners that had been in Wakayama for a long time. The thing was, when we found out, that what was quite obvious—they didn't guard—hardly guard us. I mean, we—there was no place for us to go.
- James: Yeah. Why bother?
- Bloomquist: And the people of Japan, they didn't have nothing to eat. And I tell you, at night, there was no—there was no darkness, because they were firebombing Japan, and these planes were going over all the time. And Kobe was all lit up, and Osaka was lit up, and stuff—and (laughs) that was about it. And—but this guy, they—he was—Dudley was about 6'2", about 225 about and after when I knew him back in Corps School. And he got captured on Wake Island, he was down to about 130 pounds. And all the prisoners and stuff, they couldn't feed them, because there's no—there wasn't any food. They limited amount of stuff. They put him on opium—smoking opium. When you smoke opium, you don't get hungry. Well, then they come—they had to—all I know is, there's—for some reason, all the Japanese left—Japanese personnel left the prison—
- James: They were—
- Bloomquist: Was gone.
- James: When the war was over.

Bloomquist: The—I didn't know the war was over, see.

James: Oh.

Bloomquist: And they were—all that was left was these—one of these—where do they come from, up in northern China, that they had captured and brought them back and used them as guards and stuff. And we—I asked this one guy, “What happened?” He says, “Big boom, that's all.” (laughs)

James: (laughs)

Bloomquist: And I saw a little while later, I see another big boom, I guess. But anyway, about ten or twelve days after that, these LSMs came in, whole bunch of them, LSTs, stuff, and picked us all up. Then they took us down to Nagasaki, and went aboard the—my god, it—I never remember that—one of the hospital ships.

James: Benevolence?

Bloomquist: Huh?

James: Benevolence?

Bloomquist: No.

James: Mercy?

Bloomquist: The Haven, I think it was.

James: The Haven? That was my ship, when—in—in Korea.

Bloomquist: You know where that ended up?

James: San Diego.

Bloomquist: No, they made it a—

James: [unintelligible] it is now.

Bloomquist: No, they made it in Long Beach. They took the Haven and put it—put it at a pier in Long Beach and secured the—the—the compulsion system and everything. They called it a “hospital in haven” in Long Beach.

James: Okay.

Bloomquist: Because I was tied up to appear later on right across from her(?).

James: Yeah, okay.

Bloomquist: But anyway, went aboard there, and there was an old buddy of mine from the Marine Corps, “Whiskey” Windsor. He had a lot more time than I did aboard the—and the first thing I told him—I told Whiskey, “You better tell these—these doctors these guys have been on opium, for Christ sakes, for god knows how long.” It was kind of a humane thing to do, really.

James: How long—you were on the Haven, you’d say, for how long?

Bloomquist: I—on there for about a couple weeks, and then they put me aboard an LST, and out of there. And the next thing I know, they—we went up to—where in hell—we went to Okinawa, picked up a Coast Guard cutter, and the LST towed that thing all the way to Pearl Harbor. (laughs) It took us 48 days to get back to the States.

James: In the LST?

Bloomquist: In the LST, yeah. And we come back in to—in to San Francisco, and—and I got out, I mean, got—I went in—went ashore, got into the—in Treasure Island. Stayed there, and then they—they sent me back to Great Lakes to be discharged.

James: At long last.

Bloomquist: And I got out, and I—about three months later, before—a little before 88 days later, I came and re-enlisted.

James: Jesus Christ!

Bloomquist: I went back to work on the railroad, and I said, “This ain’t for me!”

James: And discharge—and how long—when did you re-enlist, how—about six months or a year?

Bloomquist: I got out in—I got out—when was it? I think it was February, something like that. My enlistment was up. And I went back to Adams, and then I went—come down here to Madison, to go back to school. I stayed with my aunt, who lived down there, the first house on Fair Oaks Avenue, right down East Washington. And after two weeks, I said, “This ain’t for me at the University.” I enrolled—just don’t—there’s too many good-looking women and suddenly, I—(laughs) I said, “This isn’t for me.” So I went back in the Navy.

James: Six months, you mean?

Bloomquist: Well, I—before that, I went to work on the railroad.

James: Oh, yeah.

