

**BLASTED
FROM PEARL HARBOR
TO THE CORAL SEA**

**Chief Petty Officer Harold Lindstrom's
personal account of his service in the heart
of the action in the Pacific Theater during
World War II**

**As told to Kurt Opprecht
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Harold Robert Lindstrom

Harold joined the Navy in December of 1939 and was serving at Pearl Harbor the day of the attack by the Japanese on December 7, 1941. As this narrative details, he was aboard the USS Hammann when it was torpedoed and he fought alongside the marines at Bougainville and Guam. He was awarded the Bronze Star and the Purple Heart for service in the Pacific theater during WWII. He retired from the Navy in 1959.



Harold was born in 1920, the youngest of four children, and grew up on a dry land farm in north central Montana just south of Kremlin.

In 1943 Harold married Hazel Schubin whose first husband had died in an automobile accident. Harold adopted Hazel's daughters, Dianna and Sandra, and together Harold and Hazel had three children, Richard, Kathleen and Linda.

In Kathleen's words, "He did try to conceal the pain of the war from us yet I knew of most of the stories in this book. Pain had a way of keeping out of him throughout his life. Or maybe I was in tune with whatever he said about the war. It is one of the reasons I became a nurse. I thought he would approve.

"It is with a good song I am with him the most. The pomp and pleasure of a lively tune brings him close to me and in my heart. What my father became in his life was due to his heritage and his experiences. It is my belief he relished and suffered them both. As we all do! His tenderness and compassion is evident in his depictions of killing and of saving lives. How he struggled with the gruesome details, his sentences shortening, his language regressing. I can see him sputter, lower his head and let his voice fade away. He was a lover of animals, music and good partying not made from cloth of war. That he fought not to let that war win inside him is a tribute to his strength and sensitivity."

After his Navy career, Harold worked for the civil service until 1974, then moved to Reno, Nevada in 1976 and to Spokane, Washington in 1982 where he and Hazel lived until 2004.

Harold died of heart failure April 6, 2006 at his home near Olympia, Washington.

Interviewer's Note

All the time I knew my great-uncle Harold, I heard about his dramatic career in the US Navy during World War II – from everyone but him, that is. He wasn't eager to talk about his wartime experiences, and those close to him were rightfully protective of his desire to let a traumatic past stay in the past.

But as he grew older, Uncle Harold seemed to come to terms with the events of that chapter of his life and it became less distressing for him to revisit the memories that he'd spent five decades holding at bay.

I sat down with my Uncle Harold in 2003, in Seattle, at the home of June Lindstrom, his sister-in-law. He was in good spirits and relatively good health. The audio recording of the interview reveals his rascally sense of humor and irreverent attitude toward the world; an attitude which made for easier travel over the paths of some grim events. He was politely modest about being interviewed, but I felt that he wanted to tell his story, despite how painful he expected it might be.

As you'll see, he told his story on his terms, in frank and sometimes blunt language. This is not a verbatim transcript of that session; however, all edits have been made solely for ease of reading and understanding. Nothing has been added or omitted.

Kurt Opprecht

Interview

July 18, 2003

Sunday morning, December 7, 1941, Harold Lindstrom was a third-class petty officer¹ stationed in the disbursing office at the Receiving Station at the US Naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

And, the atmosphere there at this point is just normal...

Calm every day; in fact, I was on a date the night before and I had duty that day. I was supposed to be Officer of the Deck at the Receiving Station. [The officer on duty] was supposed to take off at eight o'clock and I was getting ready to go on duty.

I forgot what time...

The Blitz came a little after eight AM. I think I was relieving the watch about then, going to take over Officer of the Deck duty.

On the deck of the ship that you were working on?

No, it's not a ship; it's a receiving station, just a big building on the base, right on top of the hill before the main gate.

What was the first thing you noticed that made you realize something was fishy?

Well, the planes were coming in awful low and there were bullets coming along and explosions. A lot of

explosions. So we disbanded, of course, the Officer of the Day stuff and we just went out and watched a while and then there were fires and stuff starting.

The Arizona was already hit and was burning. Several ships were already hit out there and were capsizing and the water was burning; there were a lot of people in oily water.

You saw the Zeroes coming in low?

Oh yeah, hell, you could see the expressions of the Japs' faces as they went past us to drop their torpedoes on the battleship row.

Did you say one of them waved at you?

Yeah, he went like that. [lifts his hand in an ambiguous gesture] I don't know if he waved at us or what. He was giving us the thumb, probably, the son of a bitch.

What were the expressions on their faces?

Well, I don't think the Jap has an expression, except one expression, myself, I don't know ...

[Laughing]. What's that?

Ugly.

So, they're flying these planes in. How many are you seeing?

Oh, probably four or five, kinda. Going up and over and out. There are other ones over there; you can hear them. They are firing guns and so forth.

So you see the Arizona's on fire, but there are only four or five planes in the air that you can see?

They were coming in at us and going up and over.

So at any given time you were seeing four or five.

No, one or two maybe. Not much.

Interesting.

But, the call went out for people to fight fire because the Cassin and the Downes were in dry dock and had been hit and were on fire and they wanted people to go down there and fight fire. They had a truck there so two friends and I jumped in to go down and help fight fire.

We got down there at the Pennsylvania, which was the flagship of that fleet at that time. It was in dry dock in front of the Cassin and Downes and they asked if anybody had had gunnery experience and I had. So Jim Poole, who was my best friend, and I volunteered and went aboard the Pennsylvania and that's where we got hit.

This is how much later on in the day?