Bloomquist: And for about—and 88 days after I've been discharged, I went—I—I was in Milwaukee, and I went to see them, and they re-signed me, and I ended up at the Naval Armory down in Chicago. And fortunately, went back onboard the Zellars.

James: When did you re-enlist? Do you remember that date?

Bloomquist: It was about May or June, something like that.

James: So it was a little over a year later after you got out.

Bloomquist: No.

James: Two years.

Bloomquist: No, it was—after I got out, it was—I got out in '46, and I re-enlisted in—about less than three months later.

James: (laughs)

Bloomquist: And I worked on the railroad, and that—shovel—Christ—eight-ten ton of coal.

James: So when you re-enlisted, where did you go?

Bloomquist: I—they sent me down to the Naval Armory in Chicago, paid me my re-enlistment bonus, gave me all-new uniforms and everything and they—the Zellars had been pulled off and leashed and brought back to the States. She was at Brooklyn Navy Yard. I'd kept track of Captain Kintberger, who was the skipper of it. And I went back aboard the Zellars.

James: From—from Chicago, you went—picked up the Zellars. You—

Bloomquist: Went to Brooklyn Navy Yard, went aboard the Zellars.

James: Jesus, what a career!

Bloomquist: Well, that's about it. I mean, there's—

James: (laughs) There—and—and the Zellars(?) in—okay—and how long were you on the Zellars?

Bloomquist: I was on there—let's see, it was '46. I came off in '48.

James: In your duty. Then what?

Bloomquist: I took—I took another discharge, just to get off—

James: In your duty, and discharged again.

Bloomquist: I took another discharge in boss(?)

James: Yeah.

Bloomquist: To get off the damn thing, because they got a new skipper, and his—the guy that was the Exec aboard there was a lieutenant—he'd make a lieutenant commander—and he ended up as—

[End of Tape 1, Side 2]

--the Chief of Naval Operations, old Elmo Zumwalt.

James: Oh! Oh, he was a pretty good guy.

Bloomquist: He—good guy, shit.

James: (laughs)

Bloomquist: I—

James: You didn't get on with him.

Bloomquist: I went—may there one—while he was aboard, I made one—we—right after the war, out of the Brooklyn Navy Yard, we went up—they finally got us up to the ships—there's four ships. They got us up to Newport, and then from the Newport, we start to spend the winter at Casco Bay, Maine, tied up behind the Fresno. Then we made our European cruise, up in England and Denmark, Mediterranean and all that.

James: You knew Zumwalt—

Bloomquist: Because I'll always remember this—years later, the Naval Hospital near Yukosuka—I worked for this admiral medical officer, I—Admiral Irons. And the Chief of Naval Operations came out to see Yukosuka, and I met him at the front door with the Admiral that I worked for, and we went up to the office—to Admiral's office. This doctor that I worked for, this admiral was the Senior Medical Officer for the Far East for all services in

the Navy. But anyway, right after we got in there, and they made their amenities and all that, you know, and all this crap, and Irons and Zumwalt were together, I was starting to walk out. And Zumwalt says, "Wait a minute, Chief!" And he say, "Don't I know you?" I said, "Yeah, you know me very well." And he looked at me, and he turned around to Irons, he said, "You know this chief of yours, they had a needle in me about so many years ago."

James: (laughs)

Bloomquist: He'd had—I was—he had strep throat, and I was give—and back in those days, you'd get 25,000 units of penicillin in them. They'd wake me up, and I went up there about two o'clock in the morning. We'd—back in those days, you used a little sterilizer, you know, you never thought of different diseases that could be passed. But anyway, I—I—he moved when I went to use his bed up in the corridor(?) [quarter?], and I hit him with the damn needle gun. I said, "Was it twenty-some years later, that guy—"

James: Didn't break, though.

Bloomquist: Huh?

James: Didn't break.

Bloomquist: No, I—I—I had—down to another needle and gave him a shot. He had, well—(laughs) he always remembered that. So anyway(?), we have a—we have an association with the Zellars, and they meet every year. But I stopped going because about two or three years ago, I went down there, and I couldn't—see, the ship was in commission from '44 to '73, and I was on it from '46 to '48—well, I mean, before that, too. '44, 1945. And—but anyway, the—kind of lost track of myself there.

James: Well, the Zellars, yeah.

Bloomquist: Yeah, the—

James: [unintelligible] Well, after the—after your—your European cruise, you—you get—took a discharge again.

Bloomquist: I took a discharge, because I wanted—

James: This is the final one.

Bloomquist: Yeah—well, no, I—I could—I just took a discharge for one thing: I went back home and stayed a couple weeks. Then I went down to Great Lakes and re-enlisted.

James: Third time.

Bloomquist: Yeah, I re-enlisted and that was the purpose: to get shore duty at Great Lakes.

James: To get off of—so, to go to the Great Lakes—

Bloomquist: Yeah.

James: Or to get off the ship.

Bloomquist: Yeah. Well, not so much to get off the ship, but mainly to get shore duty.

James: Yeah, to get shore duty.

Bloomquist: Because I was figuring on getting married.

James: Ah. So how long were you on discharge, two weeks?

Bloomquist: About two weeks.

James: Ha! Jesus! Two weeks later, re-enlist.

Bloomquist: And I was assigned to recruit training in Great Lakes.

James: So you—recruit training—recruits—training—Great Lakes. Okay.

Bloomquist: I was there for three years. I was at Great Lakes for three years.

James: Mm-hm.

Bloomquist: All I did was teach. And I—one other spell—I—I got tired of teaching, and I went into the physical end of it and stuff, and I played football there and baseball so—they let me—I—physical training department. Then I left there and went aboard—I'm trying to remember—Samuel N. Moore.

James: Where was that?

Bloomquist: Brooklyn Navy Yard.

James: And Samuel Moore.

Bloomquist: Samuel N. Moore's—destroyer.

James: Norse?

Bloomquist: Moore, M-O-O-R-E.

James: And Brooklyn.

Bloomquist: Yeah.

James: And a—a DB?

Bloomquist: Yeah.

James: Sam—Samuel. U-E-L.

Bloomquist: N. Moore, yeah.

James: N as in Norman?

Bloomquist: Samuel N. What the N stand for, I—N.

James: Okay. Samuel N. Moore. How long were you aboard her?

Bloomquist: I'm trying to remember.

James: Heh.

Bloomquist: We went down—left there. I was married then and—but we left Brooklyn Navy Yard, went to Norfolk, and went home.

James: Your duty was in the Atlantic only.

Bloomquist: Huh?

James: Atlantic only duty.

Bloomquist: Yeah, but then we left there. Could I take this off and get something?

James: Stop only for the moment, just hold it. Yeah, you take it off. Just pinch it there.

Bloomquist: I'm trying to—trying to get these ships straight. Because I was on the Moore one, the destroyer.

[Break in interview]

I went aboard the Kimberly, not the Moore. [unintelligible] Do they want this, your museum?

James: I don't know. I guess—

Bloomquist: It's all about my history with—went aboard the Kimberly, rather than the Moore, Samuel N. Moore.

James: Yeah, this would be good.

Bloomquist: And we went from the Norfolk, and we went down—we went down and went underway training, I remember—

James: Mm-hm.

Bloomquist: In Gitmo. Better give me that thing. No, not the book, the—

James: Oh, right. Okay.

Bloomquist: I get these ships mixed up. (laughs) Maybe because I'm 80 years old. (laughs) But anyway, went to Norfolk and we were underway training to Gitmo and Guantanamo Bay and back. Then we left and went through the Panama Canal to Korea. And we were in Korea for—at first, we were on what they call the Japanese Sea on a bomb line. And all we did at night was—they fire five-inch at the railroad tunnels and stuff, all along the coast. But then we went back to Yukosuka and had liberties and stuff, and come back down to Sasebo, and then we went up into the Yellow Sea, and we—they had—they had taken two islands there, called Samdo and Chodo, which were right downriver from the capital of North Korea, Pyongyang. And Marines held one island and then—along with another little island where they had all the radar and everything there. And they had—the British had the Manchester and a carrier, the Ocean. And there was our two destroyers, and what we—we were there to protect these islands. We just set there, and the only hazardous thing that we ever had there was at night, we'd go between the islands and the main—the only people that we ever shot at, we had orders, anything in the water at night.

James: Right.