Couldn't have been much more than about nine o'clock.

You got hit by what?

A bomb, apparently, I don't know. [Chuckling] What they needed experience in gunnery for was they were having us go down there and haul up boxes of ammunition to the main deck.

We were coming up a ladder on the Pennsylvania and I was in the front and Jim was in the back of this big heavy ammunition box. And he finally yelled, "You damn dumb Swede, why don't you get in the back

where you are taller and you can pick the back end of this box up?"

So, he got in front and I got in back and was pushing him up [voice cracking] and he stepped outside the door when the bomb hit and I don't know anything more for probably an hour or so. I was knocked unconscious.

The last thing you remember is you switched, he opens the door...

Well, he stepped outside the hatch and I was calling him back and I got hit by concussion I think. I was knocked unconscious; he was killed. And, I woke up at the hospital grounds where they were taking all wounded and dead and they were laying them out in piles out there and I woke up and didn't notice my dog tag was gone.

You're out there on the lawn ..

I was out there on the lawn with all of the rest of the dead people and I didn't notice my dog tag was gone, but apparently they had taken my dog tag.

I woke up and saw that I didn't want to be where I was with a whole bunch of people like that, so I started running back. My duty station was at the receiving station, so I went back there. And, I guess my parents were notified I was dead. You knew that, didn't you?

Yes, I remember you telling me about it. Your Mom was notified -- how?

Telegram.

She got a telegram the same day?

Oh, no. I think two days, three days later, something like that.

You had no idea that she was going to be notified of anything like that?

Well, I didn't pay attention to the dog tag; I didn't think about it.

You had other things to think about. [Both laugh]

Well, I wrote a letter that I think they got at about Christmas. I wrote a long letter, of course, but they cut everything out except "Dear Mom and Dad, I am all right." And, then, "Love, Harold," I guess. That's all they got.

So, it wasn't until about Christmas time that she heard from you?

Just about that, yeah. But, she knew I wasn't dead. I don't know how, but she did.

What about your Dad? He got the telegram, too.

Yeah, our post office guy, our mail man, Casey, when they got the telegram, he came out, special trip.

I'll bet your Dad didn't believe your Mom when she said, "He's not dead."

I don't know. Never said. Dad didn't talk much.

[Laughs] He got a telegram that said his son was dead, but - I can understand them both believing you're not. I can understand that.

Well, Mom, she knew somehow, I don't know how in hell she knew. Just figured I was still that crazy kid I always was.

How did you get your dog tags back?

Never did. Had to get new ones. I guess that's how they figured I was dead. They had a pile of dog tags and that's how they got notified.

They probably just took all of the bodies and took the dog tags off.

There was about, oh, I don't know how many there were laying out on the lawn, but I'd give a rough estimate somewhat probably under a hundred. Then there were a lot of burnt guys that they pulled out of the water, and of course the ships that were turned over and everything and there was some strafing going on. I don't know how many got strafed, but there was some going on.

So, when you were on the Pennsylvania, you were pretty much below deck, because most of the time you were down there pulling --

Well, I hadn't been on it very long when the damned thing hit.

You made a few trips?

I think that was our second. Kinda passing from here to here and we took it from two other guys and we passed it on.

So, things changed at Pearl Harbor at that point, obviously.

Oh, yeah. Well, I went to the memorial service for Jim. We buried him at Red Hill to start with. It was back up at Makalapa. They had a big burial ground up there and they dug him in temporarily before they moved him into Punchbowl.²

Jim was the guy who was on the other end --

Yeah, Jim Poole his name was. He and I chummed around together. In fact, we kinda chummed around with sisters, Portuguese gals. Renée Camara, I'll never forget her. Don't know what happened to her, either.

What were the two girls' names?

My girlfriend was Renee' Camara and his was Estelle or something like that. I forgot.

How much longer did you stay at Pearl Harbor then?

Not too much longer. I got transferred to Johnston Island in the South Pacific as a pay disbursing clerk for Johnston Island. Then they came up and I got help in the disbursing department. The USS Hammann came in and they wanted someone who was well versed in disbursing because their pay records were all messed up.

They just came from the Coral Sea out there in the Pacific and what the hell they were doing out there, I don't really know. But, anyway, they wanted to know if I could take a TDY orders, so I got orders aboard the Hammann to pay records and I guess I was on it for a

couple of weeks. This was in June of '42, I guess it had to be.

What is the Hammann?

It's a destroyer. I had worked on it for a week and a half, something like that, and General Quarters sounded and --

What's General Quarters?

That's when everybody goes to their battle stations. I was assigned as "talker" to the Captain; that's up on the bridge and I relayed orders from him to the rest of the ship or whoever had the telephones.

You've got the microphone --

I have the microphone and I relay orders from the Captain to the, oh, the other places, the engineer room, look-outs, and so forth. Then, when the torpedo hit, I was way up in front with the captain and I got thrown way forward of the ship. The ship sank in about three and a half minutes, by the way.

Where was the ship at that time?

Almost right alongside the Yorktown, the aircraft carrier, which was sunk. And, we were taking personnel off of the aircraft carrier because it was sinking.

Because it had been hit.

Oh yeah. [chuckling] Oh yeah.

And, a torpedo hit. Was it a torpedo from one of the planes?

No, it was a submarine. Submarine dropped one on us, put us right amidships and the damn thing broke in two.

And, it threw you off the bridge.

The force of the doggone explosion kinda threw me forward off of the ship into the water. I didn't get hurt at all. The only thing that I got hurt was I had a large earphone helmet on. So that got ripped off, and my ears and so forth kinda got stung, but that was about all.