Bloomquist: It was coming from the island going in. Some of these ROK Koreans, they were deserting. But the only other problem we had was these huge jellyfish clogged up the uptakes. And this—couple of these ship repairmen, shipfitters had to go down with diving suits on, you know, and scrape out the stuff then. We just sat there at anchor all day long. And every once in a while, we'd go around the southern island, and there was a village, and they probably fired fifty or sixty rounds of white phosphorus

into the village, they get on this big telescope they had on the bridge, can watch the—probably kids, women, and old people were running around with the white phosphorus hanging on them. I don't know what the hell they did it for, but that was uneventful. Anyway, later on in that—that cruise, we were on for most of patrols between Taiwan and the Chinese coast. Made a couple visits to Hong Kong, and we left, went down to Singapore, and went all the way around and come up into the Persian Gulf. Stayed there for—that—that was when the British still held Kuwait and controlled Iraq. Wasn't any Iraq at that time. And we tied up to the piers there. I'm trying to remember what the hell that was, but it was the American oil—one of the American oil companies had a big situation then. We stayed there, and we called it a “masturbation cruise,” because we were there almost three months, no liberty, except to go over and play softball or something. But eventually we got up, and we went up to the Mediterranean to get a lot of ports and stuff. We got back just before Christmas, going into—what year was that? '49, I think it was.

James: Yeah. That's a great career.

Bloomquist: And that's—let's see—I'm trying to figure out—that was '49, '50. That—that was later. That was '50—'50—'50—'51, '52. I left Great Lakes in '51.

James: Well, anyway, so when did you finish your career?

Bloomquist: Anyway, later on I was—I ended up in Japan. I was on another—another couple destroyers and stuff, but nothing significant, and just doing routine—I was aboard the Bennington for a while, and when I made E-9, and—then I got to Naval Hospital in Yukosuka. First I was in Sasebo, but then they transferred me up to Yukosuka with Admiral Irons. And then I got from there—I was there two years, and then they put me—when that Vietnam thing started up—'54, after Dien Bien Phu, when the French got their—got beat. The North—I mean the North Vietnamese—a lot of us were going to Hai Phong. They gathered together every bottom you could find in the ship, and evacuated probably a couple million people out of there. And we were involved in that, and then '56 I went into Saigon, and I set up a dispensary there with a MAG unit—Military Advisory Group. And then, later on after that, I was with this—I got—I got back to Japan, and I got put into some tri-service medical aerovac all in, then going back. And I was involved in that, and I got—finally got back to the States to take a transfer to fleet and firm(?). And I almost got out, and then we had to debrief me, because I had a classified clearance. And that period there, they decided to keep me for another eighteen months. They put me over at Philip Van Ness(?) Fleet. They had a—they moved this station they had there over to Oakland, for MSTs—Military Sea Transport Service. And I stayed there for eighteen months. We had over 600 ships, civilian ships.

All we did was examine the civilian, merchant marine, sailor [unintelligible]. And I eventually got out and came home.

James: Boy, globe—woah—sea duty.

Bloomquist: Well, before I got home, I went to work for—for the America—I mean, for RCA's Rivers(?) Company. Okay. That's another story.

James: Yeah. You never—did you join any veterans groups?

Bloomquist: I belong to Fleet Reserve. And my mother—the only reason I belong to the VFW (coughs) is because my mother wanted to belong to the Auxiliary up in Adams.

James: (laughs)

Bloomquist: So she took out two life memberships for me and for her.

James: Huh.

Bloomquist: And when they nominate—when they approved Reagan, when he was going to run—I tried to rescind it, but they—

James: (laughs)

Bloomquist: (laughs) So I'm still—still a member. But I belong to Fleet Reserve, and we meet once every month down here at the VFW down in—you want to talk to some old-timers, go down and—it's the first—is it the first—it's the first or second Tuesday—I mean Friday in—in the month. And they have it—we go down there for a meal, and then we have a meeting.

James: Uh-huh.

Bloomquist: Fleet Reserve, they're all retired Navy chiefs, and all—some officers, and Coast Guard, and Marines. They're—and(?) we meet down there every year. And the American Legion—I—I don't belong to that. I have no use for these—this—these veterans groups and stuff. I sent money to these—that one outfit, Wounded—Disabled Veterans and stuff.

James: Uh-huh.

Bloomquist: All that.

[End of Interview]