So you just woke up --

I never went to sleep, I just got thrown in the water!

[Laughing] You're flying through the air and you're in the water --

And, I saw the ship was going down so I knew there would be a big suction with the water going down, so I started swimming like hell. Five or six guys got together -- I think there were six -- and kinda stayed together. We all had life jackets on, of course, you had to with battle stations. So we kinda stayed together, but one guy was hurt pretty badly, so we took off our life jackets and put them underneath him, kinda made a boat out of him and stuck around close.

In about seven hours little more maybe, a little old destroyer came along and picked us up.

Nice. How many ships were around you? Just you and the Yorktown?

Well, the Yorktown was there -- I don't know what else was there. Hell, I was too damn busy watching where I was. [Laughs] But there were other ships. I forgot the name of the ship that picked us up.

Were there a lot of planes in the air? Zeroes?

Oh, I suppose there were, yeah.

Buzzing around?

Yeah, but you don't see them.

You're paying attention to what you're doing?

Nah, trying to save your ass, that's what you're trying to do. [Laughs]

You must have been barking orders from the Captain, pretty much busy at the microphone.

Yeah, before the thing hit, yeah. From then it was just a big flash. [Snaps fingers]

What was the name of the ship that picked you up?

McFarland? I think. I'm not real sure of that now.

[Laughing] You've been thrown from two ships by now. And, now what do they do with you?

Oh, I got sent back. Well, I got to Pearl first. They sent all of us back to Pearl, then I got sent back to Johnston Island.

Where's that?

That's a little island between Midway and Pearl Harbor, kinda out there. I think they used it later for storage of nuclear bombs and so forth. I'm not sure. There are

two small islands, Johnston Island and Sand Island which is almost connected to it.

But, I went back there, [working] with pay records and after a certain length of time I got sent to Pearl Harbor and aircraft at the air base at Ford Island. I had put in for new construction and it came through, but I'd also passed my exam for first-class petty officer. The tenth fleet had exams at that time and I had passed my exams for first-class and I told them I'd sooner have a transfer than first-class, but seeing as I took first in the exams, I got both first class and the transfer, so I was all right there.

You were happy about that.

Oh, yeah, because I got back to the states and got new construction and got put on a fleet tug. They put a fleet tug in commission at Alameda, California. I met Hazel there, and that was pretty good.

How long were you at Alameda?

Well, the ship was commissioned June, I think, of that year. We sailed around and stayed in all different ports and went up to Alaska and up to Astoria to pick up a section of dry dock and stuff. And I got married on the first of August and on the twelfth of August we were shipped overseas and I was on my way to Nouméa, New Caledonia.

How did you feel about that?

A newly-married man, I kinda liked that idea of being married, but it didn't last very long. It was all right. Fine. But, we went out to Nouméa and from there we

went out to Guadalcanal, then I got transferred to [Tulagi?] Island. And, Carlson's Raiders were there taking trainings and I was put in training with them for about a week and a half, almost two weeks.

What kind of training?

Oh, landings' training, karate, firing, stuff like that. Marines were giving it, and they were kicking the hell out of me every day. They liked that, damn jarheads. From there, well, I went to the landing on Bougainville.

What year are we up to now?

Last part of 1943.

So, you had about a year being sent back to the states and new construction and stuff and now you're out at Bougainville.

I was there at Bougainville for close to two weeks, I guess.

You're on a ship?

Yeah, well, I was with the Marines on the base; I guess it was a base. The marines were taking the island. That's where I got wounded, and also I earned my Bronze Star there.

How did all that happen?

Well, I was up pretty much in the front lines, right where the bullets were whizzing around and I got hit in the leg. So I kinda bandaged it up and patched it up pretty good so it wasn't bleeding too badly. It was

running down my leg into my shoe a little bit, but this Captain in the Marine Corp –

It was your upper thigh, above the knee?

Yeah, right here.

Between the knee and the waist.

Yeah, like Hazel says, right near the family jewels. But anyway, this guy, the Captain, was hit and he was brought up to us and we had to try to patch him up a little bit. He was hit in the side and he was in pretty bad shape.

So I told him I'd take him back down to the aid station which was about a hundred fifty, two hundred yards down the hill. I was real glad to do that because the bullets were flying up where I was and it wasn't a very healthy place and I thought it would be a hell of a lot healthier down there. So I was glad to take this damn jarhead back down there.

By "taking him down," you mean over your shoulder?

Helping him walk, putting my arm around him and carrying him, kinda fireman's style for a while, any way that would help him.

He could still walk a little bit?

He could use one leg; he was hit in the side pretty badly. I had stopped the bleeding pretty good on him and put a bunch of packs on him; that's all you can do is put compresses on him, really. But anyway, we got back down there and we got him patched up and we had hospital corpsmen looking at him and helping him.

Of course, he took my name and he thought that was a pretty good thing I did but then I think what he did was wrote a big letter. The only way these jarheads can get their damn name in front of the generals is by writing letters like this. So he wrote a great big glorified letter that was a bunch of bullshit of how I, while wounded, and all that crap, took him down there.

Actually, what I wanted to do was get the hell out of where the fighting was, too many bullets flying around up there and I wanted to get back to the aid station. So, I don't think it was so much heroism as it was good sense to get the hell out of there.

But, anyway, he wrote this great big letter, while wounded and all that crap that he put in there and I got sent the Bronze Star for it. That was the most ridiculous thing I ever saw in my life. I didn't rate the bronze star any more than the man in the moon, I don't think.

You got the purple heart at the same time?

Yeah, well I got the purple heart because I was wounded, yeah.

So, why were you even with the Marines on this?

They picked four of us off of auxiliary ships to be stretcher bearers, more or less, and people who knew first-aid, which I had known quite well. Once again, it's no damn thing of heroism for me. I was glad to volunteer for that because they were going to put us down on the edge of Bougainville, up there by a big cliff. They had the ship go forward and back, to be a good target to see if they could get the gun spot the gun

emplacement up on that hill. I didn't think that was such a damn good idea to go up there and let them shoot at us and not shoot back or anything, so I figured I was in a better situation to go ashore than to stay there, but as it turned out, the ship didn't get a scratch. Just my luck.

So you weren't armed when you were with the Marines?

Oh, yes, I was armed.

You had a rifle?

I had a rifle and a pistol, always a side arm.

So, in any of this you've got a side arm with you.

Mm hm. Always had a side arm.

And you had a rifle, too, when you were on Bougainville.

Mm hm.

You were there in case someone got hit, you'd put him on a stretcher and carry him out?

Well, if they were shooting at me, I shot back at them.

Right. Did you do some of that at Bougainville?

Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Got a couple of them, too.

How did that feel?

Not nice. Not nice. Kinda bothers ya. [Pause] To know that you killed people. I don't know. I don't think I'd be a very good killer.

You sight in on them, you see their chest, before you pull the trigger --

Well, like the first one, I was carrying my rifle kinda on the side and this Jap stepped out from behind a bunch of something, a bush or something and I kinda snapped it up to the side and just pulled the trigger and he looked at me kinda funny and fell down.

He was pretty close to you.

Yeah, about fifteen feet.

You had the rifle there --

Yeah, I just picked it up and shot from the hip -- got lucky.

He didn't have a chance to shoot at you yet.

Nope. He had a rifle, but he didn't even bring it up.

That was on Bougainville?

Yes.

I've only shot gophers before. I'm curious how it feels to shoot a human being.

Well, I'm going to try to shoot him before he shoots me.

It's not that hard to pull the trigger, even though you know it's a guy --

Not if you think it's going to save your life.

I completely understand. I'm just interested.

I don't think it makes you happy or anything. I never felt happy about it. In fact, I felt kinda bad about it most of the time, but not enough where I was going to lose sleep, really. But it's bothersome.

Did you see other guys around you having a hard time with it?

Oh, no. I'll tell you, these damn jarheads, they're trained. They are well trained. And if I ever had to go to fight again, I'd want to be with them.

Mm-hm.

But, if you're with them, they'll square you away.

They're pretty well disciplined.

Yeah. They considered us stupid swab-jockeys; that's about all we were to them. That's all right.

[Laughing] Well, you were doing your job which was to get the wounded out of there.

Oh, yeah, and they appreciated it, but you know, there's nothing in the world that a Marine would ever say nice to a sailor. And, visa versa, so it worked both ways.

All right. So, that got you out of Bougainville pretty quick, I guess.

I was there for eight or nine days, something like that. We'd made the advance up to the hill. They were going to go down into the air field on the other side of the hill and they said that we could go back, cause the ship was called back and they had to get back into a convoy for Saipan. We had to go down and get ready.

We were supposed to make the landings on Saipan and Guam at the same time. Because we had all the papers, that's how the instructions were.

But then, what happened I don't know, we were sent into Saipan and Tinian to make the landing there. I went up there, but I was only there for about four days, I think, with the Marines there. We got up there to the top of the hill right where the suicide cliffs were and the Marines were making good advances.

On Saipan.

On Saipan, yeah.

And so, you're still with the Marines; you're at the top of the hill on Saipan, this is where the suicide cliffs are.

Well, there are still mountains above that, but I mean that's where the cliffs were where they were jumping. I only saw one jump, and that was a guy, but I saw the bodies down in the water.

There were a lot of bodies in the water.

A lot? Well, twelve, thirteen, maybe something like that. It seemed like a stupid thing to do, I don't know. If they wanted to get killed, stay where they were, we'd have killed them.

Were you killing or taking prisoners or what?

They didn't take very much prisoners on Bougainville, Saipan or Guam. In fact, on Guam, there was a incident -- I didn't see it or anything like that, but they were telling me about it -- where these here officers captured a guy, captured a Jap officer and they were going to bring him back because they were giving leave in Australia for captured officers and Japs we could get information from. So they put this guy in between

them and took him in a Jeep and then somebody shot him out between 'em! [Laughs]

Wow! [Laughing]

People weren't taking prisoners very vastly.

So, who did you see in the water?

There was one small child, and there were just people floating.

Civilians.

Yeah, looked like all civilians to me, I don't know, I couldn't tell.

Must have pissed you off.

I didn't care, really. No, it didn't piss me off. I thought it was rather stupid.

But, then I got to go back home again, back to the ship and we sat there circling the damned equator up there, hotter than all Hades, with no meat to eat on the ship 'til we got to Guam.

What were you eating on the ship?

For meat we had Australian mutton and if you've ever had a taste of that crap -- oooh, God.

We had good cooks on our ship, really good, and of course I was sleeping in the chief's quarters, and that guy was really good and he camouflaged that damned mutton as well as anybody in the world could and it was still horrible.

In fact, when we finally got meat and chickens and so forth aboard ship, the captain held what they called

ropeyarn -- Wednesday, I think it was, Wednesday afternoon off. And they took this lamb or mutton off and cut it in pieces and everybody got in the fan-tail and got to throw the damn stuff over the side. [Both laughing] Big celebration. That was awful stuff, though.

What did you do for fun? You were on the boat circling the equator.

Oh, God, we played acey-ducey, we played cribbage, we played cards, told lies.

Gambling?

Some gambling, not too much; we didn't have much money.

Once somebody won it all, it was all over.

Well, yeah. I didn't do much gambling. I was sending all of my money to Hazel.

No women on deck.

[Laughs] No women in the Navy at that time.

None at all.

None at all. I saw women in Nouméa, of course. Didn't see a woman again until we got to Pearl Harbor, going back to the states. Except the black ones on the islands out there, of course, naked ones. But they were -- I didn't classify them as women too much, just natives out there.

Which islands?

Oh, God, four or five of them, New Guinea — up in there.

What would you do when you would stop in New Guinea and go ashore.

The only reason we would possibly go ashore would be if there was enough room up there to play a game of softball or something like that. Or if there was some place we could get a bottle of beer apiece and sit on the beach, otherwise, there was nothing to do.

I think I saw one celebrity out there. I forgot his name now, I think he played with Judy Garland in something, stiff-legged guy dance, Ray Bolger? That sounds about right.

He was in The Wizard of Oz.

Ok, that was him then.

Yeah, I think I saw him and we got two beers apiece and we got to play softball -- and that was it. And, I took some torpedo juice and put it in the beer to make it a little bit stronger.

[Laughs] All right, what's torpedo juice?

That's a hundred and eighty proof alchy.

Did you guys distill it yourselves on the ship?

No, no, it comes from the torpedoes.

Oh, it comes in the torpedoes; it's the fuel.

Kinda.

So, you have extra stuff on board, so you could put it into a torpedo.

The guys had stills down in the after-engine steering room anyhow. They fermented some gosh-damn stuff - - horrible stuff. Pineapple swipe and -- oughff.

That must have been at a premium.

Yeah, we drank it but it was horrible. You take this here alchy and put it with eggnog and it's not too bad. You can get it down -- you can feel it. What the hell good that does you, I don't have the slightest idea now.

[Laughs] You were putting it in your beers.

Yeah, put it in beer, make eggnogs out of it. We did a lot of crazy things.

How many of you were on that ship all together?

It was a small ship, it was about a hundred and something, a hundred and twenty maybe. Small ship, small target.

Anyone go crazy?

No. They were all crazy to start with. No, we didn't have any problems like that. The hospital corpsman got transferred, so I had his job. The yeoman was transferred, so I had his job, so I was doing all three.

A hundred twenty on the ship and then, is this your last combat?

Guam was my last combat.

You've been on the ship circling the equator.

Then we come back up and we made the landings on Guam.

This is probably 1944 now.

Yeah, probably about '44. I don't remember dates that well.

I don't blame you.

It was pretty good. I wasn't there too much longer. The ship was in bad shape at that time so they were going to have to order us out cause we were going to have to go to the Philippines and make landings, they claimed. I forgot how long I was on Guam, maybe a week.

You were in the same capacity with the Marines?

Yeah, stretcher bearer, first-aid's man.

What happened on Guam, was it a little less active?

Oh, yeah, it was pretty good. That's where I had to throw my first grenades. [Laughs] I had this gol-damn dumb jarhead; he got hit. I was up on the hillside and there was a cave up there and a sniper was in that damn cave and that's where he got hit. He got hit in the hip and it was pretty bad.

You mean, he was in front of the cave?

No, he was alongside and underneath it; the cave was a little bit up and over.

So the sniper was near the cave.

He was in the cave.

And he shot out of the cave.

He shot out of the cave and he hit this damn dumb jarhead. He was a tough nut. So I came on up there to get this jarhead and I was up there trying to patch him up. And like I said, he was hit in the hip, and his damn bone was hit and it was pretty bad. I was trying to get him packed up and that damn sniper would lay shells -- shoot at us -- over the heads. He couldn't hit us, but --

Why couldn't he hit you?

We were too down low. He couldn't see us down there. But, he sure had us scared, I'll tell you that. He succeeded in that.

But, I got this damn jarhead patched up and I told him we're never gonna get ya out of here with that son-of-a-gun shooting at us; he'll just pick us both off. He said, "Well, here, go down there and throw a grenade in there."

I said, "I'm not going to go up there and throw a damn grenade in there. Christ, I'll get shot." So he said, "What you do is, you crawl down here to the edge. I'm going to give you two grenades. You take one and soon as you get where it's halfway clear and you don't think he's going to shoot, lob one up in front of the damn thing," he said. "You can do that, can't you?" Except, he said a lot of nasty words along with it.

So I told him, "Ok, I'll try," because I didn't see how I was going to get out of there unless something happened. So I crawled on up there and threw one grenade right in front, and of course right when that exploded, I had an idea he had to hide. Then I stood up and threw the other one in and it went in the cave and I

could hear it explode. Then I got back to this dumb jarhead and dragged him back to the first-aid station.

There was no more sniping after the grenade went off?

No, I was kinda worried because I've heard that the Japs had their women and kids on the island in those caves with them. I didn't really want to know what was in that cave.

Hmmm.

So, I never went in. It was probably too small for me anyhow.

It was a small cave.

I don't really know. I didn't go up there to find out how big it was.

You had to get your ass out of there.

Yeah, well, I had to get him out of there cause he was bleeding.

So, then you put him on a stretcher and you and your buddy --

No, I had a stretcher there with him on it, but I didn't have a buddy until I could call one. I saw another guy coming, so I said, "Give me a hand," and drug the dummy back there.

He was a tough one, that Marine. And, he said, "God damn, ya throw like a girl!" [Both laugh.] The son of bitch. He was something. Oh, we got the bastard back though and he hadn't bled to death the last time I saw him.

When was the last time you saw him?

Oh, about two hours later, I guess, we got him ready at the aid station and they took him. They had a hospital ship outside, in the harbor, so they probably took him there.

The aid station's on the shore?

Yeah, we called them aid stations. They call them units, or something, now. They're pretty well established now, but we didn't have much then.

How much different is it from what we see on M.A.S.H.?

Oh, well, that was a complete settlement. An aid station, you got about four or five corpsmen up there and maybe some place to lay people, probably on the ground, because there's nothing much better. If you're real lucky, you'd have a nurse or somebody that really knew their stuff, and sometimes even a doctor at an aid station. On Bougainville we had a doctor down below there.

Is he in a tent or --

No, no, hell no. It's just out in the open. Just some place where they cleared out and made room.

It's somewhere they designated, "here's where you bring the people."

Yeah.

When you say, "nurses", you mean male nurses.

Male nurses. Absolutely.

And, then from there they had ships --

Oh, they had a lot of little boats to take them out to the ships or wherever they went, any place that would give them first aid or give them medical aid, which I sure's to hell couldn't do.

Cripes, all I could do is give them APCs and black and whites. APCs were the same thing as aspirin and black and whites gave you the craps. [Laughs] Cleans you out.

These are pills.

Yeah.

You didn't have morphine to give them?

I had morphine, yes.

Did you give guys morphine?

I gave out morphine, yeah.

I'll bet that was the first thing they asked for.

Yeah. They'd always yell if they hurt a lot; in fact, sometimes you gave them too much.

What happens if you give them too much morphine?

They die.

Did you do that? Did you give someone so much that they died?

One guy, we did, I think.

You must have helped out a lot of men --

Well, he was going to die anyhow. His guts were hanging out on the street and you could look inside of

him and he was still talking, so we gave him an extra dose and he shut up.

Where's this?

That was on Bougainville.

So you helped a lot of guys other than that officer?

Oh, yeah, oh yeah, oh yeah. Helped everybody who was laying down. Put bandages on them, there were generally pretty heavy bandages. It was all you could do is to kinda stop the flow of blood, you couldn't really do much. Clean out a wound, put sulfa drugs on it, patch them up as best you could and try to get them up to where they could get help.

What were the bandages made of?

Cotton, anything you could get hold of, gauze, your shirt, if necessary, anything.

You just plugged it up.

Put pressure on it, and have them help you put pressure on it, not too much where it would completely cut off the blood, but stop it from flowing heavy.

Most of the guys behave pretty well when they're hurt?

Some of them do, some of them complain and bitch and yell and "Oh, my God, I'm going to die," and all that crap, you know. You just tell them, "Hey, everybody does that." You get hardened to it a little bit. By the time I hit Guam, I was pretty well hardened to it.

Uh-huh. Did you have to help a lot of other guys in Guam?

Oh, yeah, we had four or five -- most of them were just stretcher-bearer cases, and so forth, you know.

Meanwhile, there were a lot of guys getting wounds who can walk back and you're fixing them up and sending them back.

You try packing them up the best you can. Then you gotta go back to the aid station and get more bandages, and so forth and tapes, and morphine, if you can. Pretty hard to get that, though.

What about the ones that are for sure goners? Do you see someone and say, "Well, he's dead," or, did you just have to patch him up and bring him back, no matter what?

You generally leave him alone.

You can tell, they're dead.

Well, they're either dead or damn well near dying, and it's no use sitting there wasting your time trying to patch this guy up that's going to die when there might be somebody up there you could help, so you generally leave him alone to die. You don't like it, but you do it.

You had to shoot at some more folks on Guam?

Ah, I came into one scrimmage only on Guam beside that -- [laughs] -- hand grenade affair. The guy beside me got killed. He was shooting; we were both shooting, but I was in a better cover than he was.

You mean, you were behind a palm tree or something?

No, it was a -- well, I don't know what the hell it was, something overturned in a farm building or something.

You were there with your rifle, it's not a machine gun; it's a rifle.

Rifle.

And he's standing out in the open shooting.

Well, he wasn't in the open exactly, but he was shooting around. He was doing pretty good though; he was hitting a couple people and I guess one of them got lucky and got him.

You could tell, not only you could tell who you were shooting at, but you could tell who he was shooting at, and you could tell he was hitting them.

Oh, yeah, you could see 'em up there.

It must have been a pretty hairy little skirmish.

Yeah, there was a lot of firing done, a lot of thuds right near you. When that stuff whips by your ear, you know it.

What does it sound like?

I don't know, just a whizz.

Well, how do you feel when this happens? Are you crapping your pants?

Damned scared. Yeah, very scared. But, I don't know, you have some kind of a silly attitude that somebody else might get hit, but you won't. I don't know.

Are you shouting at each other? Are you laughing? Are you crying?

Oh, hell, you do all that.

Do all of that.

Do a lot of crying.

Do you cry at night or do you cry in the field?

Both places, I guess.

Pray that someday soon you get the hell out of there, I guess.

As fast as you can.

It seems like it was very disturbing to you, but it doesn't seem like it made you wacky or anything.

Oh, it bothered me for an awful long time. When I got back, I'd attack Hazel in the bed at night or something like that once in a while.

Not knowing she was Hazel?

Yeah. But, she'd yell fast enough, I'd stop, so I never actually hurt her.

You were going to strangle her or something?

Well, when some of those things come back to you, you don't know what you're going to do to 'em, but I was awful jumpy for a long time; in fact, I was put in the hospital for it for a while.

They gave you talk therapy, I guess?

Oh, some dumb, damn psychiatrist came on up there, and asked me a bunch of stupid questions. And then he made a big loud report, fired something off behind the desk, and Christ, I jumped, landed underneath the desk.

He said, "Ah-hah!", some kind of a word he had there, I think they called it "shell-shocked" then; I don't know what the hell they call it now.

He made some noise behind the desk, just to see if you'd jump or not. And you sure as hell did.

[Laughing] Sure.

You jumped behind the desk?

I laid flat.

That's good, right?

I thought it was.

Then he said, "Oh, you've got this!"

God, that happened when I went back for first leave up there. I was going through the sugar factory in Chinook and we were all walking and gabbing, and so forth and somebody made a loud report behind me and Christ, there I was down under that -- made me feel silly as hell.

Did they laugh at you?

Kind of. But, it didn't bother too badly. Two or three years it did. But, I never did tell the kids much about anything. In fact, I think this last year was the first year that my daughter knew that I'd ever had the Purple Heart and the Bronze Star.

You're just not much for bragging.

Well, I don't think it's bragging.

I think there's a lot of people who think it is.

Just something to forget.

*What did you do particularly that helped you deal with it all?
You didn't start drinking when you got back.*

Well I drank. A lot more than I should have. But I had Hazel, I think that was the reason I squared away.

Um-hum.

Like she says, if I get out of line, she kicks my ass.

I'll bet you wrote some great letters back during the time you were away.

No, didn't bring any back.

No, I mean wrote letters to Hazel.

Yeah, I wrote letters to her every chance I got, but you couldn't tell her anything because they were censored. You couldn't tell her where you were or what was going on and so when you get a letter from her, of course, you've been someplace for two weeks where you can't possibly get a letter out.

Then she doesn't get any mail, she wonders what the hell I'm doing now, who did I meet -- you know -- one of those black, naked girls out in Guam.

Well, some of the guys must have gone for the natives on the islands.

Nah.

No?

God no. Think we'd go for the dogs more than we would the women.

How about in the Philippines, you landed there?

No, never landed there. Just as well. I didn't like the Philippines.

Was there a time when you felt like you're were going to win the war or did you always know you were going to win the war?

Oh, yeah.

You knew you were going to win eventually?

Oh, sure. Hell, they weren't tough to beat, you can beat them. Anybody that's stupid enough to stand up and run at you yelling "Banzai" or some stupid thing, when you're under cover and there's no cover in the world for them. You can sit there and pick 'em off like they're clay pigeons, there's no way they're going to win anything.

Did they do that to you or?

Oh, yeah. Hell, on Saipan they came charging out there. We sat there and knocked them off like clay pigeons.

They're standing up yelling "Banzai" and running straight at you.

Oh yeah.

With a bayonet?

Oh, they had their rifles.

Were they shooting or they just had their bayonets out?

Oh, they were shooting. Couldn't hit anything.

And, you're just picking them off?

Yeah. I guess they were going to see their glorious empire or somewhere else. I was going to gladly send them there, too.

I think they knew they were lost and they wanted to go out that way.

I think a lot of them did, I think, yeah. By that time I think we were brain-washed enough that we hated them badly enough that it didn't bother us.

What kind of brain-washing did they do? Showing movies?

Oh, you know, cripes, you should have seen some of the writings that Bull Halsey put up out there. "If you see a Jap, shoot the lousy son-of-a-bitch." Great big signs. Old Halsey was quite a character, but I'll tell you he was one hell of an admiral.

Really.

If it wasn't for Bull Halsey and few of those other guys, that God-damned dumb MacArthur would have never got any place.

What was particularly good about him?

MacArthur was the biggest farce in the war. Cripes, he wouldn't move unless someone was taking a picture of him. The big phony.

Well, Halsey, what was good about him?

He was a damn good leader, he --

He made good decisions?

He made damn good decisions.

The men supported him, trusted him?

Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Bull Halsey was well-liked.

In the meantime, the war in Germany against the Nazis is going on. Were you worried about that?

No. I was glad I wasn't there because I don't know if want to shoot a German.

Mm-hm.

Cause we got brain-washed so well that we knew the Japs were nothing to be liked at all. We knew what they did and we saw the remains of some of the boys that they had captured, and there was no ifs ands or buts and we could shoot them without a bit of conscience.

Mm-hm. What did you see of those remains?

Like on Bougainville. We found two guys they had captured, they were hung upside down and they were still alive with hundreds of cuts all over their bodies. You could look through their head, through their eyes. Both of them died.

They were just cut, like little --

Slits, and so forth. They were bleeding all over. The guys were just making noises. We cut 'em down, but they didn't live.

When you say you could see through their eyes --

Well I don't know. No pupils or anything, kind of a blank, there.

No one home, kinda --

Nobody home. No.

Poor guys. But you knew that the war in Germany would be over, too, and you knew we were going to win there?

Oh, I didn't really because we didn't get news. Got very little news.

You didn't get news on the radios or anything?

Nope. Very seldom. We got Tokyo Rose, we got her once in a while on the radio. She played good music.

You listened?

Oh, yeah. Damn right. Only thing we could hear.

She played music and then she'd say, "Hey, boys, why don't you just stop fighting..."

She knew where we were, too, what ships were where, who were on the ships and "Chief so-and-so, did you know that your wife is shacking up with so-and-so when you're out here fighting a war?" You know, things like that, so dumb.

What did the guys say? Did they know it was bullshit?

They knew that it was bullshit.

They didn't worry about it at all? They just listened to the music and laughed at Rose?

They used to try insulting Roosevelt and so forth. It didn't help. Cripes, some of the jarheads would yell back, "Yeah, and Eleanor's a bum piece of ass!" Just dumb stuff. God.

You were pretty starved for music. You didn't have record-players?

Oh, we had record players and so forth, yeah. And we'd get a movie or two and show it fourteen times.

What kind of movies?

Oh, regular movies.

Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers?

Yeah, things like that, yeah. If we'd get to another ship, we'd swap movies and so forth all the time so we'd get new ones.

Well this has been a couple of years now. A hell of a lot has happened to you. When the war was finally over, where were you?

Well, we were supposed to go to the Philippines after I got off of Guam. So I got on the ship for the Philippines and then we got our orders switched and they said to go to overhaul in Pearl Harbor. I thought that was going to be pretty good. I thought maybe I could get Hazel out there somehow, but then after we got to Pearl Harbor they found out our type of ship didn't fit in there very well for repairs, so they sent us back to the States and, of course, when we got back to the States, I'd already been chief for quite a while and they didn't rate a chief aboard the ship, so I got transferred off of it.

So far the war's not over yet?

No, I was putting a ship in commission in Tacoma. And we took our shakedown cruises and everything, but the war was over while we were in Tacoma in

August that year. I only stayed on until November of that year. I got transferred off because my time was up.

How did you feel when you heard the news the war was over?

Pretty happy about it.

It's a dumb question, I know, but what did you do?

Hazel and I went ashore and we saw a movie.

You didn't go off on a drinking spree?

No. No.

Or start dancing in the street or anything?

There were some people out there screaming and yelling, but we went to a movie.

Then it was over.

I stayed on that ship until my time was up and then I got transferred to Shoemaker, actually Camp Parks, so I started living the life of a married man.

¹ He had made second class petty officer

² There is a National Memorial cemetery in Punchbowl, Honolulu, Hawaii.

Appendix

Pearl Harbor

On November 26, 1941, a Japanese fleet sailed to a point some 275 miles north of Hawaii, and from there about 360 planes were launched. The first dive-bomber appeared over Pearl Harbor at 7:55 AM (local time) and was followed by waves of torpedo planes, bombers, and fighters. Due to lax reconnaissance and the fact that many vessels were undermanned since it was a Sunday morning, the base was unable to mount an effective defense. The Arizona was completely destroyed; the Oklahoma capsized; the California, Nevada, and West Virginia sank; more than 180 aircraft were destroyed; and numerous vessels were damaged. In addition, more than 2,300 military personnel were killed. The “date which will live in infamy,” as U.S. Pres. Franklin Roosevelt termed it, unified the American public and swept away any earlier support of neutrality. On Dec. 8, 1941, Congress declared war on Japan. [From Encyclopedia Britannica online]

At the time of the attack, *Pennsylvania* was in dry dock in the Pearl Harbor Navy Yard. She was one of the first ships in the harbor to open fire as enemy dive bombers and torpedo planes roared out of the high overcast. The planes did not succeed in repeated attempts to torpedo the caisson of the dry-dock but *Pennsylvania* and the surrounding dock areas were severely strafed. The crew of one 5-inch gun mount was wiped out when a bomb

struck the starboard side of her boat deck and exploded inside casemate 9. Destroyers *USS Cassin* and *USS Downes*, just forward of *Pennsylvania* in dry-dock were seriously damaged by bomb hits. *Pennsylvania* was pockmarked by flying fragments. A part of a torpedo tube from *Downes*, about 1000 pounds in weight, was blown onto the forecastle of *Pennsylvania*. She had 15 men killed, 14 missing in action, and 38 men wounded.

USS Cassin, USS Downes and USS Pennsylvania



The wrecked destroyers USS *Downes* and USS *Cassin* in Drydock One at the Pearl Harbor Navy Yard, soon after the end of the Japanese air attack. *Cassin* has capsized against *Downes*.

USS *Pennsylvania* is astern, occupying the rest of the drydock. The torpedo-damaged cruiser USS *Helena* is in the right distance, beyond the crane. Visible in the center distance is the capsized USS *Oklahoma*, with USS *Maryland* alongside. Smoke is from the sunken and burning USS *Arizona*, out of view behind *Pennsylvania*. USS *California* is partially visible at the extreme left.

USS Hammann



USS *Hammann*, a 1620-ton *Sims* class destroyer built at Kearny, New Jersey, was commissioned in August 1939. Her service over the next thirty months included active participation in 1941 "operations short of war" in the Atlantic. Transferred to the Pacific in January 1942, she took part in operations in the South Pacific in February-May 1942 including the Battle of Coral Sea. During the Battle of Midway in early June 1942, *Hammann* screened USS *Yorktown*. While tied alongside *Yorktown* on the afternoon of 6 June 1942, assisting in her salvage, *Hammann* was torpedoed by the Japanese submarine I-168 and sank in a few minutes. Casualties among her crew were very heavy.



Harold Lindstrom and his wife, Hazel, with their grand-nephew, the interviewer for this narrative, Kurt Opprecht. The three visited Ellis Island, NY, in 2002, the port of entry where Harold's parents, Emil and Natalia first arrived in the United States from Sweden.